

# The surprising similarities between pole dancers and financial dealers

How to use flow as a management tool

Master Thesis

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## *Preface*

This thesis took its starting point back in March 2012 with a deadline in October 2012. It was necessary to sign the Master Thesis Contract in order to be able to have a task that could be completed. The goal was clear – the thesis had to be handed in at the latest in October. Several sub goals were created along the way in order to complete the task given.

During the last 7 months no one else but the authors were in control and able to complete the thesis. The journey towards the end has consisted of a lot of frustrations and also stress. Sometimes, especially during the corrections in the last month, the missing pieces were finally in its place.

The time just seemed to disappear and sometimes the writings seem as if it happened by itself. All the frustrations that were met on the way were a necessity in order for the authors to feel flow.

As submitting this thesis a happiness feeling will take over, as always when submitting a project. However, as this project has been the most frustrating yet most inspiring, the happiness feeling from submitting will be stronger than ever.

We look forward to receive the feedback, as the task has not been entirely completed yet. The feedback is all we need in order to fulfill the flow conditions.

Sincerely,

Kristina Stockunaite

&

Karina Paludan Nielsen

## Abstract

The thesis you are about to read will take you on a journey through the world of pain, sacrifices and commitment that to some are more important than food and hunger. It takes you from Maslow's basic needs to the optimal experience.

As Maslow's hierarchy and flow seem different they also share some similarities. The contradictions and similarities between the chosen theories will be held against this thesis empirical research. Thus, two deviant case studies have been conducted as they serve to answer the research question in the best possible way. The findings of the empirical research will show the similarities between two different cases.

The purpose with this thesis is to come up with a management tool by combining Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory utilizing the framework that consists of eight conditions for achieving flow and the empirical findings. Furthermore, this thesis addresses the issues of flow's paradoxes. However, it is argued that flow solves the paradox of finding a meaning in a meaningless world.

The empirical findings suggest that there is a condition that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) did not find in his own work, the need to feel comfortable in order to achieve flow. In order to overcome this gap and in order to come up with a tool that can be utilized by management it is being suggested that the framework should be adjusted in accordance to combining the empirical research with the discussed theories.

## 1.0 Introduction

Imagine that you have to hear every sound of every car honking, see every bird, spider or kid that runs around, smell all the food that is being cooked in every cafeteria in the streets where you walk. Imagine that you feel every breath, every vein in your body that just pumps the blood around automatically all the time. Imagine that you can taste the pollution of every car that drives by you when you are biking on your way home from work. And then, imagine that you have to notice all this at once! Feeling stressed?! Now - imagine everything just stops... Completely silence! Just nothing... No concerns, no stress, nothing but silence. Isn't that nice? That is how flow feels like (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

If you could stop the stress this way would you do it again? What would motivate you to do it? Would you sacrifice something to get these 10 seconds or hours of completely silence? Be careful... Too much of something, even though it is good, can be bad.

The following citation explicates the essence of a flow experience:

*“a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing.”*

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

This gives a simplistic understanding of the optimal experience. Being fully immersed in the activity that nothing else matters provides the artist or floor worker with a complete order in consciousness. However, the characteristics of flow are much more complicated than this and stretches much more widely.

Flow has its roots in the humanistic psychology, which was first categorized as a third force by Maslow (Hein, 2009). However, the two theories have the similarities as well as dissimilarities. Both of them share peak experiences that usually occur at work and not in the spare time (Hein, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, the examination of pole dancers' and financial brokers'

optimal experiences will put the theories to their tests. Just as the basic assumption that flow is always good.

Pole dancers are dancing and performing acrobatic workout using the pole as their tool. The pole dancing becomes their passion and way to spend their spare time. Can flow be recorded to occur in one's spare time? Financial brokers are spending their spare time to work, so where is the line between these. Even though these two cases may seem very different they do have their similarities, which this thesis will reveal in the chapters to follow.

## 1.1 Research question

It is rather implicit in theory that the flow experience is ought to be a good thing. Throughout the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the father of flow theory, flow is explicated as the point where one is the most focused, efficient, creative and happy. Consequently, this makes the logical assumption that is the most performing state to be in.

According to the Csikszentmihalyi (1990) flow experience can happen in all kind of performances and activities if it fulfills necessary conditions such as a task that can be completed, strong focus while during the activity, clear goals, immediate feedback and sense of control amongst others. However, flow experiences are most likely to occur at work (Hein, 2009). Is it really the truth?

As flow is supposed to be the most performing state to be in it holds possibilities for management. However, how can one make sure that employees or customers achieve this optimal experience? This leads to the following question:

**"How can management use flow experiences in daily work for the company to perform better?"**

## 1.2 Delimitation

The inspiration of this project especially stems from the literature of flow theory presented by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). The literature faces its limitation to the extent that no one, or very few, seems to question or criticize it. Therefore, the collection of framework utilized in this project has been distilled from a rather narrow amount of articles and literature. The foundation of the framework is nevertheless based on in-depth research and is thereby considered as valid as any other literature. However, it is questionable that the optimal experience theory seems to be broadly accepted without further questions raised. The reason for this might be because flow is related to positive psychology. Therefore, there is a tendency to focus on the positive aspects of therapy and thus the negative aspects becomes of less importance. In order to examine and reflect upon the theory of flow this thesis will analyze upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as well.

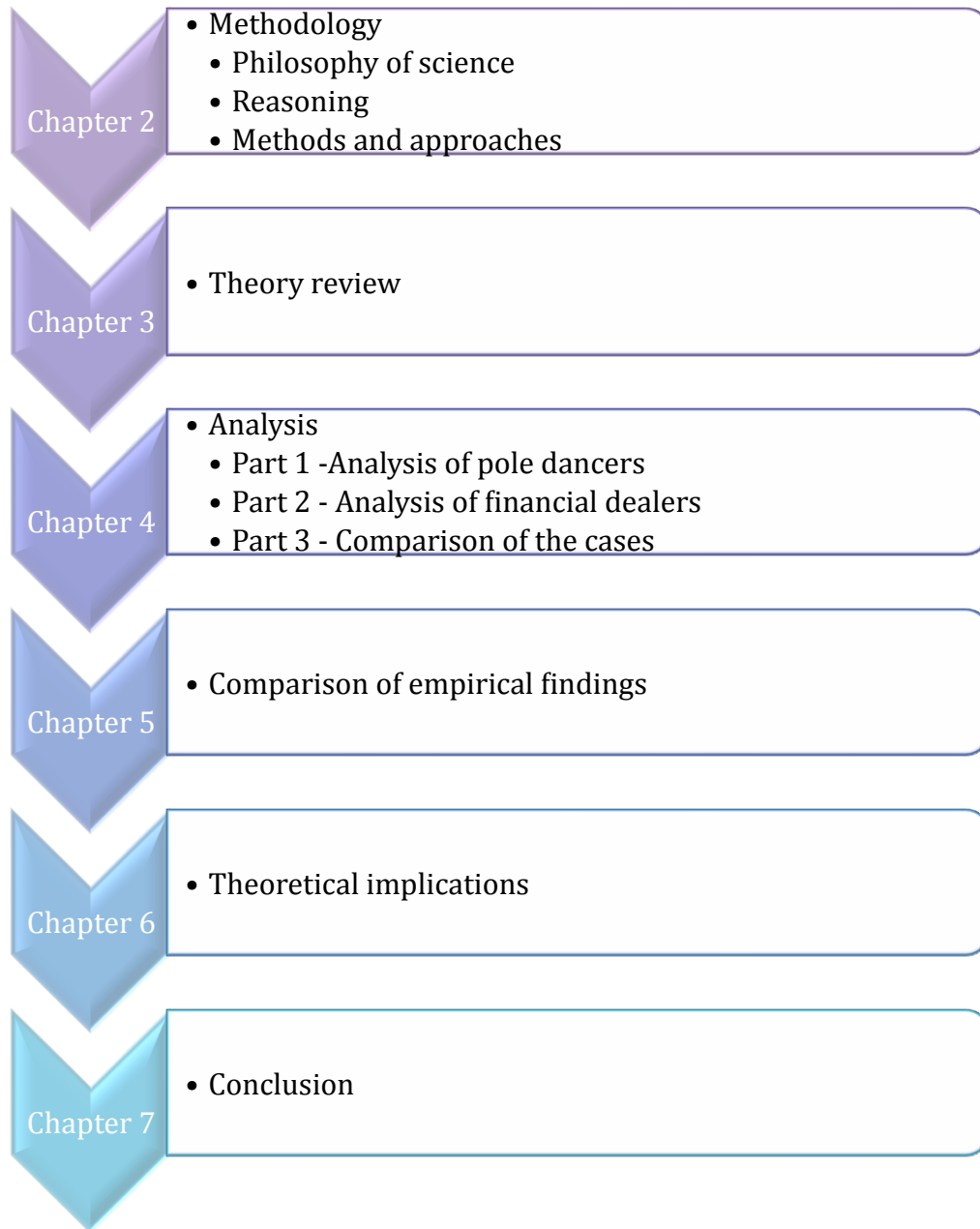
Thus, the literature review provides a balanced foundation that illustrates the relevancy of the initial research question. Furthermore, the utilized framework provides input for analysis and reflection upon the chosen cases.



### 1.3 Report structure

The structure of this paper will be as follows:

*Figure 1: Roadmap of this thesis*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

Thus, it seeks to carry the reader through the project, from research question to conclusion, by the use the illustration shown above.

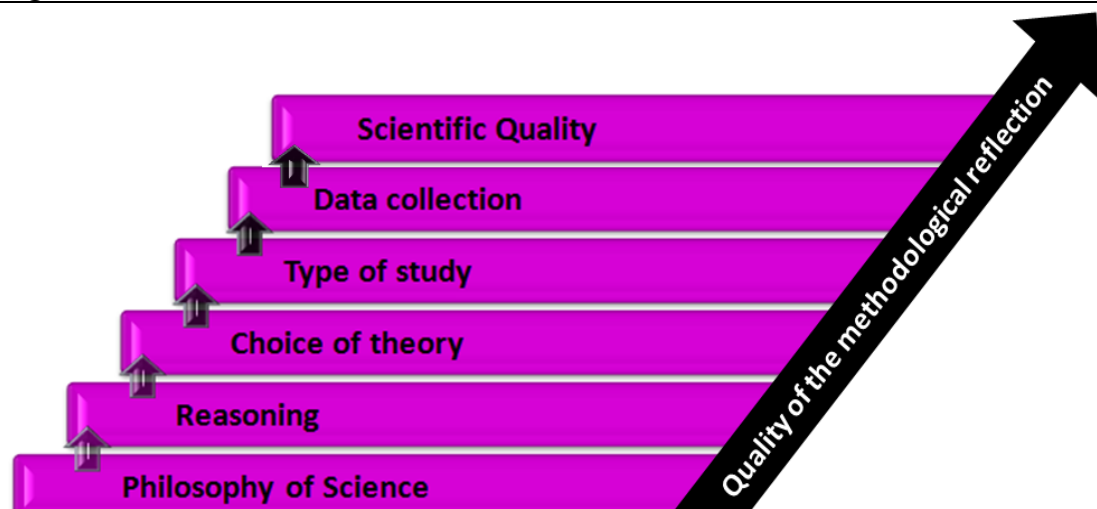
The following section will present and argue for the chosen research methods utilized in this paper. In order to provide the reader with best possible answer to the initial research two case studies will be conducted and analyzed.

## 2.0 Methodology

The following section will present and argue for the chosen research methods utilized in this paper. In order to provide the reader with best possible answer to the initial research two case studies will be conducted and analyzed.

This chapter will be structured according to figure 2, which illustrates a stairway; the logic behind this methodological metaphor is that each step will build upon another, in order to reach the top of the stairway, which represents the arrival point of a holistic methodological reflection. Consequently, the metaphor of the stairway conveys the holistic and progressive structure of the present chapter, as well as the interdependent relationships between the elements.

*Figure 2 – The research staircase*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

## 2.1 Philosophy of science

The first subset of the methodology section is structured as the initial step in figure 2 and entails the element of philosophy of science. Philosophy of science allows for analysis of the methods of enquiry within science. Okasha (2002) states the purpose of philosophy of science as follows:

*“[...] to uncover assumptions that are implicit in scientific practice, but which scientists do not explicitly discuss.” (Okasha, 2002, p. 12)*

Scientists might take certain assumptions for granted (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), thus the purpose of this section will be to explicate the underlying assumptions and set the foundation for analysis of the chosen theories.

Also, Burrell & Morgan (1979) emphasizes the importance for a researcher to be aware of the underlying assumptions in one's work. They state in the following that: *“In order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a theorist be fully aware of the assumptions upon which his own perspective is based.”* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. ix) Thus, the importance of being aware of the philosophical approach utilized in research is being stressed.

The following section will thus, explicate and elaborate on the authors' underlying assumptions and paradigm utilized in this project. The section will touch upon the work of Burrell & Morgan (1979) about the nature of social science. Consequently, it will look into their Burrell & Morgan's (1979) framework on sociological paradigms.

### 2.1.1 Paradigm

*“These [paradigms] I take to be universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.”*

*(Kuhn, 1962, s. 8)*

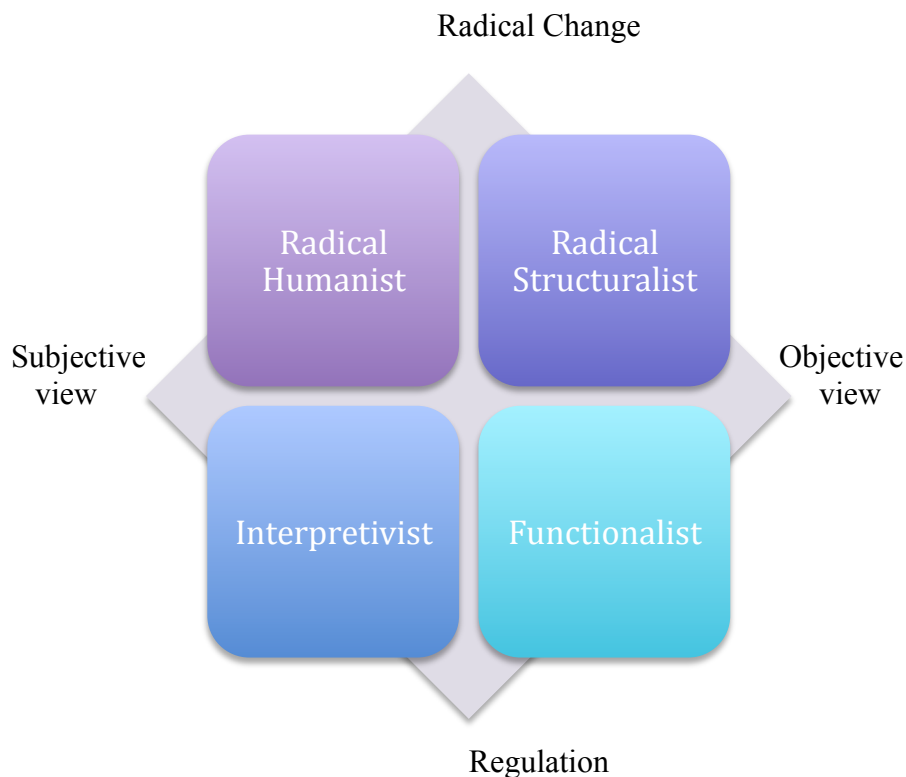
Consequently, a paradigm is way to view the world. Even though Kuhn (1962) might use the word 'paradigm' interchangeably, Okasha (2002) argues that it is more than just a theory.

*“[...] a paradigm is an entire scientific outlook – a constellation of shared assumptions, beliefs, and values that unite a scientific community[...]*”

*(Okasha, 2002, s. 81)*

Furthermore, Burrell & Morgan (1979) defines four varieties of paradigms, as they believe that assumptions of the nature of science can be thought of as objective versus subjective, whereas assumptions of the nature of sociology can be thought of as radical versus regulation. When taking together, four distinct paradigms are defined that can be utilized for analysis (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The relationship between these are illustrated in the diagram shown below:

*Figure 3 – Sociological Paradigms*



*Source: Authors' own creation inspired by Burrell and Morgan (1979).*

*“The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective change”*  
(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28)

In coherence with the above-mentioned citation, the authors of this paper seek to take the stand of the interpretive realm as the ontological and epistemological assumptions throughout this paper are believed to be based upon experiences and insights of a personal nature. Consequently, this philosophical point of view seeks to explicate the view of the world from within the realm of the individual consciousness and subjectivity (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Thus, this paradigm argues that the researcher is part of what is being observed which will be in line with the overall belief throughout this assignment as it is in coherence with the humanistic psychology. The interpretive paradigm is also reflected in the discussion of human nature, which is constituted by a dichotomy between voluntarism and determinism that represents the subjective perspective versus the objective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

### **Human Nature**

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) all social science must be predicated with the assumptions of man and the environment as human life “is essentially the subject and object of enquiry”(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). The assumptions of human nature have been widely discussed within the psychological sphere as will be discussed further in the following section. It is a set of assumptions concerning the relationship between man and the environment. Are we a product of our environment or do we create our own environment?

This project will take on the perspective of voluntarism as the authors of this paper believe that man is free-willed and is regarded to create his own environment. Man will thus be the controller as opposed to being controlled. The opposite view of human nature is determinism where man is conditioned by the external environment (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Voluntarism is furthermore reflected in the chosen theory, as Flow draws upon the perspective of the humanistic as well as the existential psychology (Hein, 2009), which will be elaborated on in

the following. Both perspectives emphasize the belief that humans search for a purpose with life and have commitment to create their own destiny.

### 2.1.2 Meta theory

There exist four different schools of thoughts within psychology; Behaviorism, Cognitivism, the Humanistic and the Existential perspective (Hein, 2009). However, this section will provide an overview of the two latter, which is respectively also reflecting the authors of this paper stands, as these meta theoretical perspectives have influenced this project's chosen theories and the perceptions that is bound to the research question. This section will consequently combine the more general aspects of philosophy of science with the specific theories utilized within psychology and motivation.

#### *The Humanistic Psychology*

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) is the founder of flow theory. Flow stems from the humanistic psychology that fundamentally thinks of humans as positive and optimistic. The humanistic psychology is linked to phenomenology as an overall paradigm. The phenomenological way of thinking has existed since Platon however it was not until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that it occurred as a concept. Phenomenology is not the concept of how humans are conscious of their own consciousness, but rather how the consciousness deals with objects (Hein, 2009).

It seems obvious that the humanistic psychology shares essential assumptions with phenomenology as the humanistic psychology sees man as a being that who partially is conscious of itself and partially has an intention of creating its own life. Thereby, humanistic psychology differs from behaviorism whereas humans are thought of as controlled by its environment. It is believed that humans have a huge potential that they will seek to realize throughout lifelong learning (Hein, 2009). Thereby, self-actualization becomes an essential concept within the sphere that is a central part of Abraham Maslow's pyramid of hierarchy. He furthermore mentions "peak experiences" as an essential part of humans' happiness feeling that is linked to the more spiritual part of humanistic psychology (Hein, 2009).

### *Motivation in the perspective of the Humanistic Psychology*

Abraham Maslow is thought of as one of the founders of the Humanistic Psychology with his work of motivational theories. Furthermore, Frederick Irving Herzberg shares, as well as other motivational theorists, the perspective of this sphere and it is even shared in some of the modern work. Especially the positive psychology is built upon the foundation of the theoretical and empirical contributions from the humanistic psychology. Finally, it has contributed to the development of the existential psychology (Hein, 2009).

### *Existential psychology*

The existential psychology, as the humanistic perspective, is also built upon the phenomenological paradigm. One of the main differences between these two perspectives is that the existential psychology is concerned with all the various aspects of human existence, as tragic dimensions of life and not only the positive.

Existential psychologists believe that an essential part of human beings is to look for a deeper meaning in the perception of reality. One of the paradoxes is that humans try to find a deeper purpose with life, yet they see the world as random (Hein, 2009). One of the essential characters within the existential psychology is Viktor Frankl who founded the logotherapy. He was also a central person to Maslow and thus, can be considered as being a central part of the development of the humanistic psychology (Hein, 2009).

The essence of Frankl's work is that man has his freedom to search for a purpose in life. Consequently, humans are capable of creating their own destiny. His work is based on the assumptions that humans' most important drive and motivation is to search for a higher purpose (Hein, 2009).

The illustration in the following (figure 4) is a sum up of the underlying philosophical assumptions and paradigm of the authors of this paper that has been explicated in the abovementioned sections. Consequently, the iceberg illustrates how phenomenology is the overall paradigm within the two schools of thoughts, humanistic and existential psychology, illustrated in the iceberg above the paradigm. Phenomenology relates to the interpretive realm,

which furthermore relates to how volunteerism views mankind. Both the humanistic and the existential psychology have influenced the theories on top of the iceberg.

Consequently, it is essential when analyzing the theories to bear in mind, which kind of assumptions lies behind the theory. Thus, the theories are shown on top of the iceberg and the sets of assumptions are hidden below the water.

*Figure 4 – Iceberg of underlying philosophical assumptions*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

## 2.2 Reasoning

This section provides an overview of the different types of reasoning and thus, the section is concerned with the second step of the staircase. The authors of this thesis will present and argue for the utilized way of reasoning within this paper.

There are three different types of reasoning: induction, deduction and abduction. Induction is the way that humans seem to rely on and go about in the everyday life. Induction reasoning goes from specific to general, whereas deduction goes from general to specific (Okasha, 2002). Consequently, when adapting the inductive way of reasoning one relies on specific observations in order to make generalizations. On the contrary, deductive reasoning is considered as less uncertain than induction, as it relies upon true premises and thus, provides a true conclusion (Okasha, 2002).



Despite the fact that some philosophers see deductive reasoning as less uncertain, the reasoning, which will be applied in this thesis, is *abduction*, as the arguments will be based on explanatory inferences rooted in a reciprocal interaction between deductive hypotheses and inductive empirical data.

Thus, the reasoning of will tend to have an inductive character as it is constituted by a case study research, which consequently moves from general to specific. Even though it consists of inductive statements from the empirical research, the authors of this thesis will seek to deductively build upon acknowledged theory of flow, thus the reasoning will go from the specific to general(Okasha, 2002). Thus, the main way of reasoning within this project will be *abduction*, as the authors combine the two types of reasoning.

It must be stressed that the purpose of this project is not to verify assumptions, but to explore and reflect upon the chosen literature and findings. Consequently, this project will be based on a “continual cycling back and forth between theorizing and data production” (Seale, 1999, p. 3). By combining these two ways of reasoning, uncertainty will become less significant. In other words this type of reasoning is also known as abduction, which is considered to be more certain than induction. This type of reasoning finds the most plausible conclusion with the provided data. (Okasha, 2002).

However, some philosophers state that abductive reasoning is another form of inductive reasoning, thereby stating that it moves from examined enquiry to make conclusions about the unexamined. Consequently, they refer to the ‘inference of the best explanation’ (abduction) as a type of inductive reasoning. However, the difference lies in the fact that abductive reasoning does not need to have a conclusion, assuming a general statement, rather investigating a ‘why’ question (Okasha, 2002).

As there appears to be a difference between the ‘inference of the best explanation’ and inductive reasoning, other proponents to this type of reasoning, argue that conclusions are based upon knowledge gained through ordinary inductive reasoning. (Okasha, 2002). Therefore, in order to

minimize the uncertainty of this type of reasoning it will deductively build upon acknowledged theories. Hence, the *abductive* way of reasoning will be sought being approached in order to answer the initial research question.

Abductive reasoning goes as a detective way of reasoning and has been used by scientists such as Darwin, when he argued for the evolution theory, as he could point to the most obvious explanation when making comparison between horses and zebras (Okasha, 2002).

Albeit it could be argued that the approach of utilizing deviant cases to provide general adjustments to theories should be termed as inductive reasoning, the authors of this thesis would rather argue that the utilized reasoning is abductive, as the theoretical adjustments drawn from the empirical data are based on inferences deemed to be the most plausible by the authors. Furthermore, the abductive reasoning is more likely to be in alignment with the pragmatic reality, which is conveyed in the objective of the thesis and reflected in the posed research question. However, it is acknowledged that induction and abduction have similar characteristics; this is intentionally sought in the thesis, as the broad, multi-faceted nature of the thesis pursues this combined approach, in order to optimally answer the research question.

### 2.3 Choice of theory

This section represents the third step of the staircase. It will present and argue for the utilized theories in this thesis. Consequently, the literature has been selected in coherence with the object of enquiry. In order to answer the research question the theory will provide a framework within which the analyzed empirical data will be linked to the theoretical concepts.

The theory of flow has been subject of virulent criticism within the established psychological literature, due to the questionable methodological approaches, basic assumptions and tendencies of anecdotal evidence of the literary stream of positive psychology from which the theory of flow stems. Despite of the criticism of the popular research of positive psychology, the theory of flow is deemed to be highly reliable, due to the extensive research covering the specific concept of flow.

Just as flow Maslow's hierarchy of needs takes point of departure in the healthy man. His work was the beginning of a whole new approach to psychological thinking, the humanistic psychology. The key words of this approach became to be the holistic view of mankind and positivity (Hein, 2009).

Furthermore, he states that when creative people has uncovered needs it actually leads to a higher need for achieving self-actualization. Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs may be criticized due to the questionable premise that the needs can necessarily be taxonomized according to a specific hierarchy; for instance, Viktor Frankl has argued how Jews in concentration camps were able to survive despite a lack of fulfillment of basic needs, but with a fulfillment of needs of a higher level.

However, contrary to much literature criticizing this issue (Hein, 2009), the authors of this thesis acknowledge that Maslow (1954) did in fact mention himself that exceptions to the hierarchy of needs exist. As he states, "There are other apparently innately creative people in whom the drive to creativeness seems to be more important than any other counterdeterminant. Their creativeness might appear not as self-actualization released by basic satisfaction, but in spite as lack of basic satisfaction" ((Maslow, 1954, s. 26).

The Hierarchy of Needs argues against theory of flow, as it states that humans have to cover their basic needs in order to be motivated and move up to the next level of the pyramid. Contrary to this, flow argues that humans can go for hours without getting their basic needs covered, when they enter the optimal experience state. However, as both theories are rooted in humanistic psychology they do share some similarities for instance in their holistic view of mankind (Hein, 2009).

Maslow will thus be utilized in order to raise central questions. In addition, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been chosen in order to get a more holistic view on the empirical research. It is emphasized that it will challenge the flow theory and as the purpose with this thesis is not to come up with a universal truth, but rather to examine how flow can contribute as a motivation tool of students and employees, the importance of critique is being stressed.

As opposed to Maslow, Frankl believed that it is the will to deeply engage in an activity that motivates humans. Thus, his theory of human commitment is comparable with flow. People need to be deeply involved in order to experience flow and thus, it is this commitment that Frankl believes motivate people (Hein, 2009). Frankl's theory has been chosen as it coincides with flow and helps to answer the initial research question.

## 2.4 Case Study

This section is concerned with the fourth step of the illustrated staircase. It will present and argue for the chosen cases. However, the quality of the cases will be explicated in the "Scientific Quality" section.

*"A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"* (Yin, 2003 p. 13).

This thesis will seek to answer the initial research question in the best possible way, thus two deviant case studies have been chosen. It is important to stress the fact that all methods have its strengths and weaknesses, however this project will seek to minimize this gap by building deductively upon acknowledged theories.

Consequently, case studies are preferred when the researcher has little control over the events, as opposed to experimental studies, and when the focus is on contemporary processes (Yin, 2003). Therefore, the case study is a preferred method for this project's research question, as the problem concerns contemporary processes that the authors do not have control over, and the findings can encourage to do more in-depth research.

To cite professor W.I.B. Beveridge "More discoveries have arisen from intense observation than from statistics applied to large groups" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, s. 226). The quotation thus emphasizes the importance of case studies. As Flyvbjerg furthermore states; case studies are of important

matter in order to do good research. This is due to the wealth of information that is linked closely to real-life situations, which provides “[...] a nuanced view of reality [...]” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, s. 223).

The cases of enquiries will be within the financial sector will be financial dealers who work at Nordea and within the pole dancing sector the main focus will be at the students that workout at House of Pole.

The chosen cases consist of employees and students within a highly specialized sphere. Helle Hein (2009) defines highly specialized employees as employees who cannot be replaced by others without the sufficient training or knowledge. She elaborates that the work carried out is not routine work, but requires skills or meta-knowledge with regards to the specific sphere (Hein, 2009).

It might seem as a surprising choice at first glance – pole dancers and financial brokers. However, as both industries must be considered as having highly specialized employees due to the definition given by Helle Hein (2009) thus, both cases are to be considered within a highly specialized industry. Even though the pole dance case has its focus on the pole dance students they are still to be considered in line with view on financial brokers, as the pole dance instructors wish for their students to perform. Thus, it is in line with management who want their employees to perform. Thus, the foundation for comparison of the two cases has been given. Consequently, this thesis will be focusing on (i) pole dance students’ ability to achieve flow and for (ii) financial brokers.

Furthermore, pole dancers and financial brokers have another denominator –creativity. Their work, or workout, is defined in this thesis as work that requires one to make use of one’s meta-knowledge on the spot in order to find solutions for complex problems (Hein, 2009) which is the case for both pole dance students and financial dealers’ everyday life.

When conducting the two case studies, first step will be to decide whether the interviewees have experienced flow. Furthermore, a comparison of the two cases will be conducted, followed by an

analysis of the conducted interviews. These provide the base for a comparison between pole dancers and financial dealers. The empirical findings will thus be subject to comparisons with other empirical studies. Finally the case studies will provide the foundation for adjustments of the utilized theories. This project will be finalized by a conclusion. Consequently, it is not the intention to come up with universal truths, but let the utilized data reflect upon the chosen theory in order to answer the initial research question.

## 2.5 Data Collection

This section is presenting the fifth subset of the staircase. It will present and argue for the chosen methods utilized within this thesis.

The data first and foremost consist of primary qualitative data consisting of 6 qualitative in depth interviews with pole dancers and financial dealers, because of the emphasis case studies have on the process of understanding findings. Thus, qualitative data becomes of high importance (Flyvbjerg, 1988). The interviews were done individually and were taped. Transcriptions are enclosed in the appendix.

Conducting a case study often requires inductive reasoning thus, the case will “explicate itself” (Flyvbjerg, 1988). Due to the fact that inductive reasoning is criticized for being less safe than deductive inferences (Okasha, 2002), this project will deductively seek to apply Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) theory of flow and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Hein, 2009) amongst other theories that are relevant to the subject of enquiry.

### 2.5.1 Conducting Interviews

This section presents and argues for the chosen interview method.

In order to conduct a case study the need for interviews are inevitable, as the anthropological study of human behavior simply calls for explanations that goes deeper than the surface. However, this strength is also the case studies weaknesses as the interviewees only are able to explain from their point of view (Flyvbjerg, 1988). Thus, the aim of this project will be to supplement chosen literature with the in-depth interviews.

The interview guide has been formed on the foundation of the utilized framework of flow. Thus, the questions were based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) eight prerequisites for entering the optimal experience. The chosen method for conducting interviews will be semi-structured in order not to adapt the interviewees' experiences into standardized questionnaires. Despite the fact that the circumstances of the two case studies, and the interviews, are depended on the specific situation of the interviewee, the interviews will be structured in such a way that it provides a platform for comparative studies of the two chosen cases.

Consequently, the overall aim is to examine the eight requirements for people to experience flow. Thus, the interview guide consists of theory-driven questions in order to keep focus on the initial research question. However, the respondents were allowed to talk freely as well with the purpose that might lead to new topics that could be considered as relevant for the case study. Consequently, the interview guide provided a static core as to keep track of the interview.

In practice, the interviews started out with some small talk to set the tone and make the respondents feel comfortable. Furthermore, the interview guide started out with the respondent's background info followed by the prerequisites.

The interviewees received a copy of the questions on before hand in order to start their thinking subconsciously as well as consciously. The questions were presented as a regular conversation so that the interviewee felt comfortable. Consequently, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a way that would seek to make the interviewee feeling as comfortable as possible in order to get as "truthful" answers as possible.

### *Interview with pole dancers*

The structure of the framework aimed to help revealing whether the pole dance members had experienced flow or not. Three main respondents' interviews form the base of this analysis. All of the respondents are students from the pole dancing school House of Pole (HoP). They received a copy of the questions beforehand.

*Figure 5 – Pole dance respondents*

Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Has been pole dancing since March 2012</li> <li>• Lives with her boyfriend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Has been pole dancing since March 2012</li> <li>• Lives with her boyfriend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Has been pole dancing since February 2012</li> <li>• Single</li> </ul>

*Source: Authors' own creation*

### *Interview with financial dealers*

In order to make sure that the cases could be compared the interviews were structured similarly.

Thus, the financial dealers were interviewed in the exact same way.

All three respondents were chosen from Nordea Bank. Their names will not be mentioned, because of the strict confidentiality policy of Nordea Bank. Accordingly, they will be called: respondent D, E and F. In order to get the bigger variety of answers, respondents were chosen from different age groups, different departments and experience.

*Figure 6 – Financial dealer respondents*

Respondent D	Respondent E	Respondent F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Had been a financial dealer for 23 years</li> <li>• Married, one child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Has been a financial dealer for 16 years</li> <li>• Married, two children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Has been a financial dealer for 5 years</li> <li>• Married, three children</li> </ul>

*Source: Authors own creation*



Respondent D is a former dealer, still working in Nordea Bank just in different position. He is danish, 53 years old, married and has a daughter. His work experience is more than 23 years. Three years ago, respondent D stoped his work as a Chief Dealer in Money Markets.

Respondent E is working as a dealer more than 16 years. He is 42 years old, danish, married and has two sons. Respondent works as a Bonds Trader.

Respondent F is working as a dealer more than 5 years. He is 35 years old, danish, married and has three kids. Respondent F is Dealer of Currency and Interest Rates.

All respondents work in the same bank, are males, danish, married in their first merrges and have kids. Work experience within the trading area varies between 5 and 23 years.

## 2.6 Scientific quality

As Herriott and Firestone states;

*“The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (Yin, 2003, s. 46).*

As the abovementioned quote states a multiple case study is considered as strong.

Consequently, the two cases have been chosen in order to gain a holistic view of the requirements for flow to happen within different businesses, however both pole dancers and financial dealers are considered as highly specialized. The two cases are chosen because of their differences, yet still comparable. One case study is conducted within the financial world, more explicitly it is dealing with financial brokers. The other case study is chosen because it differs from the financial sector and is concerned with the pole dancing industry. Thus, two deviant cases will be examined and analyzed upon; pole dancers and financial brokers.

As both cases are considered to be within the highly specialized industry the foundation for comparison of the empirical research has been provided. In order to challenge the chosen literature two deviant cases have been chosen. By taking two deviant cases the utilized theories will be put to a test. The literature has been chosen because of their similarities as well as their dissimilarities. Thus, the theories will be challenged in order to answer the research question in the best possible way.

The interview guide was conducted in such a way that it provided a similar pattern and therefore the deviant cases are capable for comparison. The interviews were taped and transcript.

### 3.0 Theory review

The goal of this chapter is to build the foundation for the empirical analyses of two chosen cases. The sequence of the chapter is presented in the table below.

*Table 1 – Theory overview*

Chapter	Description
<b>Flow theory</b>	Defining the main characteristics of flow theory according to its founder (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and the other scholars.
<b>Challenges meet skills</b>	The principle describing the basis how flow experience function and circles.
<b>Physical experience of flow</b>	Effect flow has on physical feelings connected to the emotional state.
<b>Flow as positive or negative experience?</b>	Discussion between desirable and undesirable outcomes of flow experience.
<b>Criticism of flow theory</b>	Discussion of flow limitations, flaws and different views to the outcomes.
<b>Flow in different research</b>	Finding flow in recent researches written within the last two years.
<b>Finding flow in classical motivational theories</b>	Similarities and differences between flow and classical motivational theories.
<b>Flow at work</b>	Flow influence and role at work and other activities.

*Source: Authors' own creation*

First the authors of this paper will introduce the reader to the conception of flow theory. The main characteristics, conditions and descriptions by different scholars will be presented by

relating to the pole dancers' and financial brokers' cases. The following sections will examine the flow cycle exploring the interaction between physiological and psychological parts. Thus, it is important having the chosen cases in mind that are based on totally different activities as they focus on physical and intellectual actions. Consequently, the negative and positive outcomes of flow experience will be discussed. Being aware that even the best theories have its limitations and flaws, the part with criticism will be presented. There was not found considerable critics on flow theory presented by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Therefore, authors of the paper defined the critics based on different views of chosen scholars. In order to examine the popularity of flow utilized within different research, the recent papers within two past years will be taken into analyses. Moreover, to define the place of flow theory between the classical motivational theories, the discussion will be written presenting the similarities and differences with five motivational theories: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene, McClelland's Learned Needs, Self Determination and Goal Setting Theories. Finally, links of flow and work as the other main activities will be defined. Theory overview will be constantly compared and confronted with the chosen cases in order to validate the purpose of choosing it.

### 3.1 Flow theory

Flow is one of the intrinsic motivation theories. Intrinsic motivation represents a motivation to engage in an activity purely for the sake of the activity itself (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Deci, 1975). When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they pursue activities for the enjoyment it provides. The process itself is rewarding and enjoyable despite the outcomes. It appears that to be intrinsically motivated is more than freely choosing to engage in an activity, or to do the activity for enjoyment. Rather, to be intrinsically motivated appears to involve mastery of a challenge while feeling subjective experience. It leads to feel satisfaction, pleasure, confidence, freedom relaxation and control (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010) disregard the activity.

Flow was originally defined by M. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. The experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Therefore, it is most possibly to experience flow in the activity that a person is good at. However, the limitations of a flow experience are not entirely clear. It involves long hours of

practice and hard work building strong skills. Feelings of control, an increased likelihood of learning new skills and a balance between challenges and skills are essential to the flow experience. These are present both in pole dancing and financial trading. But can flow occur, if the person has all necessary skills and conditions, but does not like the activity? To answer this question more analyses of different scholars will be needed. Apparently, it is not only the body that has to be at work, but just as important, the mind. Flow is an experience that happens after long time working or practicing in a particular area when suddenly the person just stops thinking about anything else except the activity the one is doing and it seems that everything happens by itself. Before experiencing overwhelming feeling of happiness person has to work hard and patiently while building necessary skills. Contrarily, during flow activity no efforts should seem to be required. On the other hand, not so much can be done without efforts. However, flow theory states that at least willingness to practice, deepening knowledge or training should come naturally without conscious planning or forcing oneself.

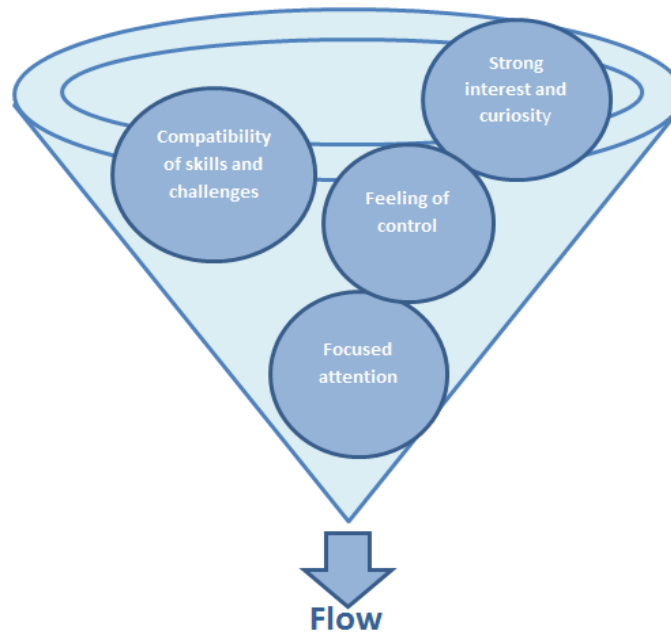
There are not so many scholars analyzing and discussing flow theory. Most of the scholars, who have been analyzing flow experience, agree on two fundamental parts of the experience: that challenges and skills have to meet. However, they characterize the main parts of the flow experience in different ways. Ellis, Voelkl, and Morris (1994) define flow as an optimal experience that is the consequence of a situation in which challenges and skills get to the equilibrium. Kuo & Ho (2010) also agree that challenge and skills are two key factors of flow experience. On the other hand, Trevino and Webster (1992) identified four core characteristics of flow experience: feeling in control, focusing attention on activity, feeling curiosity, and having intrinsic interest.

Furthermore, Hoffman and Novak (1996) conceptualized flow into four categories, which are slightly different than mentioned before: skills and control, challenge and arousal, focused attention, and interactivity. Hsu and Lu (2004) measured flow by five constructs: total involvement, enjoyment, control, concentration, and intrinsic interest, while Wu and Chang (2005) divided flow into two categories: enjoyment and time distortion. Even though, different scholars define flow experience in different ways, there are some main parts founded as

essential: compatibility of skills and challenges, feeling in control, strong interest and curiosity and focused attention illustrated in figure 7.

However, one incompatibility can be found in the definition of flow comparing different scholars. While Hsu and Lu (2004) and Wu and Chang (2005) include enjoyment into the main parts of flow experience, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) emphasizes that usually a person does not feel happiness or joy during flow. However, it comes afterwards. Either way, enjoyment is an essential part of flow experience.

*Figure 7 – Main parts of flow experiences according to different scholars*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

Despite the disagreement between scholars when the feeling of joy occurs, flow experience is always related to happiness. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) claims that a person, who knows how to organize his consciousness, can improve the quality of life by starting to enjoy boring routines at work, or by trying new sports activity which becomes the joy of life.

After defining the main characteristics of flow experience it can be seen that strong interest and curiosity is one of the essential conditions in order to experience flow. Therefore, the question

asked in the beginning of the paragraph can be answered. The person who is not intrinsically interested in the activity or work he is performing cannot experience flow, even though he has all the other conditions. Most scholars agree on the fact that people have to be intrinsically interested in the activity.

Even though there are some disagreements between the scholars' statements about main characteristics of flow, this thesis will look into the eight components defined by the founder of flow, as his list is the most comprehensive.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines eight major components of flow and enjoyment:

1. The experience occurs when person is doing a task which can be completed.
2. There should be strong concentration while doing the task.
3. The task has clear goals.
4. It provides immediate feedback.
5. Deep but effortless involvement that removes the person's thoughts away from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life.
6. People exercise a sense of control over their actions.
7. Concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over.
8. The sense of the duration of time is altered.

Consequently, a task or an activity cannot continue forever. It has to be divided into smaller tasks or goals that can be completed. Flow could not appear at an endless activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). For instance, a pole dancer knows that the task will be completed when she will be able to perform a certain figure. For the financial brokers it is the end of a trade. There has to be the feeling of completion.

A person should be immersed in the activity itself and do not do anything else. In other words, a financial trader, or pole dancer for that matter, should avoid activities during work, such as watching TV, listening to radio or talking with others if it is not related to the activity. All the distractions should be out of reach. On the other hand, what is distraction for one person can be

just a natural background for the other. Distraction can be perceived really personally. Moreover, if the concentration is so high noise might not have any influence.

Clear tasks or goals are essential for the activity. A person needs to know what to reach, in which direction he has to concentrate his activity and what exactly has to be achieved.(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) Moreover, the person has to know that the goal is achievable and realistic, but not too easy. If the dancer is performing the same figure she will become an expert of it. Also, she will be bored of doing the same and not developing her skills. Similarly, if the dealers see that goals are too high and not possible to complete, he might lose interest in achieving it because it will not seem possible.

Feedback is like a guide letting a person to know if he is working into the right direction. Therefore, the feedback has to be immediate. To put it in another way, the pole dancer knows that she was not successful if she falls down while performing as well as the dealers can follow their success on the profit loss reports. There are many ways of getting the feedback in both cases. But it is highly important to know it immediate (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

While doing the activity, the participant has to be really interested in what he or she is doing. Otherwise, it would be difficult to spend so much time on developing skills. Moreover, all the efforts have to be purely natural and voluntary. As a result, it makes the person forgets all the concerns that exist in the everyday life, all the fears and doubts. When the mind are occupied by the activity, there is no space or time to think about something else. Concentration for the activity is so strong that a person can forget not just usual daily concerns, but also hunger or exhaustion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Therefore, forgetting concerns can be seen as a negative side and dangerous for the person.

In addition to that, the person has to be free to control the activity that he or she is doing(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Control the movements on the pole, where to place the hands, feet, and the entire body. The movements of the performance in total have to be controlled. The sense of control can be felt in dealers' actions as well. They have some freedom (depending on



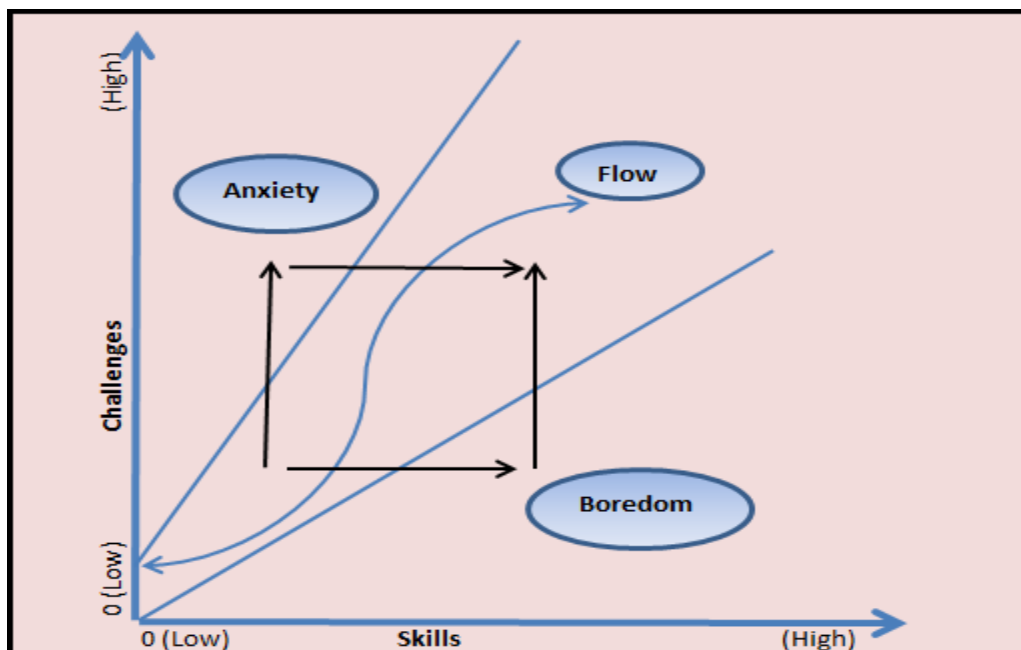
the position and experience) to act how they want while trading. They have a freedom for decisions and control over money they can vary.

Because of the strong concentration the sense of time is disappearing. A person can spend hours trying to complete a task, but it can feel like a few minutes, or controversy, few minutes in a performance can feel like ages. It is because the mind is totally taken over by the activity. All the power of the brain is used for the action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

### 3.2 Challenges meet skills

Experiencing flow, enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety. Challenges should be balanced between skills and capacities, which should not be too easy or too difficult as illustrated in figure 8 (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

*Figure 8 – The process of flow*



*Source:* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

The higher the skills are, the higher the challenges should be. If one's skills are low and the challenges are too high, the person will feel that the goal is impossible to achieve. Contrary, if

the skills are too high and the challenges are too low, the participant will feel that it is too easy and not worth any attention and focus (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

So, if a pole dancer just does all the tricks that she already knows, there might not be any point for her to learn new ones, because the flow “rush” might never come. There can be found the same confirmation of statement in the case of financial brokers. To keep working in the same area, with the same responsibility and tasks can lead to boredom and stagnation.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines certain activities as “flow activities”: play, art, pageantry, ritual and sports. The way the activities are constructed makes it easier to fulfill eight criteria in order to make flow happen. It seems logical to think that flow occurs while the dancer is performing a show, or a painter is creating a piece of art. Artists are more emotionally engaged in what they do than in what they get from doing the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Furthermore, creative activity is considered more playful and amusing than a usual job at the office (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1968). But on the other hand, the authors agree that there are no clear rules concerning within which activities flow can occur. Hence, flow can happen in any activity or work if it fulfills the eight requirements, mentioned above. According to the theory, people can experience flow while acting in a theatre, doing pole dance, working on the stock exchange or even while working in a bank. However, flow experience has been reported to occur most frequently at the job (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) (Hein, 2009). The utilized case studies will seek to confirm or contradict the theory.

### 3.3 Physical experience in flow

The flow experience and a physical activity share an inseparable part. It has already been mentioned how a person feels emotional during a flow experience in terms of what happens with the mind, feelings and mood. However, what happens with body while one is in flow? Can flow only happen when the mind and body works in collaboration with each other? And how can physical involvement be a part of non-physical activity?

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states that the body's physical function is a part of flow. When the physical activity is designed to include goals and setted challenges it can easily be turned into a flow experience. Furthermore, all the motor functions and organs can be used to promote the production of flow. On the other hand, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) emphasizes that flow experiences includes both: muscles and brain. An activity cannot result in flow without both prerequisites. Pole dancing can not be enjoyed just because of physical feelings in the body, but feelings, motives and thoughts has to be involved as well.

During various sports activities people desire to break through the limitations of what the body can accomplish. The goal is to do more than others or what one has achieved before. However, the enjoyment can be achieved not just by professional sportsmen with perfectly trained bodies and strong physical skills, but also by every person who are not fit and strong. The physical act can be extremely simple and still successfully transformed into producing flow. Even walking can generate flow experience if it includes some importantant parts (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and thus, it should be possible for even a financial broker to experience flow during work.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines five steps in the process of flow during physical activity:

1. There should be overall goal set, including as much as possible realistically feasible subgoals.
2. The process of reaching goals should be measured.
3. Strong consenstration should be maintained, as nessessery challenges defined.
4. Development of skills.
5. Keep increasing challenges, if the activity becomes borring.

Conditions for physical flow are similar to the emotional flow. The main parts, skills versus challenges, setting goals and strong concentration are kept. All the mental activities, which meet the eight conditions of flow as well as physical activities meeting five steps can lead to optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

During physical activities, the body is a source of flow, but the mental side has to be included as well. It appears as a normal process that dancers in order to experience flow have to use their

body as the main source, but what about financial brokers? They do not use their bodies in order to experience the feeling of enjoyment. However, it appears that the optimal experience can be reached any way. As financial dealers have a hectic job their body is affected. When they are in stressful situation and have to react fast, make the right decisions and are just feeling the pressure, their heart start to pump faster. They might start to sweat and so on. Whether it can be defined as an physical activity or not, the things that happens with the body is exactly the same as when a pole dancer has to perform. Likewise, pole dancers use their mind when performing – where to hold, how is the foot, is this position right and so on.

### 3.4 Flow as positive or negative experience?

There are several good aspects of the flow experience, as it makes a person to reach the higher goals, improve skills that leads to exiting experience and happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, does it just have a positive side? If it is such a pleasant experience, can it become addictive as drugs? If people forget everything in the world except the activity that they are doing and all the concerns about themselves are gone, can it be damaging? Is there an optimal way to save the balance between two extreme sides of flow?

One of the reasons why flow is thought of as a positive activity is that it always leads to growth and discovery. As mentioned before, there has to be an optimal balance between skills and challenges. The pole dancer needs to face a new trick that is attainable to do however, not too easy to achieve. Therefore, a person cannot stay at the same level for a long time. Practicing leads to improvement of skills and is followed by increased challenges. The person has to constantly improve in order to stay in the balance between boredom and anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

If people understand how flow works, it is possible to transform life by creating more harmony and to use energy that otherwise would be wasted in boredom. People who experience flow frequently claim to be happier, more cheerful, friendly, strong, concentrated, and sociable (Brycker, 2011). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests two strategies of how it is possible to improve the quality of life in general: making external conditions match our goals and change

how we experience external conditions by making them fit our goals. Thus, a lot depends on the personal view on the environment. Happiness can be understood in different ways by different people, in the same way external conditions can be transformed into favorable conditions for the individual.

Everybody agrees that sometimes we can feel extremely happy one day and after few hours or days it feels like disappointment. It can be explained by the personal view, which changes from time to time. But the question is; is it possible to control the state of our minds and how is it possible to do? How can a financial broker control how he feels after losing money on the stock market? However, awareness of flow can be the way of managing conscious and improving working life as overall quality of life. Employees or students can affect their view by being aware of flow experience and outcomes by diverting their minds into the positive way of thinking(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Flow can as a positive experience be desired by everyone, except not everyone can experience it. The theory has some limitations concerning the people who are able to experience it. Even though, there are eight fully fulfilled components, there are few types of people who cannot experience flow. A person who is constantly worried about how others will perceive him afraid of creating a bad impression, or of doing something that will not be approved by the others is condemned to permanent exclusion from enjoyment. As mentioned before one of the eight major components of flow is the concern for the self have to disappear. The person has to be extremely focused on the activity and if he thinks about everything else at the same time it will become impossible to complete. The second type of people who is excluded from experiencing flow are self- centered individuals. They evaluate all the information only in terms of how it relates to specific desires. That type of people cannot enjoy the smell of blooming spring flowers, because it does not give any direct benefit to them (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

As a result, that type of personality cannot learn about new goals, because they are too concentrated to the existing ones (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, a pole dancer that cannot see the beauty in a performance because of the lack of gain to her own abilities would have difficulties to experience flow. If the financial broker likewise had to concentrate on what the

boss would think of the next decision and so on, it would be too hard to perform and make the right decisions when time is and would consequently result in a worse performance at work.

However, if a person is able to experience flow and enjoys it a lot, can it take too much part in life and put a shade upon the rest of it? For instance, several surgeons have been describing, how they are experiencing flow by working not just because of money, but actually for the addictive experience, where they have a power of saving life. Thus, they are able to work many hours in a row forgetting all about hunger, lack of sleep and how exhausted they really are (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Obviously it can become damaging for their health. As they feel so addictive to the activity that concerns for their own health become less important. They forget their personal lives, family at home and the balance between job and life is disappearing. The flow experience at work comes first in front of everything else. Thus, it can lead not just to physical exhaustion, but also to the social isolation. Consequently, this statement denies the argument that people experiencing flow are more sociable. Flow itself does not require other people. It is concentrated around one individual and focus on his inner state diverted to the activity. Yet, sociability can be the result of happiness, which could be the outcome of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Another example of negative outcome of flow could be found in sports. Whether it is pole dancing, free running, snowboarding or any other kind of sport, people just tend to put all their mental and physical energy into the activity they are doing. It is that one time of the day that there are not a million thoughts running through their mind. There is nothing to worry or think about other than the performing activity, namely doing what one loves. Because of the expenditure of mental and physical energy and, presumably, the unity of mind and body, the concentration needed to execute the stunt becomes channeled into a single pointedness. Concentration on performance leads to a narrowing of the field of stimuli that evolves into a single focus, absent of distracting or competing thoughts. In fact, it is possible that concentration can become so narrow that people do not feel pain during the performance (Seifert & Hedderson, 2010). A pole dancer can thus be injured while performing without even recognizing it and consequently, is able to continue with the performance. It can be dangerous that self-preservation is gone as it can possibly lead to dangerous injuries or even death to put it on the tip.

Moreover, it is widely known that too much of a good thing can be bad. Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerroui (2010) analysed burnout syndrome as a negative relation to the flow experience at work. Special condition at work creating flow experience more likely to happen may lead to working overtime. When an employee is constantly encouraged to improve his skills and set higher and higher goals, it might result in exhaustion, tiredness and chronic fatigue. A basic feeling like hunger sends the signal to our brain in order to make one stop the current activity as the body needs food to continue. When one is involved in a specific game of reaching a goal the person usually disconnects from reality and does not feel the signal of hunger. There is a thin line between obsession and normal way of doing a task. Furthermore, a person cannot always be successful in reaching goals. If the settled goal cannot be reached after a certain period of time it tend to lead to dissapointment and frustration(Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerroui , 2010).

On the other hand, Brycker (2011) argues that loss of self control is not always a damaging thing. In pathological cases, the loss of self-conscious control is evidently upsetting. But this does not entail that the same holds for all experiences. Loss of self-conscious has positive effects on the physiological, psychological, transpersonal, and behavioral level. One of the forms of losing self-conscious like meditation has proved effective in interventions for cardiovascular disease, chronic pain, anxiety, panic disorders and reduction of depressive symptoms. Concerning psychological health, it has been observed in the levels of happiness, self-actualization, stress-resistance, and self-esteem.

The main and desired outcomes of flow are happiness, constant development of skills, higher productivity and enjoyment of the activity. Still, there are several negative sides of flow experience like physical and mental exhaustion, stress, social isolation and body injuries. Too many efforts even for the good purpose can be damaging. Balance should be found in any activity, including creation of a flow experience. Positive flow experiences with a lot of good outcomes can become a negative and addictive side effect to the favorite experience.

### 3.5 Criticism of flow theory

Physical and mental exhaustion, stress, social isolation and body injuries seems the only negative aspects of flow theory discussed in the literature.

Flow experience makes a person become highly self-oriented. There are personal goals, personal feedback, personal skills and lastly deep focus and involvement. Basically, a person who experiences flow does not need other people to surround him. Social inclusion is needed for several reasons.

A philosopher Paul Ricoeur has described one of the reasons as follows:

*“Because someone is counting on me, I am accountable for my actions before another”. (Paul Ricoeur)*

The above-mentioned citation stresses the fact that people need other people to feel responsible for what they are doing. The others who are doing the same task or work are creating a benchmark for individuals. For a pole dancer living deep in her own world it is difficult to know whether she is good if she is not aware of the other dancers surrounding her. Seeing further than one's own working desk can be valuable and more effective than getting feedback from a manager. Seeing others mean that a person is aware of the exact situation constantly. Therefore, total involvement into the activity can have a doubtful benefit comparing with awareness of the situation. Moreover, the role of autonomy in flow experience acts in the same way towards social exclusion. Autonomy reduces accountability because of excluding the other people from the activity (Sennett, 2006).

Also, it should be taken into consideration that flow theory was originally written in 1990 by Csikszentmihalyi. More than twenty years passed and some desired outcomes of flow theory



may not be so valuable nowadays. For instance, flow increases loyalty for the activity, company or dancing school. Loyal students in the dancing school is undoubtedly desired outcome. Contrary, loyalty in the company can be seen in another perspective. Mastering one area is no longer the advantage in the modern organization. Employees are desired to be flexible, fast learners and open minded because normally they will get many different tasks. So, workers are not required to be good at one thing, contrary they should be capable of learning new tasks as the institutions themselves took on new kinds of work. After completing one project they have to become good in the new one depending on companies needs (Sennett, 2006). If an employee is experiencing flow at work, he is likely staying there for many years, because he feels happy and in comfort. According to the research done by Sennett (2006), managers in huge successful organizations were mentioning that they would not like to hire a person who worked in the same position for more than 4-5 years. Therefore, not to develop too much corporate loyalty is seen not as negative but as a positive. It shows that when business conditions change, employees can change with them(Sennett, 2006).

The other doubtful part of flow theory is its universality. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow experience as possible in all kind of activities if the activity can fulfill eight criterias. But is it logical to think that for instance blue color workers could experience flow? The person who is cleaning offices have all the conditions for flow. He has tasks which can be completed. The person is cleaning until it is clean. There are clear goals and standards which have to be completed. Specific number of offices have to be cleaned according to strict requirements. Strong concentration and involvement into the tasks are possible. The feedback is gotten from the supervisor and can be clearly seen itself. Sense of control over actions is easily achieved by doing cleaning tasks, which are not controlled by anybody else except the person who is doing that. And finally the sense of time can be lost in any kind of job or activity. However, it would be hard to believe that a person who is cleaning offices could be having a flow experience.

Another questionable thing is whether flow works on all types of personalities and across cultures equally? Csikszentmihalyi (1990) mentions several types of people who cannot experience flow: the ones who are concerned about the others opinion all the time and self-centered individuals. However, there is no research done regarding nationality features,

intraverts or extraverts personalities. There are some specific characteristics common just for particular nationality the same like personality, which can be helpful for flow to experience or could create additional barriers.

### 3.6 Flow in different research

The purpose of this section is provide an overview of how flow theory is used and discussed in research nowadays having in mind that the original theory is more than 20 years old. Additionally, the authors of this thesis sought to examine which areas flow theory is utilized the most and are there any links with the two chosen cases.

Klein, Rossin, Guo, & Ro (2010) did a research about how flow impacts learning outcomes. The scholars did the research based on surveys and came to the conclusion, that flow does not affect learning performance, but it affects students' perceived learning of the subject matter and their satisfaction. The conclusion could be related to both cases: pole dancers and financial dealers. Dancing students have to learn to control their bodies. Brokers are in the constant learning of new information required to know in their work. Positive acceptance of exercise and work is a positive and desired outcome of flow in the chosen cases.

Kuo & Ho (2010) did a research on individual differences and job performance in relation with flow experience. The findings in this study were that appropriate job design and flow experience had a positive effect for service quality, which turned into increasing customer satisfaction. Increased customer satisfaction can thus lead to higher income and lower churn-out rates, which will in the end increase income for firms in general terms. Consequently, it could be related to the conducted case studies of this thesis. Where implementing flow into the everyday life of pole dance instructors could increase customer satisfaction, as financial dealers are ought to attain a profit for their customers in order to make them satisfied. Even more interesting, flow could be implemented in the teaching of pole dancing. That means that in the process of learning pole dancing the students should attain flow.

However, flow experience can also result in peak performances. As Seifert & Hedderson (2010) wrote a study researching intrinsic motivation and flow in skateboarding. The results indicated

that there is a relationship between intrinsic motivation and flow. Conquering challenges required concentration and effort, and the resultant's success may culminate in a flow episode that was described as peak performance. The scholars state that flow is more often reported when one is doing his or her favorite thing and thus, argues that a link between intrinsic motivation and flow actually exists. Because of the fact that pole dancers and skateboarders are both doing hard physical exercises, they make up a comparable case. Therefore, it can be argued that the same peak performance can happen when one is exercising pole dance. Besides that, it is important to keep in mind that both body and mind has to be equally involved in order for a flow experience to happen. Consequently, the same link can be transferred to financial dealers. The important denominator between intrinsic motivation and flow is that one should use for instance curiosity and thus, do what is interesting and the mind will develop.

In terms of work factors such as the physical and psychological aspects are very important in order to achieve flow. Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerroui (2010) have been doing research on the link between job resources and flow at work. The results of the study confirmed the links between job resources and flow at work. One finding suggests that whether it is a pole dancer or a financial dealer that is at work, it is important to reduce feelings of exhaustion if the possibility of a flow experience should increase. Financial dealers have to be especially aware of this aspect as their job is very stressful.

There exist other reported experiences similar to flow. Prycker (2011) found that wu-wei is associated with peak performance, just as flow. Furthermore, it gives the actor a clarity of mind and has a positive impact on performances.

*Table 2 – Overview of the most recent research of flow (2010-2012)*

Scholars	Flow implication in the papers
(Klein, Rossin, Guo, & Ro, 2010)	Flow impact on learning outcomes
(Wang & Chen, 2010)	Flow experience and programing performance in game based learning.
(Kuo & Ho, 2010)	Individual differences and job performance in relation with flow experience.
(Seifert & Hedderson, 2010)	Intrinsic motivation and flow in skateboarding.
(Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerrouiti, 2010)	Job resources and flow at work.
(Brycker, 2011)	Relation between flow and wu-wei in the aspect of non conscious and control.

*Source: articles mentioned below*

As it is seen in Table 2, flow conception has been analyzed in different aspects. The link between flow and learning, as well as the impact of flow at work. Consequently, flow can be aplicable in several contexts and within different types of activities. The pole dancing and financial dealing cases could probably not differ more. However, as in the above-mentioned paragraph there are a lot of similarities as well. Furthermore, it shows that even though, flow has firstly been associated with creative, physical activities like pole dance or skateboarding it can also be analyzed upon in activities such as financial dealing and learning.

### 3.7 Finding flow in clasical motivation theories

This paper has already discussed the role of flow theory in up-to-date litterature. The authors of this paper were trying to explore the most common areas of where flow theory has been applied during past two years. Now taking into the account already well known clasical motivation theories. Does it support or contadict with M. Csikszentmihalyi's findings?

#### 3.7.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's (1954, 1968) *Hierarchy of needs Theory* is the most widely known theory that relates individuals' needs to motivation. According to the theory people have certain needs that stems

from basic needs as food and shelter to more complicated needs like self fulfilment. The needs become more and more complicated by every step one takes toward the summit of the pyramid (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009). However, flow theory contradicts with the main part of Maslow's theory.

*Figure 9 – Maslow's Hierarchy of needs*



Source: (Godesky, 2006)

Maslow distinguishes between two basic categories of needs: deficiency needs (physiological, safety, belongingness) and growth needs (esteem and ego, self-actualization). According to the theory a person has to fulfill the physiological needs first such as food and sleep (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009). Contrarily, the theory of flow stresses that a person is so intrinsically motivated and involved into the activity that they even forget about the basic needs. He or she can lose the track of time and work for many hours without food and rest. The same can be said about acceptance by others, friendship and love. People in a flow state forget about all the concerns one has about oneself and others.

On the other hand, there can be found some similarities between the two theories. The feeling of freedom is one of the deficiency needs in Maslow's theory. While experiencing flow the person has to be free to control the movements or the tasks he is performing. Turning to the growth needs Maslow excludes the development of full potential as an individual. It can be related to

one of the main element of flow. Within the flow theory challenges and skills have to be balanced. However, during the activity and the period of time skills are improving and the primary task does not seem challenging enough. As a result, a person improves skills and performs more challenging tasks. It leads to the constant development of an individual.

### 3.7.2 Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not the only motivational theory that is related to flow. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene theory is based on two questions, namely the description of when a person feels extremely good about the job he is doing and when he is feeling exceptionally bad. Satisfying experiences, called "motivators" covers intrinsic motivation factors, like recognition, achievement, responsibility, growth and work in itself. As dissatisfying experiences, called "hygiene" includes extrinsic side of motivation, like salary, coworkers relations or company policies (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009). Consequently, the "motivators" can be seen as closely related to flow theory.

*Achievement* can be compared with the positive feedback a person gets during a flow experience. A pole dancer's achievement is a well-completed performance and for financial dealer it is a successful deal, which increases profit (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

*Growth* is the same personality development which was discussed in the comparison with Maslow's theory. During flow experience skills are constantly developing and growing just as the self (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

*Work itself* is a strong motivation factor in Herzberg's theory. The same is the basics of the flow theory that when a financial dealer is performing at work he is extremely interested and motivated by the activity itself, hence the intrinsic motivation is leading him (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

Herzberg emphasized that eliminating "hygiene" factors does not result in a state of satisfaction. This desired state can be reached only by using intrinsic "motivators". Equally, the theory of flow stresses that the intrinsic side leads to enjoyment (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

### 3.7.3 McClelland's Learned Needs Theory

This theory was developed by McClelland (1961-1971). It explains how individuals acquire certain needs from the culture of a society by learning from the experienced events in the past. There exist exclusively four needs that people may learn (need for achievement, need for power, need for affiliation and need for autonomy) (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

Two of the four needs concede the flow theory in the way that the need for achievement refers to a strong desire for finding solutions and performing tasks, which is similar in the optimal experience as an individual is aiming for achievement in the next performance. Furthermore, in McClelland's there is a tendency to set difficult *goals*, a strong desire for *feedback* and preoccupation for *task accomplishment*. Again it is similar to the theory of flow. The need for power refers to the *control of environment*. Three of eight components that describe the flow experience matches McClelland's learned needs theory main points. The tasks given have to have clear goals, provide immediate feedback and the experience occurs when a person is doing a task that is possible to complete. Similarly, as mentioned before it has to be freedom and full control of actions.

### 3.7.4 Self Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT is another approach concerning human motivation. It highlights the importance of resources for *personality development* and behavioral self-regulation. Furthermore, it covers people's growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are basis for their self-motivation and personality integration. The SDT is an approach to understand intrinsic motivation, the definition of intrinsic motivation is given by the pleasure and inherent satisfaction that stems from a specific performance. There can be defined three basic needs for: *competence*, relatedness and *autonomy*. Consequently, it fosters constructive social development and personal *well-being* (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

The fact that SDT can be called a general approach to understand intrinsic motivation, acknowledge resemblance to flow theory. This paper has already defined the facts justifying flow theory as an intrinsic motivation theory in the chapter above. Moreover, one of the main elements of SDT is personality development (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009). Likewise,

constantly improvement of skills and overall personality development is the result of flow experience.

Two of three basic needs influence motivation, mentioned in the SDT are part of flow theory: competence and autonomy. A person experiencing flow has to be skilled and competent in the activity he or she is performing. Flow happens after long time working or practicing in a particular area. Therefore, it is most possible to experience flow in the activity the person is good at. Autonomy is another element that is essential in order to experience flow. The person has to be free to control the activity he is doing, and control movements, tasks and the way of acting (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Both theories- SDT and flow as a determinate results define personal well-being and enjoyment. SDT theory, McClelland's learned needs theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene theory are not the only motivational theories that relate to flow. The Goal Setting Theory by Locke & Latham (1984, 1990) is another important theory matching the optimal experience on several points which will be presented in as the last mentioned theory within this chapter.

### **3.7.5 Viktor Frankl**

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) was Austrian psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor and existential philosopher. His experiences as a social scientist and sufferer allowed him to fuse the personal and the scholarly in a way that might not have been possible for other psychiatrists. In the Camps, Frankl recognized that his exceptional circumstance would allow him to explore psychological and philosophical assumptions about the human response to unavoidable suffering (Esping, 2010).

Professor was arguing that modern-day stress, frustration and mental illness are inevitable when one has no meaning and purpose in life. The idea led to a discovery when he was a victim of, and witness to, the incredible brutality in Hitler's camp. Frankl identified one remarkable human trait that could predict, with all facing the same dire circumstance, who among his fellow prisoners would succumb and who would triumph and survive. Observation and reasoning



brought him to an inescapable conclusion that even in the most absurd and painful situation, human life has meaning. One's triumph over suffering when one finds meaning in suffering. Search for the meaning of life, and happiness will follow after the discovery of meaning. The finding was made also after a research in suicidal cases. According to Frankl's theory, suicide is a failure to make sense of life. Of the 35,000 suicides annually in the United States, significantly more occur on Mondays, while much fewer happen on holidays. The suicide rate spikes after age 65, but it drops among those who have friends; and it drops even more among those with many friends. These findings hint at the power of the spiritual element in human life, its potential to kill or to heal. It can lift people out of self-absorption to help transcend and to reach out (Tellis-Nayak, 2011).

Viktor Frankl stated that people can survive without firstly fulfilling their basic needs if they have the higher purpose and meaning. Therefore, the findings contradict Maslow's basic human needs pyramid (where in order to seek higher goals like self-fulfillment human has to fulfill their basic needs) and acknowledge flow theory (denying the preference of basic needs against involvement in the enjoyable activity).

### 3.7.6 Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory asserts that performance is regulated directly by the conscious *goals* that individuals are trying to reach in order to complete a task. Many studies showed that specific, difficult goals lead to better performance more, than specific easy goals. In order to make goals lead to better performance, the performing person has to be committed. People should feel that it is *possible to reach the goal*. Goal setting is more effective, and usually only effective, when there is a *feedback* on the performance (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2009).

In comparison, one of the major components of flow is that a task has to have clear goals. Goal setting theory hereby explains a huge part of flow theory. The fact that goals have to be difficult rather than easy refers to the balance between skills and challenges in flow theory (figure 8). Together with growing skills there have to be higher challenges, otherwise a person will be bored and not motivated enough. On the other hand, it has to be possible to reach the goal as both theories agree upon. Too high goals which are not matching skills lead to demotivation and a

feeling that it is impossible to achieve one's goal. Therefore, goal setting and flow theory both accept that goals have to be high, but perfectly match one's skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Goal setting theory stresses the fact that the process can only be effective when there is feedback on the performance carried out. As already mentioned, feedback is also one of the eight major components of flow. A pole dancer needs to know if she is performing the task well and if she is not- she needs to know exactly what has been done wrong. The same applies for brokers. Knowing how the task should be performed and how one is performing leads to improvement until perfect accomplishment.

Goal setting and flow theories were defined around the same time in the 90's. Both theories are basically describing the way how to achieve the best performance and be happy at the same time. So what is the main difference between the theories?

Goal setting theory states that performance is regulated directly by goals and feedback. Considering flow theory, goals and feedback are just two of eight required items in order to achieve flow. Therefore, flow theory is taking into account broad area within motivation theory while goal setting theory is concentrated on goals and feedback as the main point of achieving desired results. Goal setting theory is going more into the depth of goals features, ways of feedback and different outcomes depending on many variables. Contrary flow theory is not as specific, because goals and feedback are just a minor part in the concept.

Goal setting theory is like a comparison of present and desirable future situation (Griffith & Graham, 2004). There is not drawn much attention to the process in between. Contrary, flow theory mainly is focusing on the process of performance while achieving goals. The process consists of totally concentration, involvement, interest, happiness and enjoyment. All mentioned parts of flow experience lead to constant improvement, growing of skills and reaching higher goals. While goal setting theory states that it organizes experience, direct action, and promote productive living by moving individuals from weakness to security and well-being(Griffith & Graham, 2004).

Consequently, the same purpose of two theories can be found- satisfaction and increased performance, also as similar negative outcomes. Circumstances after setting the right goals lead to higher performance. Flow experience creates the process of constant learning and raising goals which leads to better performance. Moreover, goal attainment provides satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, which enhance the meaning and purpose of life. On the other hand, when they are unrealistic, unattainable or out of balance, people experience frustration and anxiety (Griffith & Graham, 2004). Equally flow experience makes person more cheerful, happier, friendly and strong (Brycker, 2011). When there is a negative side as well: body injuries, stress, physical and mental exhaustion.

Flow and goal setting theories can lead to negative and damaging outcomes. Unwanted consequences of flow experience are described under the *Positive and Negative sides of flow* part. Basically, it can be explained by too high involvement in to the activity and ignorance of physical or mental warnings. Similar situation can be found in goal setting theory. Too high standards for itself and willingness to do more can lead to perfectionism. Perfectionism from positive can become negative. Perfectionists set high, even unrealistic goals and they evaluate their performance relative to those goals. This would raised the question as to why individuals set such high, even unrealistic goals and why they may assess their achievements as failures or as less than perfect (Leonard & Harvey, 2008). The desire of perfect and thinking that it is not perfect enough cause negative emotional states which transforms to negative behavior. Negative emotional states can be: depression, anxiety, neuroticism, job stress and psychosomatic disorders. Accordingly it raises procrastination, increased conflict, chemical use, eating disorders, coronary heart disease, chronic pain and even suicide (Leonard & Harvey, 2008). The different reaction to the same circumstances of two theories in both cases is explained by different personalities. High self-esteem individuals differ from their low self-esteem counterparts in the way they think, feel and behave. Self-esteem is one of the most important variables in flow and goal setting theories while analyzing different outcomes.

Goal setting theory can be described as a part of flow theory. But despite the fact that goal setting theory covers just narrow part of flow theory, it analyzes goals and feedback very specific and detailed. For instance, it takes into account the link between many types of personalities and

perception of goals, same as many different types of feedback. So there can be made many different combinations and variations between personality type and the way of feedback. When flow theory does not discuss different types of feedback and goals. It is more like a fact that flow experience cannot occur without having goals and feedback in general. Therefore, it can be said that goal setting and flow theories can be combined and used together in order to make it work more effective. Theories have similarities, but cannot replace each other. It can be called compatible theories.

### 3.8 Flow at work

In general people spend the majority of their lives at the job. As mentioned before flow is one of the sources of happiness and it is therefore extremely important to create the conditions for flow in the daily activity. As flow is related to happiness it might be logical to think that a flow experience is more likely to occur during leisure time when people are spending their time as they wish. Even though the majority of people are looking forward to the weekend so they can enjoy themselves as the working week is over, flow experience have actually been reported to occur more frequently at work than during leisure time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Hence, work fulfills flow characteristics more than leisure. Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerrouiti (2010) define work-related flow experience as a short-term peak that is characterized by absorption, work enjoyment, and intrinsic work motivation. The absorption part refers to a state of total concentration, as when the shares are dropping and the financial dealer has to be totally focused on his work. The work enjoyment refers to a positive judgment of the quality of one's working life. Furthermore, the intrinsic work motivation then indicates one's desire to perform a certain work activity with the aim of experiencing the pleasure. Pole dancers might have to get over a hurdle. As the experiencing of pleasure is on the other side of the hurdle it simple motivates the pole dancer to perform.

Kuo & Ho (2010) in their paper suggest that managers should facilitate employees' flow experience at work and put greater effort to designing jobs that provide autonomy and professional development. According to Csikszentmihalyi it is, in theory, possible to create flow in any job if it follows eight conditions. For instance the financial dealer has to have a strong concentration, a chance of completing the task and clear goals just to mention some. Moreover,

Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerrouiti (2010) claim in their article that the relationship between flow component of work enjoyment and job satisfaction was found to be relatively strong and positive. However, those who have the power to influence the nature of a given job, have their biggest concerns about how to increase productivity, keep safety and security. This is regrettable, because if employees would enjoy their jobs they could benefit personally, but it would also increase efficiency and seek to increase all the other goals of the company (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). None of the companies want to have unhappy, desperate, and bored or apathy employees. Even though, they work exactly according to the rules and requirements their work less likely could lead to fresh ideas, if they are not happy about what they are doing. It is desired to have passionate workers, who do not count every minute of work and cannot wait until the end of day. If a pole dance instructor was counting every minute of every session it would without a doubt affect the members. Those who do their job with love and commitment can create innovations and move the company to a higher level. Accordingly, to create flow at work is valuable for the employer, because of increased result in organization functioning and for employees, because of intrinsic happiness while doing everyday job. Not only would increased happiness lead to better service, but it should also decrease employees number of sick days (Kuo & Ho, 2010).

To improve the quality of life through work, two complementary strategies are necessary. On the one hand jobs should be redesigned so that they resemble as closely as possible flow activities and fulfill eight flow characteristics. But it will also be necessary to help people develop autotelic personalities, by training them to recognize opportunities for actions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Neither one of these strategies could work if the person does not want it to work. The personal view is extremely important. There can be perfect conditions at work, but if the employee is not using them, it will not work in the desired way. A financial broker has to be open for new opportunities in order to experience flow or the job should be redesigned in such a way that it fulfills the eight main components of flow.

Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerrouiti (2010) in their research emphasises the link between flow at work and the positive outcomes reaching job related goals. The scholars add that the job resources are crucial for the employee's motivation and flow experience. Job resources

are the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that helps the person to deal with job demands, increased learning, feel comfortable and are useful in achieving work-related goals. This process is as a cycle because employees who gain more job resources will also attain a higher level of work-related flow. As a result flow may also promote job resources. This may occur through social activity in the workplace or attainment of work-related goals. So if there is a good atmosphere at work, employees will work more effective, become happier and improve overall working environment (Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerroui, 2010).

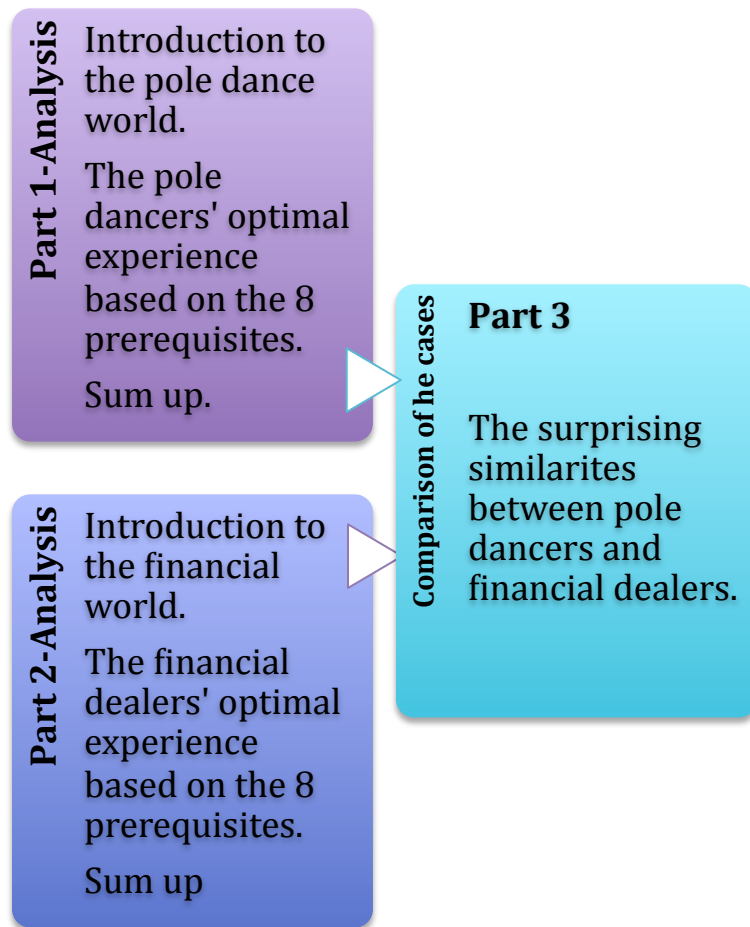
To sum up, one's job is a huge part of life, where people are most likely to feel flow experience and happiness. Knowing that both employers and employees should concentrate on improvements. Not all the efforts should be diverted into leisure. Flow experience at work leads to growing of the self and passive entertainment does not lead to anywhere (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

*"The future will belong not only to the educated man, but to the man who is educated to use his leisure wisely" (C. K. Brightbill).*

## 4.0 Analysis of empirical findings

The following chapter will be structured as illustrated in the figure below:

*Figure 10 –Roadmap of this thesis empirical findings*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

Thus, the following section will be dedicated to a presentation of pole dance and an analysis of the empirical findings based upon the eight conditions of flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

It will be structured as follows and is concerned with part 1 in the figure 10:

*Figure 11 – Roadmap of empirical findings in the pole dancing world*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

#### 4.1 What is a pole dancer?

Pole dancing is a sport that combines dance, flexibility and gymnastics by utilizing the pole as a workout tool. Sports pole dance requires physical strength and leaves room for the individual's creativity and willingness to express oneself through the acrobatic dance. (Paludan, 2011).

Pole dance is considered to have originated in Vancouver during the 1970s and 1980s. During the past five years it has begun to be recognized as a sport and acrobatic way of exercising and not as a sexually oriented activity (Paludan, 2011; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009).

Pole dancing is becoming more and more popular in Europe during the recent years (Whitehead & Kirz, 2009). In fact, it is becoming such an acknowledged sport that it is planned to be included in the Olympic Games 2016 (Moye, 2012).

Pole dance is considered a novel, fun and creative way to workout. Going to the gym can for some people be considered as boring. On the contrary, pole dance offers a variety of moves and tricks. It must be considered as tough training as it requires a lot of physical strength to carry one's own body weight in the so-called spins and positions. Thus, high endurance, coordination and flexibility are required as one's skills enhance.

It differs from individual to individual how much training and efforts it takes in order to learn the complicated twists, turns, dips, climbs and slides down the metal pole. Carrying out a



performance the pole dancer does the best to make everything look as indiscrete as possible. Different athletes express their own unique style by combining the pole dancing with tricks from their own personal background such as gymnastics, salsa movements and modern dance.



Photo: Oona Kivelä  
Current winner of Pole Art and International Pole Championships 2012 (International Pole Dance Fitness Association)

Pole dance and fitness is thus one of the newest forms of exercising where the pole is used as the tool for doing the daily workout. One of the first pole dancing school in Denmark started up back in 2008 and during the last couple of years several pole dancing schools have been founded despite the financial crisis. However, some has also been forced to close because of the lack of income. There exist around 7 pole dance schools in Copenhagen at the moment (Ellemand, 2009). Consequently, it seems as if the sport is about to boom. As mentioned before, the sport is no longer only considered as a sexually oriented dance, but as a whole new group of athletes. The question that one might ask oneself is; why? Due to observations of hundreds of guests (hens' parties) or students, the art of pole dancing has a denominator. Most of them say that it is so much fun and even laugh and talk to each other during the sessions.

Pole dancing is a sport where the contestant is able to learn and pick up really fast: a new move, a new trick and so on. More combinations and tricks, requires better skills and more strength. It gives the pole dancer an endless range of creative skills to put into progress. How to go from one trick to another? How to make it look easy? How to gain more strength? It is such a creative sport and only the sky is the limit for new combinations. Furthermore, the contestants or students are able to express themselves through this art and thus, it provides the students with incentives to perform better in order to express themselves in the way that they want.

Pole dancing requires a lot of sacrifices. It is a sport that leaves the student with bruises, blisters and callous skin on hands and maybe even on the wrists. The student has to be willing to learn and have intrinsic motivation to do it. If the student is driven by extrinsic motivation it will be really difficult to learn when the pain is setting in.

Why does someone wish to do a sport that requires a lot of pain and bruises? There are various ways to workout avoiding this. However, the fun of the sport seems to make it all worth it.

#### **4.2 Pole dancers' optimal experiences**

Sport is designed to make people achieve flow according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Thus, in theory pole dancers should easily achieve the optimal experience if the sport is structured with regards to the flow components. Consequently, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) claims there are at least five major components as mentioned in the theoretical part; an overall goal, measuring of the process of reaching the goal, maintaining strong concentration, development of skills and keep raising the stakes. Even though, sport is designed to achieve flow in theory this thesis will seek to examine if it is in real life cases.

However, Csikszentmihalyi sets up a framework consisting of eight components (see section 3.1). The following section will thus be dedicated to (i) an analysis of the pole dancers' experience with flow based upon the conducted interviews (ii) as well as a discussion of the positive and negative outcomes of flow experiences. Consequently, the empirical findings will be linked to

the theoretical framework. The foundation of this analysis is based upon the eight flow prerequisites (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and is structured as seen in figure 11 in section 4.0.

### **Completion of the given task**

One of the first conditions that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) mentions for achieving flow is that the person involved in an activity needs to be able to complete the task of the activity. The challenge presented to the performer thus needs to match the pole dancer's skill, which is consequently the basis of the flow theory as shown in figure 8.

Respondent A, who had tried pole dancing back in 2008, stated the following about her very first time on the pole: *"I thought to myself that I would never start"*. When digging in a little deeper she revealed that her first experience with the pole had been a little humiliating. One of the girls who joined the session was really good even though it was for newbies. *"[...]I thought it was way too difficult. [...] and a lot of them were really good [...] and then we could not do a single thing right"* she explicates. She never signed up for a new pole dancing class at that studio.

Whenever competition becomes the end in itself it seems to de-motivate people. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) the individual who gets a given challenge has to have a fair chance of completing the task otherwise the enjoyment will disappear. In this case the competition of beating the opponent seems to have overtaken the entire session and thus, removed all the possible enjoyment from the workout.

Furthermore, the challenge was too high and did not match respondent A's skills. However, later on when the element of the competition was not present respondent A suddenly felt a lot of enjoyment by doing the same activity that she had tried once before. Respondent A explicates about her first time in HoP: *"[...] we were having a lot of fun because we were all at the same level"*. She continues later on in the interview: *"I think I was more capable than the first time"*. She ended up with a subscription for HoP after having a feeling that the challenge presented to her was actually met by her skills. In order for flow to happen the individual needs to be intrinsically motivated. The moment the motivation goes from intrinsic to extrinsic it seems to keep the person from being fully absorbed in the activity.

Furthermore, several observations of pole dance newbies have also shown that when the going gets too tough they quit. Too many frustrations and not a single trick that succeeds can leave them rather unhappy. Flow-frustration has been overlooked in the most popular literature about the positive psychology. The road to achieve optimal experience can thus be frustrating, but when it happens it is where the greatest form of satisfaction happens (Hein, 2009).

Even though some quit, others take up the challenge either way because they find the experience rewarding enough in itself. *“I know I’m really bad at this, but it’s just so much fun”* stated by a pole dance newbie. She definitely had a chance of completing the tasks. However she did not succeed the first or second time.

Respondent C explicates that she does not think the goals are unrealistic, however she finds that the level is somewhat different from time to time. She elaborates: *“If the entire class is focusing on the crucifix then I might find it a bit boring”*. The crucifix is a basic level position and thus she stresses the importance of the intersection between challenges and skills.

On the contrary, respondent B rather often finds the goals too unrealistic. *“Sometimes they are rather difficult”*. However, her commitment is what makes her continuing despite the frustrations she feels when she is not capable of doing a new trick.

### **Clear Goals**

It is very important that a given task consists of clear goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Otherwise, it can restrain the pole dancer from experiencing flow. Consequently, the pole dance students need to know what they have to do. If they just see a trick and have no clue how to carry it out, it will not only keep them from the optimal experience because the goal is too high and unclear, but it can also become very dangerous.

If the instructor is not able to explain a spin or trick into detail so that the student understands it well enough the goal also becomes vague. Thus, the performance becomes worse and flow-

frustration (Hein, 2009) may occur instead because it is impossible to carry out a task for the student if she does not know how to do it.

On the contrary, every new trick has a new goal and every figure can contain different sub-goals such as stretching the foot or keeping a squared hip. This is why sports, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), are designed to achieve flow experiences as they are structured with sub-goals and goals. However, respondent B mentions in the interview that the running and pole dancing is not anything like each other. *“I used to run a lot before, but it is not the same because it is like- now I can run one minute faster- kind of thing. It doesn’t make such a big difference. [In pole dancing], suddenly I’m able to do something that I was not used to be capable of”*.

The respondent’s enhanced exercise of control does not mean much in running and actually seems to lead to boredom even though the skills get improved. However, it seems as it makes a big difference when performing sports pole dance. The reason might be that the goals are set too low when the respondent is running.

Respondent C mentions that she has her own goals during a session that are typically to succeed in doing a new trick or spin. Even though the pole dance instructor provides sub goals during the session, respondent C aims for the goal itself. However, the sub goals can be seen differently. They can either be doing part of a trick or as the trick itself.

Whenever a student sees a new figure they tend to work even harder in order to achieve the current goal so that they’ll have enough strength or flexibility to achieve the other. Consequently, the pole dancing provides a perfect foundation for a structured order and therefore provides a great foundation of achieving flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Furthermore, the fact that the goals have to be raised all the time keeps pushing one to the limit both physically, but also mentally. Thus, the pole dancer keeps stretching her skills as to enter the optimal experience by performing and rehearsing more and more advanced and complicated tricks. As a pole dancer is quite often found with her head hanging down when doing tricks on the pole it will become more and more dangerous. However, observations also show that it is

often the tricks that does not require as much attention, as the pole dance knows the trick so well, that are actually the most dangerous. Here the pole dancer loses focus and is more likely to do a mistake.

However, as the paradox of being in control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) seems to occur as flow increases confidence, which might lead to arrogance/ over confidence resulting in mistakes as the pole dancer might scamp on the tricks as it is seems easy. The following sections will explicate on this.

### *Immediate feedback*

An activity needs to provide immediate feedback to the individual in order for her to keep developing and enhancing her skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and the same goes for the pole dancer. Thus, the feedback itself provides a direction as it sets up goals. One of the clear goals a pole dancer has- is not to fall down. He or she will for every second get immediate feedback. Thus, the pole dance student knows what is right and wrong immediately when carrying out the task and either the student do the same trick or she does not.

However, some things are not that simple and the students need to get a sense of direction. They need to be taught how to hold on to the pole, how to make it look easy, to stretch the wrist in their spins and tricks. Consequently, they should get immediate feedback from their instructors and from the experience itself.

Respondent C was asked how she knows if a trick has succeeded. She believes that it is achieved through the feedback she receives from instructors and other pole dancers.

Consequently, a student can keep doing a spin with a bended wrist instead of stretching it and can thus immediately be provided with feedback.

The feedback is immediate in pole dance; either one does it right or wrong, which is explicated by respondent B's statement: "[...] but, ehm, I often surprise myself by being able to do something that I did not expect I could!" After being capable of a new pole dance trick the

respondent furthermore elaborates on the feeling she experiences afterwards: *“Yeah, totally good feeling. I’m just biking home happy!”*

This statement concedes with Csikszentmihalyi theory that happiness comes after a flow experience. As the respondent claims to have had, backed up by the eight conditions, flow experiences it seems rather implicit, according to the theory, that the happiness feeling afterwards is a result of the optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

### ***Effortless Involvement***

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) the optimal experience furthermore consists of one’s way to act with a deep but effortless involvement that removes the focus away from the worries and frustrations of everyday life. It is important to bear in mind that even though the experience appears to be effortless, it requires mentally and physically strength (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Pole dance students have stated that they love to come to the pole dance studio because they happen to forget about their everyday life. The focus of their training makes them forget about the world around them and they are captivated in their workout. The accomplishment of a new exciting trick becomes their goal and makes them focus so much that they forget about their exam that awaits tomorrow or the sick aunt at the hospital. Respondent B states about her experience during pole dance sessions: *“[...] I forget [...] that I’ve been having a fight with my boyfriend[...].”* ‘

Furthermore, respondent B mentions that she is sometimes surprised by herself and her abilities as she enters a trick that she thought she could not do. Thus, she experiences effortless involvement even though it takes a lot of strength to perform the trick.

After respondent A had had her first pole dance workout she stated that: *“I think I was thinking a lot about how clumsy I was and how bad I was that I couldn’t even spin around as the others”*. The statement shows how her mind was just spinning and keeping her from experiencing flow as the deep involvement cannot occur. The result from this respondent’s experience was that she never came back to the pole dance studio again. She was prevented from experiencing flow and

pole dance even though she reports to have entered the flow state at a later point and is thus capable of it.

### *Sense of Control*

These are not the only prerequisites that are used to describe flow. Another important part of flow is characterized by when the individual exercise a sense of control over her actions.(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Pole dance definitely requires body control. The better the pole dancer becomes the more control they acquire and vice versa. Thus, their skills improve and the enjoyment of new spins and tricks makes the pole dancer repeat it over and over again. However, being afraid of doing a new trick might be caused by the sense of lacking body control. Respondent B states about her experience that when she does is scared it is because she lacks the feeling of control. She almost crashed once where she was so focused and felt capable of doing the trick that she had not thought about the possibility to fall down.

The paradox of control is important to bear in mind for the performer. Even though it seems safe and controllable unforeseen things can happen. The technique needs to be there before taking the trick one step further and performing it directly on the pole with the head down. As the self grows together with the feeling of body control it leaves the pole dancer less scared and with a feeling of being more capable (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Also the empirical findings point towards this paradox of being in control. Respondent B mentions that she made a mistake from a shift from outside leg hang to inside leg hang, which is quite a dangerous move. However, with no fear of falling down she decides to go for the down resulting in a crash. Respondent B usually achieves the optimal experience. Thus, it does not seem as if flow minimizes mistakes even though focus is supposed to be at its highest. Contrary, it rather leads to the paradox of control, which can be dangerous if the pole dancer feels too capable.



### **Strong Concentration**

In order to do a new trick strong concentration is required. When the pole dancer is strongly concentrated leaving anything else out it optimal experience can occur. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) this prerequisite is one of the most frequently mentioned conditions that happen when people have experienced flow. Usually people tend to leave the mind wander whenever something needs focus. Sitting in a classroom looking out the window for instance instead of listening to the professor is just one example of many.

However, when an individual enters the flow state concentration is fully focused on the task at hand leaving no room for the mind to wander (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). One of the respondents stated that: “[...] *actually I’m really focused and forget pretty much everything around me*”. Sometimes it looks like the students are in some kind of transcendence only focusing on that new trick.

Respondent A and C explicated that their concentration was between 7 and 8 on a scale where 1 was not focused at all and 10 “so focus that everything else was left out”. Respondent B was the only one who was lying in the high end on the scale. She describes her focus as a factor 9 on the scale.

Peculiarly enough respondent B is also the only of the respondent who attends classes almost every day. Helle Hein (2009) states about Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs that more wants more, which might be in correlation with the level of focus. The empirical work point towards the possibility that a higher level of flow i.e. a higher level of focus seem to cause the addictiveness of flow.

Respondent A stated that during her first pole dance session she could not do a single thing right. Furthermore, she thought that the level was way too high and therefore she could not keep up. As she did not sign up for a membership it seems, as she never achieved flow. The happiness experience did not occur afterwards either. The lack of skills could seem to keep her from getting

wholly immersed in the activity that she was doing. Thus, flow will be unlikely to happen (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) findings flow experiences can relieve people from pain or hunger. As the concentration is strong, the pole dancer thus forgets about hunger. While respondent B is in the state of flow, she simply forgets that she is hungry. "[...] *I have actually wondered how I sometimes come to training and then I have completely forgotten that I'm hungry*". Because her concentration was so high during the sessions she tends to forget her most basic needs as hunger or tiredness.

As the pole dancers can skip a meal now and then since their focus become absorbed by the pole dancing itself they need to focus on balancing it. If the fundamental needs for living are not fulfilled it will drain the body in the long term. The same goes for injuries. If the pole dancer becomes injured during a performance it can be dangerous if she keeps on going depending on the seriousness of the injury or course. Furthermore, it gives her incentive to workout despite an injury that has not been given enough time. Thereby, the time of recovery can be prolonged substantially. In addition to that the pole dancer might never get back on track, as one is usually not allowed to workout injured.

### *The concern of the self*

As strong concentration leaves the mind rather empty concerns for the self disappears yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience has passed. "*When all a person's skills are needed to cope with the challenges of a situation, that person's attention is completely absorbed by the activity*" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Several of the respondents have experienced that thoughts and stress of the everyday life was left behind during workout. The empirical work revealed that one of the respondents mentioned that she even forgets about hunger while she is pole dancing. One of the most basic needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the psychological need, which refers to food and sleep. As opposed to Maslow's pyramid, the empirical findings shows that the basic needs come to the surface such as hunger and sleep after having a flow experience.

In addition respondent C explicates that she does not really think during pole dance session. *“That is a good question! I think that I want to succeed. I don’t think that I’m thinking of anything in particular”*. In this state she has no concern for herself, but on focus on the activity she is doing. She explicates that she during the sessions are “within herself”.

Due to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theory of flow and the empirical findings the optimal experience seem to be so gratifying that people are willing to achieve it over and over again – even though the activity might be difficult or dangerous. Respondent B explicates that she once almost crashed from a certain shift from on leg hang to another. Because she was so confident that she could do it that she forgot to be fully focused. Thus, it seems as flow makes people confident because of the personal development it can also make them too confident which easily makes people do mistakes.

Furthermore, Koch, who was one of the pioneers within the intrinsic motivation theory, suggested that a person can be so fully absorbed in an activity that primary drives such as hunger and fatigue is able to be suppressed (Deci, 1975). Enjoyment is in focus while pole dancing and nothing else. Not hunger or tiredness, but just the pole dancing itself.

In flow a person has to constantly improve her skills and is thus challenged to do her best. For that to happen the experience needs to have a loss of the self, which actually reflects on the depth of the experience. If concentration can be so focused that one forgets oneself the individual has done her best. Consequently, as skills have met the challenge presented the self grows larger after the flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

This is shown in respondent B’s answer that is in consent with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) statement regarding how the self emerges stronger after a flow experience. *“I haven’t really seen my friends [...] maybe because I have been prioritizing this. [...] but I just didn’t feel the need to sit down and drink coffee with my friends.”*

The need for seeing friends all the time has decreased as the respondent is feeling more confident and has “enough” in her own company. However, isolation is the backside of the increased self-esteem in this case. Everything needs to be balanced. The respondents acknowledge that their self-esteem has grown when they were asked directly. One of them explicate that she was not as afraid anymore of doing more and more dangerous moves. She dares to do tricks instead of being scared.

As it seems that a flow experience leaves the self to grow afterward, as the person's skills cope the challenges she meets, it is necessary keep in mind that it is only when the experience has been going well. If a mistake occurs because the challenge exceeds the individual's skills, the happening will lead to anxiety as shown in figure 8. If the skills exceed the challenge it can lead to boredom.

Due to hundreds of observations in the pole dance studio the girls who succeed in a new trick, do it over and over again because it's possible. The feeling of happiness of having acquired a new skill seems to rush over them and they have to do it over a couple of times.

### *The sense of time*

Another condition that is often reported when people are describing the optimal experience is that the senses of time changes. Hours feels like minutes and minutes can feel like hours. This is one of the conditions that several people have reported about their flow experience. Focus and concentration is so high that time just passes by as an uninteresting factor. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

*“When all a person's skills are needed to cope with the challenges of a situation, that person's attention is completely absorbed by the activity”* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) thus, leaving out the track of time.

As pole dancing requires new skills all the time and as it is a dangerous sport as well focus and concentration needs to be high. If there is no immediate feedback the pole dance can risk falling from the pole. Is the hand where it should be? Is the foot right? Can I hang like this? This

constant flow of feedback and high concentration leaves no space for the mind to wander and think about factors that seems unimportant.

Respondent B describes her attention while pole dancing as if she gets completely absorbed by what she is doing: “[...] *actually I’m really focused and forget pretty much everything around me*”. She elaborates: “*I often think that the sessions pass by really fast – I forget track of time. Sometimes I feel that I have only been here for ten minutes and then an hour has passed [...]*”. This statement illustrates perfectly how a person can leave everything out and be so fully absorbed in an activity that time does not even matter and passes by as an unimportant factor.

### 4.3 The positive and negative side of flow

This section will be dedicated to an analysis of the pros and cons of flow based upon the empirical research.

#### 4.3.1 Positive outcomes

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states that happiness follows the optimal experience. He argues that it is not during the activity itself, but a feeling that comes afterward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to the empirical findings pole dance students leave the studio happy whenever they succeeded. Respondent C states: “*One gets all high [...] and feels like everything is possible*”. The statement is rather similar to the two other respondents. Furthermore, respondent B often gets frustrated when she is not able to do a new trick that she would like to do. She explicates that she uses the frustration in a constructive way. Thus, she keeps trying until she succeeds. Respondent B’s way of acting shows her great commitment. She is willing to make sacrifices as pain is an inevitably part of pole dance and also very characteristic for flow (Hein, 2009).

The way to achieving flow can thus be very frustrating. However, it is also here where one is most satisfied (Hein, 2009). Respondent C also mentions that she sometimes rehearse a trick over and over again as she wants to succeed and gets a rush when she finally achieves it. According to respondent B she could not hang on to the pole and do spins when she starting, which was extremely frustrating. She mentions that: “*I left the studio with the feeling of wanting*

*to kick a pole on the way out as I was pretty frustrated.”* When the respondents were asked why they continued pole dancing despite their frustrations their answer were similar. They did it because they think it is fun to pole dance.

#### 4.3.2 Negative outcomes

The flow experience can be very addictive and thus, one might seek goals that are more and more dangerous. Because the mind is so structured during flow it can easily become an escape from everyday life's troubles and worries. It is kind of the same effect as drugs have. It becomes an escape of reality. One of the dancers that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) interviewed states the following about dancing: *“I get sort of physical high from it... I get very sweaty, very feverish or sort of estatic when everything is going really well.”*

One of the pole dance students (respondent B) works out at least 5 days a week. She is not only joining 5 sessions a week, but even more. Sometimes she takes two lessons in a row or a stretch class afterwards. She has been told that it is not good to do fitness workout every single day, whereas she replied: *“I know, but it is so much fun”*. Even though she actually loses muscle strength by going every day she does it anyway.

Due to the empirical work a correlation between a higher level of focus or maybe even flow and addictiveness can exist. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states that flow can be addictive because of the structured order in consciousness. However, he does not mention that there can be coherence between these two factors. Contrary, it is in coherence with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs as he states that one wants more as people search for a permanent state of happiness, which does not exist (Hein, 2009). However, it concedes with flow theory as one experience the happiness feeling after the optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Even though Csikszentmihalyi states that the structured order in one's mind can become addictive it seems as the addictiveness to flow is caused by a high level of focus. However, the structured mind is most likely caused by strong concentration. The issue raises a question, is the state of flow only where people get addicted or is there simply a correlation between the level of focus and addictiveness. Respondent B was the most focused and is the only member who joins

at least 5 days a week. Respondent A and C states that they are focused however, less than respondent B and they pole dance a lot less.

Respondent B states that: *"[...] it is not like I'm hiding in my own little world and is totally one with the pole, but I try to suck the entire experience in"*. However, in flow one's focus is centered on the activity only and nothing else – no room for leaving the mind wander. Respondent C is focused, experiences happiness and all the other eight prerequisites, but she is not addicted and is less focus than respondent B. If there is no correlation between the addictiveness of flow and the level of focus, as the empirical findings suggest then the framework for measuring flow is questionable.

Another suggestion could be that addictiveness to flow is evolved over time. However, respondent B who is the only respondent that works out every day has done so since she started, eliminating this possibility. Consequently, the higher the respondents scored on the level of focus the more they worked out. Respondent B has also felt the consequences of too much workout as she began to feel ill.

Ignoring the good sense of taking care of the body in order to get the flow experience.

Instead of letting the pole dance work out being a conscious choice it has become an addiction-interfering with other activities. During the interview with respondent B it was revealed that the pole dancing had been influencing some of the respondents' every day routines and appointments rather heavily. Some did no longer feel the need to see their many friends anymore. Thus, flow can have an isolating effect because of the addictive side it has. Respondent B's life has furthermore been planned so it would fit in to her pole dance schedule. *"[...] I feel that this is so important to me, if I do not, or if I 'only' workout 3 times a week I get a little frustrated"*.

When she was asked directly if her life got planned with regards to pole dance she answered: *"maybe a little too much some would think [...]"*. She has given up her ultimate control, as she has no longer the freedom of choice to determine the content of consciousness. Consequently, she has become so dependent on the ability to control an enjoyable activity that she cannot pay

attention to anything else. Thus, the frustrations set in. Her self has become so captivated by the order in consciousness that it is unwilling to cope with the ambiguities of life. Consequently, enjoyable activities that produces flow can become so addictive because of they are capable of improving the quality of existence by the structure it creates in the mind.

Respondent C also mentions the feeling of getting high. She states: *“Consequently, one gets all high [...] feeling capable of everything. And that is why one wants to continue”*. The citation slightly stresses the paradox of control - the feeling that one is capable of everything. Furthermore, it has a very important point. Respondent C actually states that flow makes people want to come back. She also explicates that pole dance is the missing piece of her everyday life. Before she started, she believes that something was missing. Now she has a passion.

Consequently, too much of any good thing can have its consequences. The flow experience can be very addictive and thus, one might seek goals that are more and more dangerous. Because the mind is so structured during flow it can easily become an escape from everyday life's troubles and worries. It is kind of the same effect as drugs have. It becomes an escape of reality. One of the dancers that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) interviewed states the following about dancing: *“I get sort of physical high from it... I get very sweaty, very feverish or sort of estatic when everything is going really well.”*

Another aspect of the negative side of flow is, as the self grows the pole dancer might become arrogant and reckless. The first can, once more, have an isolating effect and influence her social life. The latter can be more dangerous as she might perform a trick that is above her skills and thus, get hurt. This is a side effect can leave the pole dancer to think that she is capable of something that she is not.

Consequently, arrogance and recklessness can develop as the self grows after a flow experience. This causes a circle where the addiction to flow causes arrogance which results in isolation which again increases the need for a new flow experience, as it is an escape from reality.



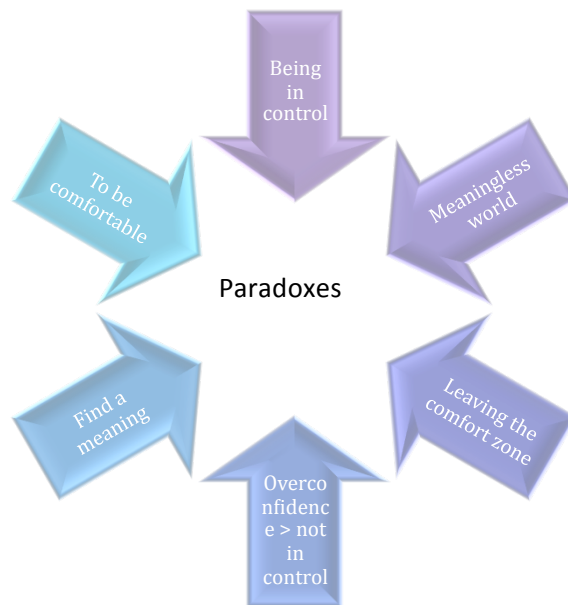
#### 4.4 Sum up

All of the respondents agreed that the goals were high. Respondent A was the only one interviewee who explicated that she quit when it got too difficult. Respondent B did not find the goals too high as respondent C often did. Sometimes respondent C becomes surprised of herself as she can perform a trick unexpectedly as she is pushed to her limits. Furthermore, pole dance provides immediate feedback. The students rely on each other or the pole dance instructor to provide feedback. In addition, they know from the sport itself whether they done something entirely wrong as it can provide a crash from the pole. In some of the cases the student weren't able to experience the effortless involvement. However, respondent B mentions that she sometimes got surprised by doing a trick she thought she was not to.

All the pole dance students acknowledge that their sense of control has increased. However, the paradox of control leads respondent B to almost crash from the pole as she thought she was more capable than she actually was. The finding is in coherence with the theory of flow.

The students were furthermore able to go without food as their concentration was so strong that they simply forgot about hunger or even injuries. As their concentration seem to be so strong they had no concern for themselves – in fact some of the respondents did not even know what they were thinking of while pole dancing. However, the empirical findings revealed that the fact that the self grows after flow experiences could lead to isolation.

The illustration in figure12 shows the paradoxes that the empirical findings revealed either in consent with the literature or uncovered by the literature.

*Figure 12 – Paradoxes revealed by empirical research*

*Source: Authors' own creation*

The way to achieve flow can be dangerous and requires sacrifices and pain. However, achieving it is also what makes it all worth (Hein, 2009). These situations of controlling a new trick gives the pole dancer a certain kind of rush – the happiness feeling that comes after a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Hein, 2009).

Both of the abovementioned statements were in coherence with the interviewees' answers. Furthermore, flow-frustration seems to occur before achieving flow and the respondents used it in a constructive way – to reach their goal. However, some of the respondents seemed to get addicted to the sport despite her physical health. It might be due to the search for permanent happiness (Hein, 2009).

A correlation between the level of addictiveness and concentration emerged from the empirical findings. The higher the concentration was the more addicted the pole dance became. However, some respondents stated that pole dancing gave them a purpose.

The following section will be dedicated to a presentation of financial dealers and an analysis of the empirical findings based upon the eight conditions of flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

## 4.5 What is a financial dealer?

*Figure 13 – Roadmap of empirical findings in the financial dealers' world*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

Financial dealers work within the financial sector. A broker-dealer is a person, a company or an organization that trades securities for its own account or on behalf of its customers (Anderson, 2010). The dealer holds independent responsibility in an area of limited complexity. They trade shares and bonds on behalf of customers. The responsibility dealer hold implies both a budget and transaction responsibility, and the dealer contributes to ensuring that transactions and risks are based on the company he works policies and guidelines. The field of responsibility typically comprises less complex products, but with a strong weight in the balance sheet. The dealer also makes independent assessments in connection with the performance of specific tasks (Anderson, 2010).

Dealers' look for patterns to find reliable signals of when to buy or sell financial instruments, such as stocks, options, futures and foreign currencies. Successful trading depends on how good dealer identify support and resistance levels for a security. The dealing in the marketplace can thus be very stressful as one wrong decision can cost their clients or company lots of money. In the end the financial dealer's decisions will result in a bonus or a notice. The more they prepare before going to work the better the outcome will be, as their decisions will be based upon an in depth analysis of the current market. This also indicates that there is no such thing as spare-time; at least not if you want to be a really good financial dealer. Consequently, the financial dealer has to have the updated facts such as information on securities, government regulations and market conditions so that he makes the most right decisions based on the facts.

There is a line at a stock chart where it hits multiple points where the stock price bounces back from a low point. This is known as a support level. The line drawn on the chart that hits multiple points where the price peaks is known as a resistance level. Under technical analysis, a stock trader wants to buy at support (low) and sell at resistance (high). It is difficult to know where the support and resistance levels are until after the fact. The fact that trading securities instruments is really difficult confirms The North American Securities Administrators Association. They studied the accounts of day traders. Only 11% consistently generated profits, and 70% sustained losses that wiped out their accounts (Anderson, 2010). Even though dealer has developed high skills, it does not always lead to the success. Mistakes- losses are part of dealer's job.

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*Stock brokers working on the trading floor of the stock exchange (1963)*

(Posters, 2012)

Apparently, dealers' job requires a lot of knowledge, high skills, constant practice and strong focus. However, working as a securities trader is always related with huge bonuses. For example, the average bond trader in New York City earns a base salary of about \$150,000. Their annual bonuses, which comprise the bulk of a trader's earnings, can often be eight to ten times their base

salary (Simons, 2011). Money is a huge motivator for the people who choose to be dealers. On the one hand, dealers work hard, stressful and intensive job, because of the money. On the other hand, they cannot stop working this job even after many years, when money is not an obstacle anymore. The job and the whole process becomes as an addictive game. So which part of the dealer's job hold intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?

According to the theoretical part, flow activities belong to the creative industry: dance, painting or writing. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) agrees that flow experience theoretically is possible in all kind of activities, if it corresponds to eight flow items. The authors of the paper wanted to test the theory in two contrary areas of business. Exploration of two different worlds- pole dancing and financial trading should help to find limits of the theory. Can it be used universal? How does it affect completely different people? What benefits can be gotten from it?

Pole dancer and securities trader seems hardly comparable. Dancers are training their bodies physically and invoking their creativity to build choreography. Their goal is to show breath taking dance for people who admires and values that. Traders are sitting in front of the computer, carefully following financial indexes and making hundreds of immediate decision to sell or buy in order to increase the profit. Deep feelings of art and practical world of money cannot be compared. Still, the process of training a body while creating dance figures can be really similar to the process of trading securities and following the amount of money variations. Strong countless efforts against the goal can become to an addictive game.

Knowing that flow activities are firstly creative and art related, it has to be found which conditions make financial dealers to experience it. It is most possibly to experience flow in the activity person is good at. It involves long hours of practice and hard work building strong skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). As it was stated in the theoretical part compatibility of skills and challenges, feeling in control, strong interest, curiosity and focused attention are the most essential parts of the flow. Dealers work a lot until they build the required skills. They have to have deep knowledge about the market. However, the main knowledge and skills come through everyday work. Dealers learn from their mistakes and get the sense of the process during intensive practice.

Financial traders have the power to control their work. They have an account with money and can vary it in the ways they want. They control huge amounts of money. In the end of the day, it can be double or all lost. It is a huge power to control money.

As a must have quality, dealer have to be really interested in their job. Even though, dealer starts his career with basic knowledge, he has to deepen it constantly. On the knowledge level depends how successful dealer is. Dealers have to follow markets and deepen their knowledge every day, as a result naturally it becomes as an interest. Coherently come curiosity. When a person starts follow something he becomes eager and curious in that area.

Focused attention is one of the most outstanding characteristics concerning dealer job. All the attention is based on the market variations, charts and indexes which determine success of a trade. As Respondent D stated in the interview, dealers are so focused into their job, that *“During the very busy days it was normal not to go for lunch. You just couldn’t leave your place. And the same thing in the evening, you were sitting late. You are sitting in your own world and fighting with your own figures”*.

Analyzing dealer job compatibility with flow experience, it was taken in to the account eight major components of flow and enjoyment defined by Csikszentmihalyi, (1990). Strong concentration and a sense of control have already been discussed in the paragraphs above. Tasks have to have clear goals. Financial dealers have their own goals and budgets, how much do they have to earn during the certain period of time. Activity has to provide immediate feedback. Dealers are getting the feedback from their managers. Additionally, they can see how successful they are by them self from the profit loss. After every trade, it can be seen if dealers earned or lost money immediately. The other components of flow concern the inside feelings of people, therefore it will be further discussed during the analysis of the interviews.

Regarding success criteria in Nordea bank professional descriptions, dealers are required to be creative, get results through constant learning and be responsible for personal qualifications. It is difficult to imagine dealer as a creative person. Still he has to use his skills and knowledge in a creative way. Job involves finding best solutions through different variations. Constant learning

during the entire job is also considered as a success criteria. It is expected that dealer will deepen his knowledge constantly, otherwise job cannot be successful. Knowledge in this job is particularly dynamic. As a result dealer's skills are steadily growing. Moreover, dealer is aware about this process and has personal responsibility to make sure to get enough knowledge. He has to ask trainings and seminars if needed.

#### 4.6 The financial dealers' optimal experience

Considering the description of a dealer job it can be claimed that theoretically they can experience flow. At least, brokers have all the needed conditions following Csikszentmihalyi (1990) findings. But how close theory can be with the real life cases? In order to answer this question three in depth interviews were completed.

As it can be seen from the picture 13 the analysis part will be based on the eight components of flow, which will be tested by applying to the conducted interviews. The empirical findings will consequently show if all eight conditions can be found in the dealers work. Also, it will be tested if all the interviewed dealers experienced flow.

##### *Completion of the given task*

From the first side dealers have tasks which seem possible to complete. They are responsible for the trades and even if it takes more than one day, it still ends at some point. Therefore, every time by taking a new trade dealers know that it will have the end. Furthermore, they are working hard to find the innovative ways of completing the task successfully. All the dealers have the access to the same information, so here is the place, where they have to be creative and act how the others cannot predict. Creativeness comes in the way of using the information in a novel way. Being creative for the dealer means finding relevant information, using it in the right places and taking a risk which should be balanced with the possible profit.

But on the other hand, can trading tasks always be seen as easily completed? During the interviews dealers were asked how they felt when they just started to work. All three respondents agreed that they were nervous, scared and did not know what to do. Consequently, it caused mistakes. Respondent D describing the first day remembers: *"I lost a lot of money, because I was*

*afraid not to get any profit, so made prices way too high.*” Respondents were scared and did mistakes because they did not have enough skills. Therefore, at that time tasks did not seem easy to complete. The lack of skills determined frustration. Moreover, in some cases frustration cannot just prevent from experiencing flow but also it can cause quitting. The statement support Respondent’s E comment: *“some people were just too nervous and had all the nerve’s break downs and were out of the game very fast.”*

To sum up, tasks can be perceived as possible to complete if a dealer has enough skills. It justifies one of the main flow principles that skills have to match challenges in order to experience flow and move to constant development ladder. If the skills are too low, task cannot be completed.

### **Clear goals**

All three respondents described their goals as clear and well communicated. It was divided differently though. Respondent D had monthly and yearly goals. Respondents E and F had monthly goals divided into daily goals. However it was their own initiative. They wanted to know exactly where they are with their budget every day so they could follow how successful they work. Moreover, goals had a tendency to grow constantly. *“At the beginning when I started, I don’t think that goals were that high, but the longer I worked the goals were higher and higher and really tough to reach”* - says respondent D. Even though goals were not achieved, the budget was increased the next year. It never stayed the same or decreased even despite the economic situation. Respondent E says that goals were always unrealistic. *“When I see a budget I think I will never reach that goal, but that what it makes it challenging. If I say to my manager that I can reach some specific goal, he always makes it higher for me.”*

This fact compliments Picture 8, where combination between skills and challenges is shown. The higher the skills are, the higher the challenges should be in order to stay in the balance of anxiety and boredom what leads to flow experience. Therefore, it is logical to think that dealers were improving their skills and deepen specific knowledge. Thus, they needed higher challenges in order to stay in flow and not get bored while working. After working in the same area for some time, person becomes professional and can find more ways to reach goals even with more



difficult circumstances and less effort. So they have to be creative. As a result of this cycle, goals are always increasing despite the overall economic situation. Cycle of growing goals makes sure that dealers will not become bored and look another job, which could be more challenging at least at the beginning. As a result of this cycle, employee's specialization in the specific area is constantly increasing.

### *Immediate feedback*

Dealers job itself is built to see the feedback immediately. They are always able to see how successful they were in a profit loss report. It is the same like a pole dancer knows that she failed by falling down, dealers see it by losing money. But on the other hand, some trades take a long time to complete and a dealer does not know how it will end until it is over. Respondent D says: *"I didn't get that much verbally feedback, it was just looking on the profit loss. But I spoke with my boss every third day, so I could hear his opinion about me. I knew by myself what it will be."* Respondent E is getting feedback from his manager every day. Moreover, he has a "high five" tradition in his department. Every time somebody has a successful trade they announce that loud to everyone sitting in the office. *"I get high on that and continue in the same direction,"* says Respondent E. Apparently, it is a good way to create a little competition and give recognition which motivates to keep putting efforts. On the other hand, Respondent E is getting a rough feedback from his manager every time he fails. Respondent F is getting a formal feedback from his manager just every quarter. But he follows his productivity by keeping track of his goals every day. So despite the formal feedback dealers get from their bosses, they are always able to follow their success. Moreover, they also get a feedback expressed by early bonuses, directly showing how good they are.

Feedback frequency and way differs among the departments and local culture established in the office. However, if the proper feedback would be considered just the one dealers are getting from the manager, it would be too seldom. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) the feedback should be immediate. And for instance, conversations with the manager every third month could not be called as immediate feedback. The form of feedback was not defined clearly and explicitly in the theory of flow. Except the part that it should be immediate, it was not explained any further.

Accordingly, it can be just assumed that self-awareness and autonomous efforts to track how successful work is could be considered as an acceptable feedback.

### **Effortless involvement**

Deep involvement was clearly seen from the very beginning while talking with all the respondents. They were asked if they ever forgot time, hunger or people while working. *“Always! During the very busy days it was normal not to go for lunch. You just couldn’t leave your place. And the same thing in the evening, you were sitting late. You are sitting in your own world and fighting with your own figures. You don’t think that much about anyone else”*-confirmed Respondent D.

Moreover, job was taking such an important part of financial dealers’ life that it affected their families. Respondent E says: *“I am only thinking about my work. I never think about my family or what I’m going to do on the weekend.”* Constant involvement into the job was extremely strong and could last even after working hours. Even though, dealers were claiming that they could spend just around an hour during the working day and one day of the weekend with their families, they had a financial freedom to do whatever they wanted. *“I have all the financial possibilities to spend time with my family very nicely”*, says respondent E. On the other hand, is that enough? As Respondent D says: *“Looking back I could say that first 12 years of my daughter’s life I haven’t seen her more than two hours per day. And I missed a lot. But I didn’t miss it at that time. I didn’t even notice that.”* While respondent E remembered his son who *“told me several times that I was never at home when he was a little boy. So he had missed something”*. Hence it is obvious that dealers have effortless involvement into the activity they do.

### **Sense of control**

When respondents were asked if they were feeling in control, two of three said yes, and the control was felt in different ways. Respondent D said: *“I was in control, because first I was responsible for my team, the guys sitting there and trading.”* Respondent E added *“I am feeling in control of the huge amounts of money which were under my responsibility”*. However, Respondent F contradicts: *“I’m responsible for the money, but I couldn’t say that I’m thinking about how I’m controlling it.”* Respondents D and E had different sense of control depending on

their position. If a dealer is a chief, the sense of control over people is the strongest. Contrary, if a dealer is not responsible for the team he feels in control over money. The power while dealing with millions of bank's money is really strong. Dealers have freedom to act in the way they think is the best. So controlling and playing with millions makes them to feel powerful. However, Respondent F did not perceive the power as the sense of controlling. It was more one of the tools to complete his work.

### **Strong concentration**

All of the three respondents described their concentration between eight and ten in the scale of ten. *"I was just so concentrated on my own part, that everyone could start screaming and I wouldn't hear it"*- says respondent D. Apparently, dealers have to be extremely focused if they want to do a good job. They have to follow different indexes and watch their screens all the time in order to do profitable trades. All their senses have to be sharp and ready to register even minor changes. Respondents described that there are many additional distractions and tasks at their work which were not related to the trades they were doing at that time. First, there is a high level of noise in the office in general, second they have constantly to answer phones and emails and finally, they have a lot of paper work to do and *"...>" it was boring. Something has to be done, but no one wants to do it"*, says Respondent D. He was the only one who saw disruptive factors as negative side of the job though. The other two respondents described that as a part of a "game". *"It was a part, where I got a lot of more additional information."* Despite the fact that in the dealer job there are plenty of factors distracting their focus for the trades they are responsible for, the concentration level is in the top of the scale.

### **The concern of the self**

Brokers most of the times do not think about anything else except the activity they are doing, that shows the focus scale varying from 8 to 10. They tend to forget their families, hunger or any other distractions not related to the work. The sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over shows the citations of Respondent D: *"Even while I was thinking about my job at home, I could say it was a positive thinking and emotions."* During the working hours Respondents D and E do not have the time to feel happy or unhappy, they just work in their world of numbers and indexes. But after work, when they are not in the activity, they feel happy

about themselves. *“And I’m always looking forward to get up in the morning and go back to work,”* says Respondent E. Respondent F did not express that so clearly. He did not mention that he feels happy after work. He felt happiness just after success at work.

### ***The sense of time***

Dealers have to sign the contract with working hours- not less than 37 hours per week. That means they have to keep in mind that it could be more working hours included. All of the three interviewed respondents admitted that they were constantly staying at work overtime and also gathering work related information while they were at home (reading on the internet, watching BBS news). However, dealers never felt like spending a lot of time at their work. They simply did not feel it. When the focus level and concentration are so high, they do not feel the time. *“I don’t even feel how fast days, weeks and even years are passing. “It’s like a magic circle, you are dragged in and everything goes around you very fast,”* says Respondent F.

## **4.7 The positive and negative side of flow**

This section will be dedicated to an analysis of the pros and cons of flow based upon the empirical research.

### **4.7.1 Positive outcomes**

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part flow experience is directly related to happiness. After accomplishing goals person naturally feels self-actualized and happy. Also, flow experience makes a person to forget all the concerns not related to the activity. Together with forgetting time and families, dealers also were forgetting the problems related with it. For instance, if there was a fight with a wife the bitter and angriness can be forgotten during the time they are in an activity. It is like a runaway to the safe island, the world ruled by dealers. Two of three respondents (D and E) were relating their jobs directly with happiness. They could say that it was more fun to be at work than to spend a time with their families. Moreover, they were always looking forward to another working day because they were experiencing positive emotions there.

The other question which came up after completing the interviews, are dealers really motivated intrinsically by hapiness and enjoyment they are experiencing or is it the money that makes

them work so much? Respondents mentioned huge salary and high bonuses many times. Money for them was the way to freedom of spending their free time in the ways they wanted. It was also the way to keep their families happy. Instead of spending a lot of time with them they were spending short but qualitative time together. What they could not do without huge salaries. So if dealers were motivated by money, is extrinsic motivation involved? As it was defined in the very beginning of the theory part, flow experience is strictly intrinsic. Flow happens when the activity is a reward by itself and provides the enjoyment without additional motivators. So if the dealers are motivated by money, are they really experiencing flow? When the respondents were asked what is the biggest motivation in their job- money or the job itself, they all responded that it was the job. *“It was not salary or bonuses. It was very good of course, but it wasn’t that. After ten years of working I got huge bonuses, a lot of that money I still have. So I could have stopped if it was just money. It was a game, colleagues, traders in foreign countries. It’s like poker. Work itself was driving me,”* says Respondent E. Therefore, it can be claimed that money is one of the motivators or nice part of the dealer’s job, but the main motivator is the activity itself and the positive feeling occurring during it.

#### 4.7.2 Negative outcomes

After analyzing empirical data, it can be noticed a negative side of flow, which was discussed in the theoretical part. As it is known, flow can lead to physical exhaustion, social isolation, stress, and body injuries. As it was already mentioned, dealers are so focused and into the activity they are doing that sometimes they forget to eat or have lunch in ten minutes. That of course leads to physical exhaustion.

Forgetting your own kids and finding the job more interesting than the family, can be called social isolation. *“It is better for me to work as a trader than to be together with my family”*, says respondent E. Even though, respondents tend to accent that instead of spending a lot of time with their families, they used to have short but extremely expensive and qualitative time together, it is still not the same. Respondent D admits that he missed a huge part of his daughter’s life. Respondent F spends all the evenings and weekends with his family. He likes to read a lot of material related to his work in his free time though. Moreover, all three respondents are working more than 37 hours. Respondent D said that he worked much more than 37 hours, respondent E-

at least 60 hours and he says that “even if I am sick, I still go to work, because I feel really responsible for what I do,” Respondent F- around 45 hours per week. With working hours like that, it is difficult to spend enough time with families and have a social life. Despite that all the respondents still live with their first families.

Financial dealers’ position seems stressful. *“Some people were just too nervous and had all the nerve’s break downs and were out of the game very fast”*, says respondent E. Contrary, Respondent D says, that *“22 out of 23 years it was not stressful. So main part it was very good. Even while I was thinking about my job at home, I could say it was a positive thinking and emotions.”* Respondent F does not get a positive feeling all the time. *“Sometimes I get a bit depressed about everything. It’s always you get money or you lose money. My feeling depends on how successful the day is.”* Respondent F feels happiness as an outcome of a successful trade. It is directly related to the outcomes of the activity, but not the process. So, he does not feel constant enjoyment and happiness which supposed to be felt if the person is in flow. It is one of the main outcomes of flow experience and Respondent F does not experience it.

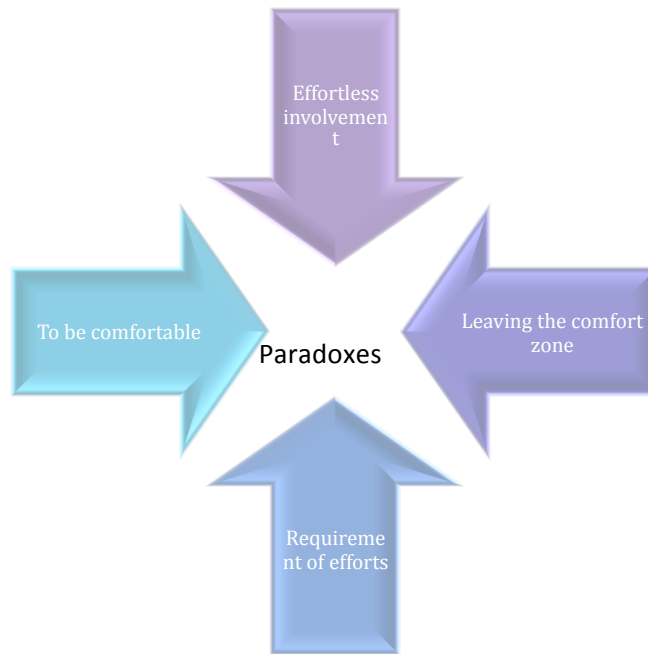
Overall, dealers describe their job as very addictive and compare it with “gambling”, “playing poker” or “taking drugs”. They did not want to stop, even though they knew that they are not spending enough time with their families. It was a game of their life, a gambling with huge amounts of money. However, not everyone can work as a dealer without experiencing huge stress. That could depend on the manager, environment between colleagues, work load and the personality itself.

#### 4.8 Sum up

The goal of the section was to test if eight components of flow are applicable in the dealers’ job and to answer the question, does it always lead to the flow experience? Three interviews showed that eight components of flow experience can be applicable and were actually found in dealers’ job. After evaluating answers of the interviews, it can be said that it is possible for dealers to experience flow at work. But it cannot be confirmed that eight components of flow can always lead financial dealers to flow experience.

After analyzing three interviews it can be seen, that one of the three respondents did not fulfill some of eight flow conditions. He did not feel the sense of control. And the most important, the respondent did not feel enjoyment after the activity. He felt happiness directly related to the successful outcomes. It was not the happiness which appears because of the process itself if the person is in flow. On the other hand, respondent F had all the conditions needed for flow to experience. He had tasks, which could be completed. His concentration was strong- between 8 and 9 in the scale of 10. He had clear goals and immediate feedback. He claimed he was not feeling the time while working. Also, he felt highly involved in the activity. He worked around 45 hours per week, spent weekends by reading and deepening his professional knowledge and every free minute at work used for finding new relevant information. It seems that Respondent F was interested in the activity and put a lot of efforts to be up to date concerning all the needed information.

Therefore, it is not exactly clear, what is the connection between a lot of efforts and the effortless involvement (component five)? Can involvement be called effortless when at the same time the process requires so much efforts and time? It could be possible that some people after a period of time naturally progress to the state of effortless involvement and the others keep thinking about the efforts needed in order the goal could be reached. The explanation of the difference could be personality types. Different types of people and possible different outcomes of eight components of flow depending on it are not analyzed explicitly in Csikszentmihalyi (1990) book presenting the theory of flow. Except mentioning that there are some types of people, who cannot experience flow there are no further discussions about different ways of experiencing flow for different personalities.

*Figure 14 – Paradoxes revealed by empirical research*

*Source: Authors' own creation*

It can be agreed that necessary components of flow does not always lead to flow experience. Simple hard work, high discipline and dedication to put a lot of efforts in order to reach goals can be confused with the flow experience. There is a high relation between personality type and flow experience. Furthermore, the empirical findings revealed some paradoxes with Csikszentmihalyi (1990) prerequisites of flow. First, effortless involvement is requiring a lot of efforts, what was discussed in the paragraph above. Also, dealers have to feel comfortable when at the same time they are leaving their comfort zone everyday by overcoming their challenges.

## 4.9 The surprising similarities between pole dancers and financial dealers

At first glance, the case study of pole dancers and financial brokers might not even seem possible to compare. The cases were chosen within opposite fields. Physical performance compared to intellectual work. The opponent areas represent different sides of flow theory and test it within



wide variety of conditions. On the other hand, two different cases can be surprisingly similar in the context of flow theory. Thus, the following section will compare the two deviant cases by utilizing the analyzed empirical findings.

Firstly, when comparing pole dancing and financial trading, the dissimilarities might be strong as pole dancing is a sport – a creative way to express emotions and workout at the same time and financial dealing is a specialty within financial industry. Here the dealer hold a budget and transaction responsibility also, contributes to ensuring that transactions and risks are based on the company he works policies and guidelines. Pole dancing can obviously be categorized as a creative activity. However, according to success criteria in Nordea bank professional descriptions, dealers are also required to be creative.

Furthermore, even though the cases seem to be hard to compare both pole dancers and financial dealers are considered to be within a highly specialized industry. Helle Hein's (2009) definition of highly specialized employees is the foundation of the comparison. She states that the work carried out requires skills or meta-knowledge with regards to the specific sphere and cannot be taken over by others who lack sufficient training or knowledge. As a pole dance and a financial dealer can be placed within this definition reflects some of the similarities.

The empirical data furthermore revealed that sports pole dancing and financial dealing are similar as endless learning and constant improvement in order to complete tasks is a huge part of the activities. Furthermore, not only pole dance but also financial dealing requires a lot of sacrifices regarding free time, efforts and even health.

Interviews for the both cases were based on the same framework defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). The purpose of the questions was to confirm or deny that chosen respondents were experiencing flow. It was concluded that pole dancers and financials brokers were able to experience flow during their activity even though the former is during one's spare time. Yet, one broker did not feel in flow even though he had all the conditions to experience it. Despite the different outcomes, the same framework used for the interviews made both cases comparable.

### ***Completion of task***

The empirical work came to the same conclusion in both cases. Firstly, completion of task can be achieved just by having enough skills. Respondent A did not want to come back to pole dancing classes because she did not feel confident enough to do tricks. The same as a lot of dealers are quitting their jobs in the very beginning because the lack of knowledge leads to stress and frustration. Despite the background of the activity, skills have to match the difficulty of task in order to feel that it can be completed. However, the empirical work also revealed that before getting to flow the respondents experienced “flow-frustration” (Hein, 2009) as if it seems to be an inevitable part of achieving flow.

### *Strong concentration*

Concentration is the condition, which is the most frequently mentioned by people describing the feeling when they experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The importance of the second condition was approved by both cases. All of the respondents agreed that the level of concentration was really high, which was followed by forgetting to eat and other physical harm. For instance, pole dancers were continuing exercising even though they experienced injuries. Similarly, brokers were going to work despite the fact that they were sick. Thus, the empirical findings from both cases showed that concentration can be too strong and as a result have negative outcomes.

### *Clear goals*

Even though the goals of pole dancers and financial dealer are not comparable, they both have it. There seem to be a tendency for dealers to have extremely well communicated and clear goals, which are divided into small steps and followed by their managers. On the other hand, goals were constantly raised up despite the fact that brokers were not able to complete the smaller ones the period ago. Whereas, pole dancers sometimes can risk to be confronted with a lack of explanation about goals and vague goals lead to frustration just as financial dealers experienced when given too high goals. Therefore, it is extremely important that pole dance instructors would communicate goals very detailed and clearly, as well as financial dealers’ management. However, the case study revealed that the students were given sub-goals that kept getting raised as their skills improved.

### *Immediate feedback*

Feedback was considered immediate in both cases. Pole dancer's immediate feedback was considered as falling down when performing a trick. While financial dealer gets his feedback as soon as the trade is completed by looking to the profit loss report. In other words, the feedback for a pole dancer is pain when the feedback - for a dealer is losing money. Even though, the feedback differs in terms of money and pain, it works in the same way. Additionally, pole dancers get the feedback from instructors during the class and brokers get it from a direct manager.

### *Effortless involvement*

All the respondents in both cases were highly involved in the activity. They were tended to forget their friends, families and problems in general. The activity was safe to escape to their world. On the one hand, it is good that they are able to forget all the problems and concentrate on the activity. On the other hand, in both cases it led to the social isolation. Dealers were describing the feeling as gambling and stated that they could not resist to the addiction.

### *The sense of control*

Both the pole dancing and financial dealing let the respondents feel in control. Even though one respondent did not think about how he was in control of the bank's money, he had the power to move them around. All respondents, except respondent F, felt the power of control. However, feeling in control in pole dancing case was a bit more related to the outcomes. If the dancer does not feel entirely in control, it can lead to lack of confidence, fear and mistakes. Consequently, it leads to overconfidence if the feeling of being in control grows too strong after the performer becomes better.

### *The concerns of the self*

Both pole dancers and financial dealers had a tendency to forget about their everyday life during their optimal experience. They forgot about hunger, family and fights with friends. All respondents had a high focus and only one did not experience a happiness feeling afterwards, which might be caused by the lack of flow experience. Both pole dancers and financial dealers mentioned that in one way or other their activity meant the world to them. Some stated that they

were missing something before and others stated that it was the world to them. Thus, their activity provided them with a purpose.

### *The sense of time*

Not a single respondent stated having experienced that the sense of time had altered. All of them lost track of time while working or working out. The financial dealers even spent their spare time to work and some pole dancers even worked out almost every day. All respondents stated that they did not notice time passing by.

#### **4.9.1 Positive and negative outcomes**

In both empirical cases, it was come to the conclusion with two opposite outcomes: positive and negative. Positive outcomes were related to happiness, enjoyment and being high of the activity. Negative outcomes within the financial dealers' case were related with physical exhaustion, social isolation, stress and addictiveness. Accordingly, pole dancers were put to risk to become arrogant, addictive to the activity and using it as an escape from the reality. Thereby, empirical findings from the two different cases showed that flow experience can lead not just to desired positive outcomes, but also to the very negative ones.

## 5.0 Comparison with other empirical studies

The empirical findings in this thesis are not entirely in alignment with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) framework. However, by examining other researchers' empirical findings similarities have been found.

Firstly, Seifert & Hedderson (2010) observed and interviewed twenty skateboarders in order to examine intrinsic motivation in natural contexts. Results indicated a phenomenon of strong motivational feeling leading into the dangerous outcomes. Skateboarders could keep skating even with difficult injuries. Flow experience described like sense of freedom, euphoria and satisfaction was stronger than pain. It could be compared with the findings from pole dancing case, where dancers kept performing despite the injuries in their bodies.

The other group of scholars: Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerouti (2010) after empirical finding gathered from 335 employees of an employment agency came up to the finding which were similar to the ones presented in this paper. The mentioned scholars investigated the links between job resources, work related and person oriented approaches. There was described the burnout syndrome- the result of working too many hours, forgetting to eat and constantly thinking about the activity a person is involved. The causes of the burnout syndrome were found in dealers' and in pole dancers' cases. Also, scholars discussed the links between work enjoyment and intrinsic motivation as a positive outcome of flow experience. Five of six respondents from both cases analyzed in this paper were experiencing all mentioned outcomes of flow. Moreover, Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerouti (2010) described physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects called- job resources, which make employees feel comfortable, besides other positive effects. Feeling of comfort, by authors of the thesis was decided as extremely important and a missing item in order to experience flow.

Finally, Kuo & Ho (2010) did a study to investigate the effect of personal factors of gender, length of employment, and meditation experience on employee perceptions of job characteristics, flow experience and service quality by surveying 341 employees from 20 different companies. After analyzing the empirical data, scholars came to the suggestion that managers should

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facilitate employees flow experience and put greater effort to designing jobs. Consequently, the authors of the paper came to the same findings and described how pole dancing training and financial dealers' job should be designed.

## 6.0 Theoretical implications

This section will illuminate the theoretical implications, which will be drawn from the empirical findings in the preceding chapter.

### 6.1 Adjusting flow framework

#### *Flow gives life purpose*

Helle Hein (2009) mentions the paradox within the existential psychology consists of finding a meaning in a rather meaningless world. She states that the solution to this paradox can be found in commitment according to Yalom. They stress that it is through commitment that one finds meaning with life and thereby overcome the paradox. As flow makes people committed to an activity as it provides one with a purpose it can thus be seen as a solution to the paradox. She draws certain similarities between Frankl's Logotherapy. Hein states: "[...] it takes courage, will and sacrifices to commit [...]" (Hein, 2009, p. 205). In coherence with flow one has to be courageous and willing to commit. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) does not emphasize how the way to achieve flow can be frustrating. According to his framework there is boredom, flow or anxiety, thus leading a very important aspect out – flow-frustration (Hein, 2009). In order to achieve flow one might need to be frustrated first. As respondent B mentions she often gets frustrated attempting to achieve a new trick. However, it is her frustrations and commitment that leads her to the accomplishment and optimal experience. Therefore, frustrations and commitment are an inseparable part of flow. Because commitment needs to exist in order for pole dancers and financial brokers to achieve flow then flow is a solution to the paradox of finding a meaning in a meaningless world.

#### *The importance of flow*

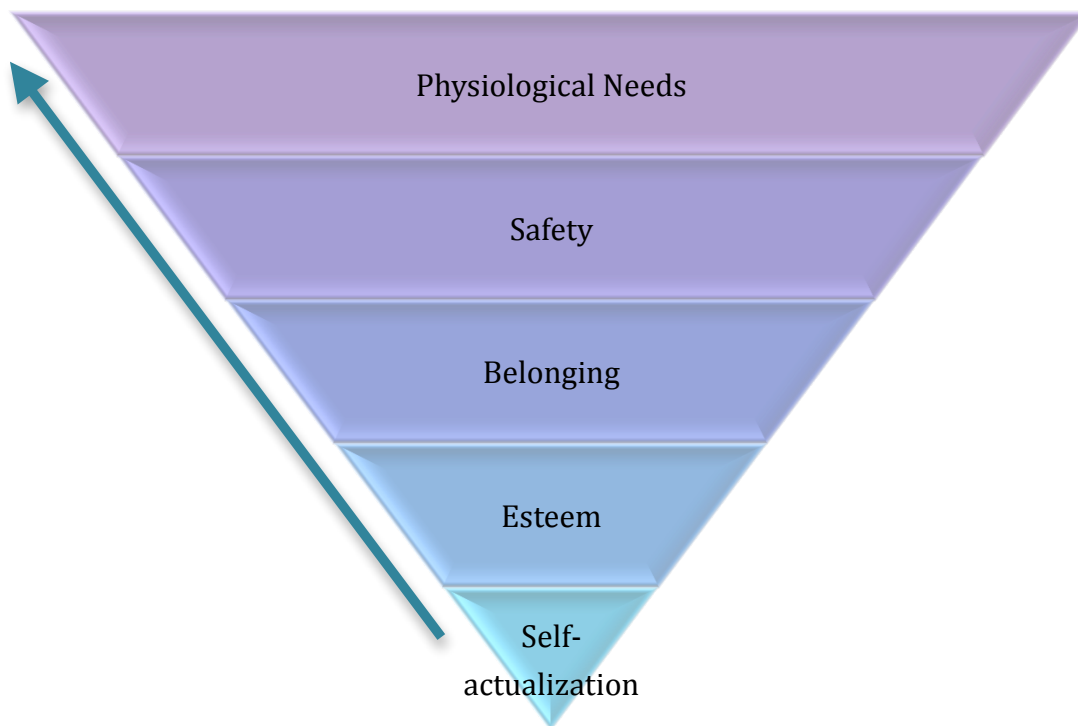
Another interesting aspect of flow is how the empirical findings reveal certain contradictions to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs even though the positive psychology is utilizing contributions from the theoretical and empirical work of the humanistic psychology (Hein, 2009). Maslow argues according to Hein (2009) that the basic needs have to be fulfilled in order to go to the next step. However, according to empirical findings pole dancers and financial brokers could forget about

fulfilling their basic need such as food as long as they got into flow. Thus, their self-actualization becomes their prior need.

Maslow's pyramid could thus be turned upside down as the basic needs no longer are the most important. However, Maslow do mention that it is not all types of people that needs to have the basic needs fulfilled in order to strive for a higher one (Hein, 2009). Maslow states that when all needs are not covered it will be the basic needs that are strongest (Hein, 2009). Consequently, according to flow and the empirical findings it would be possible to turn the pyramid upside down for people who are within the highly specialized industry – at least for a period of time.

*Figure 15 – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs turned upside down*

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*Source: Author's own creation inspired by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

It is not revealed in the empirical research that one would seek self-actualization after a long period of hunger merely that the basic needs can be “forgotten” in flow experiences. However, the research shows that other basic needs are necessarily for some to enter flow. The need to belong has seemed to be a central issue. This is one condition that Csikszentmihalyi does not



mention in his work. One pole dance student explicitly mentions that she needs to feel welcome and comfortable. However, it seems a little contrary to flow because one has to step out of the comfort zone in order to achieve the optimal experience (Hein, 2009). Thus, another paradox seems to have arisen. Personal development or the loss of self cannot happen without feeling comfortable or without leaving the comfort zone.

### *Flow frustration*

Flow frustration has proven to have a huge impact on the way to flow due to the empirical research of this thesis. However, this fact is also one of the enquiries of criticism mentioned by Helle Hein (2009). Both pole dancers and financial brokers have experienced frustrations on the way. Due to the empirical findings, it is more or less indicated to be an inevitable part of achieving the optimal experience. Thus, it should be taken into account. It should be stressed that it is not a condition for making flow happen but merely a part of achieving flow just as the sense of time.

The way to achieve flow has proven to require sacrifices. The financial brokers had to work at home during weekends and in the pole dance case pain and bruises are an inseparable part of the everyday workout. Consequently, sacrifices must be seen as a part of achieving flow. However, the goals should not be too high or unrealistic as only frustration would be at stake. As the empirical research point to the goals should rather be high as the pole dancers and financial brokers need to strive for it. In the process of achieving the goal frustration will encounter both the pole dancer and financial broker.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has not encountered the basic assumption that in order to achieve flow one needs to be intrinsically motivated. He does mention it in his work however; that it is one of the prerequisites to encounter flow. All respondents who achieved the optimal experience were intrinsically motivated.

The financial brokers and pole dancers usually got too high goals and they all have the commitment in common. As Viktor Frankl overcame what seemed impossible, to survive the

concentration camp (Hein, 2009), both cases concede with Frankl. As both Helle Hein (2009) and Yalom (Hein, 2009) believes that commitment is the solution to the paradox of giving life meaning in a meaningless world, thus flow is able to overcome the obstacle as well. The commitment is what kept pole dancers and financial brokers to keep doing what they do.

## 6.2 Management's flow-framework

The framework that is encountered in the following is based upon the empirical findings. Furthermore, the discussion and critique of flow is of crucial importance in order for the authors of this thesis to come up with the best framework. Thus, in order for any management to set up conditions for achieving flow the empirical research reveals that the following could be used as a management to achieve flow:

1. Feeling comfortable
2. High goals that are being raised
3. Clear goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)
4. Elimination of disturbing elements
5. Provide feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)
6. Attract intrinsically motivated people or make them committed (as flow does not come for free (Hein, 2009) )
7. Provide controllable activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

These modifications show the aspects for making flow happen. Both pole dancers and financial brokers had goals that were too high to reach. However, it is their commitment that decides whether they will achieve them one day. On the contrary, too high goals might result in stress, as was the case for one financial broker so it has to be balanced. If the person is not committed and intrinsically motivated flow did not appear to happen as concedes with the flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The finding of the paradox of feeling comfortable is coherence with Maslow's belief that the lower needs have to be fulfilled in one way or the other before the next level can be achieved.

Another finding that should be taken into consideration is that the level of focus and flow should be taken into account. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explicates that it is easier for some people to

achieve flow than others. However, he does not state that there can be a correlation between the level of focus and the level of flow.

The empirical findings indicate that flow cannot exist without frustrations. According to Herzberg's Hygiene and Motivator theory there either exist a hygiene factor leading to dissatisfaction or motivator factor leading to satisfaction. However, due to the research flow can be achieved after experiencing frustrations. Thus, it can be argued that flow consist of a tension which, is necessary in order to motivate.

Contrary, Csikszentmihalyi states that there either exist flow, anxiety and boredom. These three factors are according to his theory existing as separate. However, the empirical findings and Hein emphasizes that one cannot exist without the other as illustrated in the figure shown below. Consequently, the illustration of Yin and Ying shows the duality that exists.

The duality exists in the way that flow can consist of the optimal experience however; it is furthermore connected to frustrations. As the frustrations are necessary in order to achieve flow explicates why this duality is necessary and why it has been illustrated as yin and yang.

*Figure 16 – Flow's Yin and Yang*



*Source: Author's own creation*

### 6.3 Sum up

The empirical findings revealed that the paradox of finding meaning in a meaningless world can be overcome by flow as it provides a purpose in people's life. Just as commitment has been stressed by Helle Hein (2009) to be a solution to the same paradox. Furthermore, it proved to be the student's and employees' commitment as well that got them through their flow-frustrations. Consequently, their commitment to their activity is what makes them overcome the paradox.

Basic needs did not have to be fulfilled and thus, Maslow's hierarchy of needs could be turned upside down as both financial brokers and pole dancers could go without food or sleep during flow experiences. Thus, the peak experience became their prior need. However, Maslow does state that some types of people do not need to have all the lower needs fulfilled in order to strive for a higher one. On the other hand, the empirical findings show that the need to belong became of high importance – a condition that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) does not explicate.

Another paradox came to surface during the research. The need of belonging and feeling comfortable are factors that need to be fulfilled. Thus, as personal development requires leaving the comfort zone the paradox has arisen. Furthermore, it was revealed that flow-frustrations were an inevitable part of achieving flow.

Based on the above-mentioned discussion of empirical findings and theories, the authors came up with a management framework tool in order to set up conditions for flow consisting of 7 conditions.

### 6.4 Managerial solutions for HoP – Re-designing the settings

The following section will provide suggestions for managerial solutions by analyzing upon the empirical findings and theoretical implications. Hence, it will seek to uncover how flow can create value for the customers and the company. Consequently, this section will take the analyzed interviews into account as it will seek to answer the initial research question in the best possible way.

By making sure that the HoP's members experiences flow creates a kind of lock-in effect. If the members keep getting memorable experiences by experiencing flow they are more likely to become loyal. The key for HoP is to make sure that members are in flow then. As the conditions for flow to happen are likely to occur when one perform sports pole dance it would be ideal for HoP's management to make sure that the teaching is build up in a way that is as close to the flow conditions as possible. As mentioned before by focusing on making the members experience flow HoP makes sure that they keep coming back. Who does not want to experience happiness? However, the difficult part might be to make sure that the members get the optimal experience. So, how to do that?

### **Condition 1 – Being comfortable**

Firstly, in order for HoP's management to create flow for its members they can make sure that the trial sessions are only for those who had never tried it before, because it removes the element of competition and makes sure that the level is adjusted. It will of course differ from person to person how good they are due to certain facts such as talent, cognition, strength and flexibility just to mention a few. However, as respondent A states about her first time experience with the sport clearly argues that feeling comfortable is an important issue. Thus, in order to make sure that the situation is not uncomfortable for newbies it is important to adjust the level in a way so that the introduction sessions are only for beginners and not for girls who have tried it several times before. However, when this is said it is important to keep in mind that the level should not be too low as well because it will lead to boredom as illustrated below.

### **Condition 2 – Give high goals**

Due to the growth of the self after the flow experience, which gives the students a feeling of being capable and more confident, they would like to return to the flow state. Thus, they will stretch their skills and is more likely to achieve something that they thought was impossible. Consequently, the flow experience makes the students capable of things that they thought they were not. In that way they return to the state where they enjoy themselves. The following statement captivates the above mentioned perfectly: *“I rarely find them [the goals] too easy. [...] I often get surprised of being capable of something that I did not expect I could do.[...] It is really cool! One gets all high”*.

Furthermore, one should keep track of the progress. It is quite easy to track in pole dancing as there are so many sub goals. The members can be able to do a trick or not before they can do a transition (going from one trick to another). Consequently, keeping track of the progress is quite obvious to the performer. When she is able to do a new trick she will realize how much she has learned. However, videos are a perfect tool to keep track with, as it may be quite difficult to see small changes and to remember one's entire repertoire and thus there can be a tendency to forget the whole progress that one has been through.

### ***Condition 3 – Give clear goals***

HoP instructors need to make sure that the tasks they present are carried out in a way so that the members understand them. Clear goals are easiest to work with as one knows exactly what is expected. A good idea would be to illustrate the move first so that they get a sense of how the move should look like. The instructor should bear in mind that people learn in different ways and therefore some of the members just needs the visual and then copies it. However, in order to make sure that as many of the members experience flow the move should be brought down into pieces. In other words, they have a goal that is divided into sub goals. As they succeed doing a sub goal they can proceed to achieve their overall goal – the move illustrated by the instructor in the beginning. Furthermore, this will give the members a feeling of control as they grow stronger for each time and enhance their skills.

### ***Condition 4 – Eliminate disturbing elements***

A prerequisite that HoP cannot manage, but only help the members to immerse is a strong concentration. By giving a task is just at the right level is one way of setting the conditions so that the optimal experience will become more possible to achieve. Choosing the right level for the members HoP makes sure that they have a chance of completing the task. Eliminating competition in the beginning could also be a way of doing it- at least for newbies.

The strong concentration is thus able to arise when HoP has made sure that these prerequisites are present in the daily teaching. Furthermore, when a member has to use all her skills to cope

with a given challenge, her attention is completely absorbed by the activity and thus concerns for oneself disappears (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

#### ***Condition 5 - Provide feedback***

Another important thing that HoP can do is to provide immediate feedback. The feedback leads to the members' development of their skills which will –in the end- give them an incentive to keep going. The instructors need to provide the members with feedback just as they get from the experience itself. Sometimes they cannot feel what they are doing wrong, but they just do not succeed. In these cases it is very important that the instructors have an eye on the member so that it does not lead to frustration.

#### ***Condition 6 – Provide the person with a purpose***

By making sure that the other conditions are set the customers who is not committed or not intrinsically motivated will not continue. This condition can only be set by making sure that the other prerequisites are achieved. Especially by giving the pole dancer a goal would provide him or her with a purpose. Consequently, the other prerequisites will make the pole dancer committed.

#### ***Condition 7 – Provide controllable activities***

As pole dancing is a sport where one needs to have a sense of body control in order to perform the activity this prerequisite is almost given by the sport itself. However, the instructors can sometimes make sure the students have some kind of influence in the daily teaching. By making sure that they are given 5 minutes of playtime during a session the pole dancer can work on exactly the trick she wants. Consequently, her commitment and intrinsic motivation is coming to surface in this situation making flow easier to be achieved.

### **6.5 Cost-Benefit analysis**

This section will provide the reader with an overview of a cost-benefit analysis that takes its starting point in the section above and the assembled data.

One strategy that HoP should go for is to be unique as it differentiates the company from others. However, if one looks at the sport industry pole dancing is already different and thus differentiated. On the other hand, the firm has to differentiate from other pole dance studios and by making memorable events for its members and customers it increases the income, as they become loyal customers that return. Loyal customers result in lower churn-out rates. Furthermore, it costs more to attract new customers than to maintain the relationship with the old (Business source, 2012).

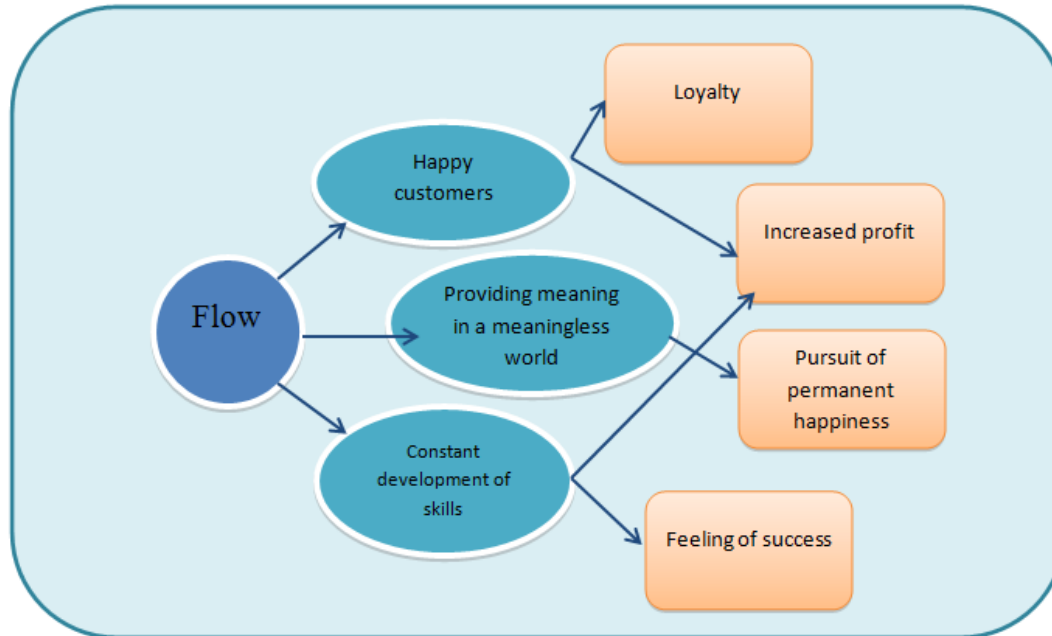
As long as HoP focuses on adjusting the level so that the students' skills are capable to cope with the challenges they are presented to would thus be a way to increase income. In the interview with respondent A, she stated that she never signed up because level was too high and the atmosphere was not very friendly. What the management has to remember to teach their instructors is that the members are there to learn and if there is nothing to teach them then it gets boring and thus the members will disappear. Another pole dancer recently left the place where she used to pole dance, as the goals were set too high.

Furthermore, respondent A did not sign up for a membership after her first experience. If she, as she did the first time at HoP, experienced flow the first time she would have been likely to sign up for membership. The difference between those two visits was that the level was adjusted to fit a newbie and thus, made sure that she was able to focus on the activity instead of worrying about being bad at it. Consequently, adjusting the levels will result in more memberships sold.



The figure below illustrates the consequences of implementing the management tool framework.

*Figure 17 – Consequences of management tool implementation*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

## 6.6 Sum up

In order to keep customers coming back HoP's management could use the management tool framework to make sure they set up the best conditions for the customers to experience flow. As flow is usually followed by a happiness feeling and because people search for permanent happiness – it provides a good foundation for keeping the students to come back.

Consequently, the levels had to be adjusted to the students as well as they have to feel comfortable. Furthermore, it will result in more memberships being sold. The former can provide the latter. Consequently, they need to get high goals as they will strive to achieve their goals. Furthermore, HoP should make sure that instructors give clear goals in order for the students to know what they are supposed to do. By illustrating the move first and then break it down into pieces helps the student to realize what to do.

The elimination of disturbing elements can be done by removing competition, which happens when the levels are adjusted. Furthermore, by providing feedback the students will get an incentive to continue, as they can keep improving.

If the student is not intrinsically motivated this can be awakened by given them a purpose. Thus, when they succeed they will feel successful and hence get intrinsically motivated. Lastly, the sense of control is already fulfilled as pole dancing requires body control. However, the instructors can provide the students with an influence in the daily teaching by giving them some play time.

### **6.7 Managerial solutions for Nordea – Re-designing the settings**

Work takes a huge part of individual's life. Work for dealers is more than a half of their life if not the main part. Therefore, experiencing flow at work is one of the possibilities to live happily. Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Kuo & Ho (2010) and Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerouti (2010) all of them are analysing flow and work issues. It was said that it is possible to create flow in any job if eight conditions can be applicable. Moreover, it should not be just a possibility any more, but it should be desired in every job while creating the position. Managers in the bank who are responsible for creating the position should use flow. Not all of the conditions can be created, but some like clear goals, immediate feedback or some freedom can be possibly applied.

How should financial dealers' job look like if they are redesigned by the "Management's flow-framework"

#### ***Condition 1 – Being comfortable***

How comfortable dealers feel at work a lot depends on the environment and skills. Job resources were also discussed in the theoretical part as an important factor in order to experience flow. Atmosphere in the organization is really important and can differ between the same organization and different departments. It depends on the employees, working there, the manager and even small details of internal traditions. All the chosen respondents for the interviews were from different departments in one Nordea bank. The impression after the interviews shows that they all had different culture in the office. They got feedbacks in different ways and in different

frequency of time. They had some specific traditions typical just to the specific group of people. “High five” tradition, which had respondent F in order to celebrate every win. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to all the small details creating job resources and design it in order to make employees comfortable. Also, skills should correspond the tasks.

### ***Condition 2 – Give high goals***

Empirical findings showed that dealers have extremely high goals. Their goals were increased every period even though they could not achieve the lower ones. But high goals made them to be oriented to the better results and put more efforts. High goals make the work challenging and therefore interesting. Some people are tend to evaluate their capabilities lower than they actually are. High goals make them to reach even more than they think they can. However, it should not be too far from the realistic situation in order to avoid frustration situation with skills and challenges incompatibility.

### ***Condition 3 – Give clear goals***

Dealers always have their goals. At least yearly and quartaly goals are communicated well by their manangers officially. But in order to be more clear, goals should be devided to every day, or at least weekly goals. Because if the period when the goals should be completed is too long, they are not able to track how successful they are. There is a risk to be too relaxed because it feels like a lot of time to achieve the goal. Contrary, if the dealer knows how much he should do in order to achieve daily goal, every working day he can know how good he was. As a result, goals should be devided into the smaller periods of time.

### ***Condition 4 – Eliminate disturbing elements***

Strong concentration depends a lot on the person. If he is successful in avoiding additional minds not related to job and can ignore external disturbances, dealer can be strongly concentrated. On the other hand, managers could help dealers to concentrate easier. For example, there could be hired student assistant to help dealers with the manual tasks: like documentation or even answering some emails and phone calls. Traiders could use all their working hours to actually trade. Also, noice level could be reduced. Some dealers claimed that they learned not to hear any noice. Conversely, the others can have some difficulties to focuss when everybody around are

shouting loudly. The solution could be restructuring working seats in the office by avoiding to seat more than two dealers at one desk.

### ***Condition 5 – Provide feedback***

Financial dealers state that they can see the feedback of their work independently from official feedback from the boss. Feedback is a profit loss which is checked every day. Moreover, they are getting official feedback from the management in different frequency of time. In order to follow eight flow conditions, feedback should be immediate. Therefore it is recommended every day. There could be 5 minutes meeting every day before starting to work, where everybody's successes and losses could be discussed. It is important to give positive feedback as well as negative. Small team traditions like "high five" (the example given by respondent F) could be very valuable, so that to increase positive atmosphere and intrinsic motivation.

### ***Condition 6 – Provide the person with a purpose***

Management can uncover during the hiring process whether the candidate is able to be intrinsically motivated or not. By asking how many hours they usually work, which ambitions they have and so forth, they have a chance of selecting people who more easily achieve flow.

There are factors in order for flow to happen, which do not depend on the external circumstances. Effortless involvement, concerns and the sense of time can not be affected by the manager or job design. It depends just on the person. In order for the three mentioned factors to happen, a person should really like the area he is working in. A dealer should be extremely interested in economics, general market situation, be aware of what is happening in the world. If the area is not interesting for the person, it is less likely that he will ever be so involved that he could forget time or concerns. Therefore, Human Resources managers should be aware to choose people for the dealer's position not just depending on their knowledge, degree, or experience. Apparently, intrinsic wish to work this job is even more important. As it can be seen from the interviews, two of three respondents did not have any relevant education before starting to work as dealers. They really wanted to work there, but they were not qualified for the position. However, they learned everything by working and became very successful. A person who has a strong desire to work in a specific area which is interesting for him, can be determined to learn hard and fast.

Consequently, it is better to hire somebody less qualified but with the strong desire and interest to work.

Redesigning job in order to facilitate flow is just one of two complementary strategies in order to improve the quality of life, claims Csikszentmihalyi (1990). It is essential to help people develop autotelic personality. So that they could recognize and find more opportunities in actions. However, despite all the possible strategies used in order to create flow experience, personality acts the vital role. There are two certain types of people, who cannot experience flow. The person who is constantly worried about the others perception of him and self- centered individuals. But even though, the person does not have two extreme pathologies in his personality the attitude makes a difference. If the person is sceptical, negative or depressed, it is less possible that he would experience flow. The person who is naturally curious interested in the area he is working with, is more tend to experience flow.

#### ***Condition 7 – Provide controllable activities***

Two of three respondents were feeling in control while working. Every dealer has a day's budget which differs depending on the experience and qualifications. Most of the times they can act independently on their budgets, except if they are taking a risky trade and losing huge amount of money it is possible to be interrupted by a manager. Sense of control is felt regarding money. It seems that dealer's position already has this factor. However, as the example from the interview shows not everyone can feel the sense of control. Even though, the conditions to feel in control are within dealers job, some types of personalities might not experience it.

#### **6.8 Cost benefit analysis**

It was agreed that dealers are able and can experience flow at their job. But what can we say about the benefit of flow experience at dealers work and personal life? Despite the fact that flow is a positive experience some negative outcomes were noticed. Job becomes as an addiction, lack of attention to families and physical exhaustion. There were no extreme negative social factors noticed between three interviewed respondents. They all still have their families without any divorces. On the other hand, the Respondent E recently had to stop working as a dealer because

of his health. He was told to stop working this job, because it was too stressful for his body otherwise he would die. Even though the Respondent E liked his job a lot and could not describe it as stressful, his body reacted in other way. However dealers are calling their job as a game and describe it as a positive experience or the best year of their life. *"I could say to everyone, if they have a possibility to try, try it, - says Respondent D.* It can be said that positive side of flow cannot be denied, but there should be some limits restricting going too deep in to the flow.

But what can we say about the benefits for the bank? Is it beneficial to design a working place so that it would be easier to experience flow? What does it give to the organization?

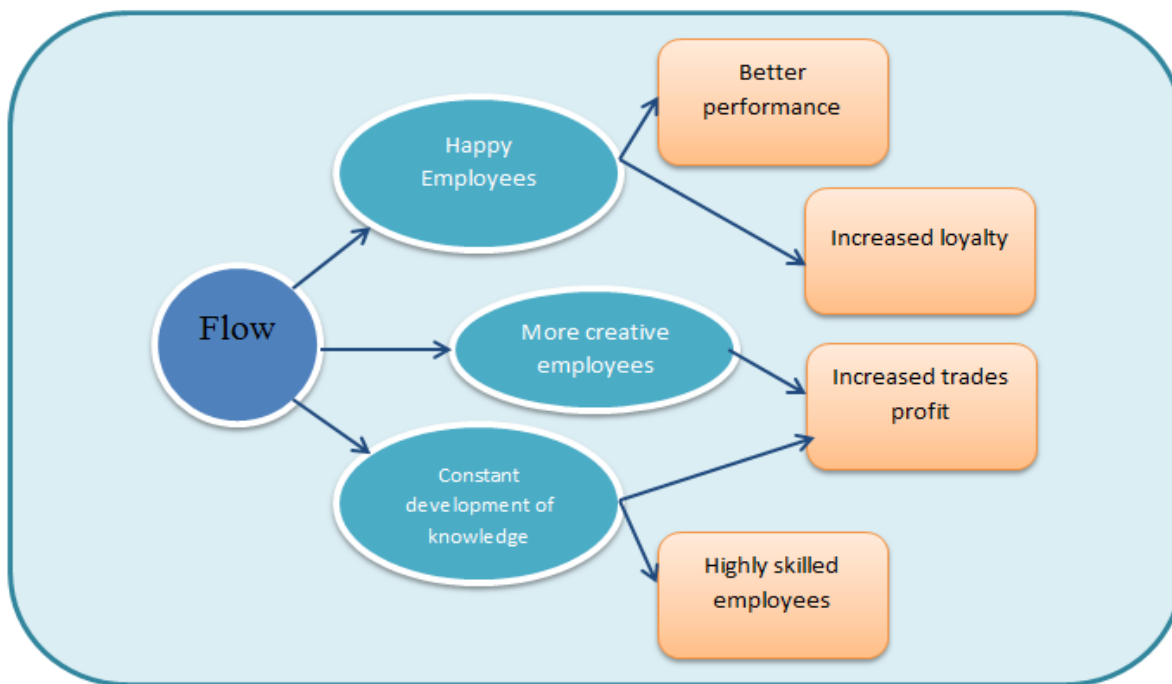
Firstly, it gives a happy employee. Employees' satisfaction is one of the desired goals to all the successful companies. Happy employees are more enthusiastic and perform their tasks with bigger commitment. While working with passion they are willing to do more and as a result they can reach higher results. Moreover, if employee is satisfied with his work it is less possible that he would look for another job or try to go to the competitors. Because company can lose a lot of money by hiring new employee and providing expensive trainings every time they lose a specialist. On the other hand, loyalty can be seen as a negative outcome (under the chapter 3.5 Criticism of flow theory), how it is described by Sennett (2006).

Secondly, respondents of the conducted interviews claimed that because of strong involvement they almost never took any days off caused by sickness. Less sick days are used in the department, more productive it is. But looking from the different perspective, it also can be seen as a negative side. Is it good that employees are going to work even though they are sick? They can infect all the other colleagues, do more mistakes and be not productive. However, it could help to avoid employees who are taking the days off even if they feel just a little bit sick.

Moreover, Respondents claimed that when they were in a flow mood they were tend to risk more, found creative ways to use information and had more profitable trades. Contrary, they were tended to finish the day with zero, if they were not in a flow. So dealers were more creative and were willing to find some new ways of getting more profit while being in flow.

Finally, if a manager is able to create the flow circle (picture 8) the employee will be in a constant development of knowledge. The circle between anxiety and boredom makes a person to keep learning and developing skills. Otherwise, the task will not be interesting. During the period of time dealers improve their skills just because of getting experienced. They get better, tasks become too easy, so they deepen their knowledge and take more difficult tasks.

*Figure 18 – Consequences of management tool implementation*



*Source: Authors' own creation*

Accordingly, because of flow experience bank can save money by decreasing employees' retention and saving money on trainings for new employees. There are less sick days used and because of that productivity increases. Also, happy employees perform better. And lastly, they are willing to learn more by themselves and constantly deepen their knowledge.

## 6.9 Sum up

The answers to the same interview questions were very different. Two of three respondents answered very emotional and explicit. They were passionate about telling more than were asked. They could not hide that work was or is more important part of their life than their families.

There was no doubts that Respondents D and E experienced flow while working. But Respondent F was not so passionate about the questions. His answers were more constructive and contained pure facts without including emotions. He admitted that sometimes he felt stress because of the work, and never described it as a possitive feeling. It was more a tough job, requiring strong concentration for him than a feeling of enjoyment. Therefore, possibly the respondent F was not experiencing flow constantly even though the 8 conditions were applicable. His personality an the view in general could be an explanation. Autotelic personality was not developed enough. Also, it could be the atmosphere at work or job resources, how it was named by Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola, & Demerrouti (2010).

The other question which came up after completing the interviews, are dealers really motivated intrincically or is it the money that makes them work so much? Respondents mentioned huge salary and high bonusses many times. Money for them was the way to freedom of spending their free time in the ways they wanted. It was also the way to keep their families happy. Instead of spending a lot of time with them they were spending short but qualitative time together. What they could not do without huge salaries. So if dealers were motivated by money, it is extrinsic motivation. As it was defined in the very beginning of the theory part, flow experience is strictly intrinsic. Flow happens when the activity is a reward by itself and provides the enjoyment without additional motivators. So if the dealers are motivated by money, are they really experiencing flow? When the respondents were asked what is the biggest motivation in their job-money or the job itself, they all responded that it was the job. *"It was not salary or bonuses. It was very good of course, but it wasn't that. After ten years of working I got huge bonuses, a lot of that money I still have. So I could haves stopped if it was just money. It was a game, colleagues, traders in foreign countries. It's like poker. Work itself was driving me,"* says Respondent E. Therefore, it can be claimed that money is one of the motivators or nice part of the dealer's job, but the main motivator is the activity itself.

It can be concluded, that dealers are able to experience flow if they are provided with the necessary conditions. However, the personality type and the attitude to work are not less important. In order flow experience would be beneficial to the employees and to the company all the stressed factors should be taken into the considerations and balanced very carefully.



## 7.0 Conclusion

The initial research question started a journey through stress, pain, happiness and performance. Thus, the present chapter will conclude upon the gathered knowledge by answering the research question. The initial research question that has been aimed to answer is as follows:

**”How can management use flow experiences in daily work for the company to perform better?”**

*“When all a person’s skills are needed to cope with the challenges of a situation, that person’s attention is completely absorbed by the activity” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)*

According to the above-mentioned citation flow is the state of mind where nothing but the activity itself exists. Consequently, this thesis examined two deviant cases; pole dancers and financial dealers optimal experience. By taking the stand of the interpretivist perspective lead to explicate the world from within the realm of the individual consciousness and subjectivity. Hence, the case studies formed the base for answering the research question.

The similarities between pole dancers and financial dealers were surprising. The case studies revealed that all respondents except one had experienced flow. Thus, they stressed that one had to be intrinsically motivated as all the respondents were encountered by stress, bruises, frustrations; just to mention a few sacrifices. Hence, the respondents kept doing their job or performed their sport – simply because they liked it.

Different paradoxes were revealed during the research. However, some respondents stated that by performing (pole dance or at work) gave their life a purpose. All the intrinsically motivated respondents showed that flow is utilized to overcome the paradox that exists within the existential psychology. As flow provided a purpose and the respondents were committed, thus they found meaning in a meaningless world.

Both pole dancers and financial dealers experienced the happiness rush after being in flow. However, all the respondents who achieved flow experienced frustrations along the way to the optimal experience as if it is an inseparable part of flow.

Furthermore, the respondents' focus was so high that they forget to eat and sleep enough reflecting the darker side of flow. Despite sickness and injuries they kept doing their activity as it was used as an escape from reality. All of them forgot about families, fights and even hunger. The activity has become their life and thus, flow was used to overcome the paradox mentioned above.

A peculiar finding was the paradox of being comfortable on one side and leaving the comfort zone on the other side. Both cases suggested that being comfortable was extremely important to all of them. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) stated that the paradox of being in control and the risk of being overconfident exist. This was furthermore confirmed by the empirical findings.

During the empirical research, it was experienced that some of the eight conditions were merely descriptions of flow and would not work as a tool for management to set up the best conditions for customers and employees to achieve flow. Thus, the management flow-framework was designed based on the analysis of empirical research and discussion of theoretical implications.

The most important elements were:

- 1) Feeling comfortable
- 2) High goals that are being raised
- 3) Clear goals
- 4) Elimination of disturbing elements
- 5) Provide feedback
- 6) Attract intrinsically motivated people or make them committed
- 7) Provide controllable activity

The first condition did encounter a paradox of being comfortable on one hand and leaving the comfort zone on the other hand. However, all respondents mentioned that being comfortable was important for them in order to leave the comfort zone. Furthermore, the second condition provided them with a purpose and kept them going. However, the goals needed to be clear otherwise they lead to frustrations and stress. Some respondents had a hard time either feeling comfortable or focusing when there were disturbing elements. In order for them to achieve flow they needed to be able to focus first thus, the fourth condition is also important.

The feedback was proven to make them stretch their skills as it presented a challenge. Thus, the respondents knew where they were headed. The commitment was shared by all respondents and was the factor that made sure that they achieved their goal despite the lack of fulfillment of basic needs. Thus, hiring intrinsically motivated employees could fulfill this condition. However, if it is not possible management needs to make sure that the employees or performers are committed in one way or the other. Either by making sure the other conditions are fulfilled or by creating a spirit of solidarity.

The last condition was important as the respondents needed to feel in control. Otherwise, they cannot change the situation, which would lead to boredom.

If all conditions are fulfilled it would lead to happy employees that perform better, as flow creates the happiness feeling afterwards. In the pole dancing case, it creates happy customers that keep coming back and in the other case the financial dealers loved their job and performed better.

In addition to the management framework, a correlation between the level of focus, the level of flow and thus, the level of addictiveness was found in the pole dancing case. Furthermore, the empirical findings revealed a duality, which means that flow cannot only consist as the optimal experience, but it is also deeply connected to the flow-frustrations. These frustrations proved to be necessary in order to achieve flow.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1. Interview with respondent A

The interviewer is abbreviated as I and respondent C is marked as C.

**I:** Nu har du jo været til din første poledance time og det er faktisk et af mine spørgsmål her. Hvordan havde du det bagefter?

*A: Hvilken en af timerne? Delighten eller...?*

**I:** Den aller aller første

*A: Den aller første hernede?*

**I:** Uhmhhh

*A: Skal jeg jo lige til at tænke*

**I:** DU var her sammen med Pip og Amalie

*A: Det var jo ikke rigtig den første. Den var jo lidt for sjov*

**I:** Men hvordan havde du det efter den?

*A: Jeg havde haft en rigtig sjov oplevelse. Og jeg synes det var, da jeg kom hjem, da var jeg sådan, hold kæft det var hårdt og svært*

**I:** Ja

*A: men samtidig rigtigt sjovt*

**I:** Okay. Jeg tænker, når det er så hårdt og svært, men alligevel sjovt, er det så det der har gjort at nu tænkte du, nu vil jeg gerne starte fordi det var sjovt selvom det var hårdt og svært eller?

*A: Jeg tror det var lidt de efterfølgende dage faktisk, da jeg kunne mærke det på min krop, hvor meget jeg havde brugt den på bare, jeg tror vi stod og fjollede i hvad 20 minutter eller sådan noget, hvor øm jeg var i de tre dage efter. Og da jeg kunne mærke det var jeg sådan: Hvis det kan være så sjovt at træne, så er det jo det hele værd. Altså, for man griner jo ikke når man går ned i et træningscenter og står med vægte og sådan noget vel. Så tænkte jeg det var en god træningsform.*

**I:** Det giver noget helt andet måske?

*A: Ja, lige præcis.*

**I:** Hvad med oppe i Polefitness hvor du prøvede det allerførste gang, hvad synes du egentlig der efter timen?

*A: Der tænkte jeg, det her kommer jeg aldrig til at gå til .*

**I: Fordi?**

*A: Jeg tror bare sådan det var hele oplevelsen, a hvad jeg sådan kan huske, det er jo nogle år siden efterhånden. Men det var hele det der med vi var jo den flok piger, men vi kunne ikke alle sammen være på et hold, så mig og min veninde Ditte skulle jo være på et hold efter. Og da jeg sådan kom ind, så var det ikke sådan nogen der sagde hej eller velkommen og I kan klæde om herinde og komme herind bagefter. Det var sådan lidt op til tilfældighederne synes jeg. Vi tussede lidt rundt og var sådan lidt "Øh hvor går vi hen?". Og da vi så kom ind og klædte om så havde vi jo overhovedet ikke det tøj på som alle de andre havde. De rendte jo rundt i de der små shorts, det skal man jo lige vænne sig til ik. Og så kommer vi så ind i den der sal, som er meget sådan lille kan jeg huske. Jeg synes vi stod meget tæt i hvert fald. Og så var der, jeg ved ikke om det var underviseren eller om det var en af de andre der var der, der bare førte sig frem nede i anden ende. Vi stod i den ene ende og i den anden var der bare en eller der førte sig frem i små shorts og så skide godt ud og rundt på den der stang, og min veninde og jeg stod bare og kiggede. "Øøøø okay..." Og så gik timen jo i gang og vi prøvede og prøvede og jeg synes bare at det var alt for svært og det var jo det var da sjovt, men på samme tid synes jeg det var ydmygende faktisk. Jeg ved ikke om det var fordi at jeg jo var på en prøvetime, men der var mange på holdet som var rigtig gode på den prøvetime ikke. Og så, altså, vi kunne jo ingenting, ingenting overhovedet.*

**I: Nej**

*A: Jeg ved ikke, underviseren stod vist også langt nede i den anden ende, end hvor vi stod, tror jeg. Ja, det gjorde hun.*

**I: Ummm**

*A: Og så efter den time så gik vi jo ud og så kan jeg huske jeg var sådan, jeg var træt, altså det var ikke sådan, altså jo vi havde grint, men det havde ikke været sådan overdrevet sjovt, det havde bare været sådan "Haha – det var hårdt agtigt og ydmygende på samme tid, og det gider vi ikke at gøre igen agtigt". Og så smuttede vi. Jeg tror det var hele sådan atmosfæren*

**I: Man følte sig ikke tilpas**

*A: Nej. Jeg følte mig ikke velkommen og det er meget vigtigt for mig når jeg skal ned i et center, at når jeg træder ind ad døren så skal det være en rar følelse jeg får. Jeg har prøvet det i nogle forskellig centre. Også træningscenter og sådan noget. Det første indtryk jeg får, skal være så jeg føler at det er et varmt og pænt sted at være, og det var det ikke. Så jeg kom der ikke igen.*

**I: Ej, det var det (Sjov) Hvad tænkte I så på da I lavede al det der pole? Tænkte I meget sådan på hvordan de andre var og...**

*A: Ja, jeg ved det ikke. Jeg tror jeg tænkte meget over hvor klumpedumpet jeg egentlig så ud og altså hvor de andre var og hvor dårlig man selv var og at man slet ikke kunne snurre rundt.*

**I: Hvad så da du var hernede (House of Pole), var det så de samme tanker du havde?**

*A: Nej*

**I: Hvad tænker du så på når det er du**

*A: Jeg ved ikke om forskellen er at det er fordi jeg kender dig.*

**I: Ja**

*A: Men jeg tror bare at da vi var hernede den der dag med Amalie og Pip. Var Nanna også med der?*

**I: Nej**

*A: Der var det sådan, jeg var meget nysgerrig, og så "Karina, kan du ikke vise hvordan du underviser, kan du ikke vise os lidt og kan du ikke gøre lidt. " Jeg ville rigtig gerne prøve, fordi nu var jeg jo et trygt sted og et sted hvor jeg kunne grine sammen med veninder, og det var ikke ydmygende at stå op på en stang eller svinge rundt på en stang for det var jo dem jeg var sammen med, var jo nogen som jeg kender og kan lide. Det trygge miljø. Øhm, og så... Så havde vi det jo bare så sjovt altså fordi vi var jo alle sammen lige.*

**I: Ja.**

*A: Der var jo ingen af os der kunne, og så var vi jo dybt fascineret over at du kunne. Alle de der ting man bare havde en drøm om at hold da op – tænk hvis man kunne det der.*

**I: Så får man sådan lidt et mål man sætter sig og det dér, det vil jeg også kunne – hehe**

*A: Ja, det vil jeg gerne kunne det der.*

**I: Ja**

*A: Men det var meget anderledes synes jeg. Og så den første sådan rigtige time jeg var her, der var jeg her alene, det var efter påske*

**I: Ja**

*A: Der havde jeg sådan efter vi havde været hernede og have det sjovt hvor jeg var så øm i 3 dage efter, så tænkte jeg "Det er jeg nødt til at prøve igen. Og da jeg så var her den første time trods jeg var her alene med et helt hold jeg ikke kendte, så kunne jeg da godt mærke til at starte med at det var lidt svært når man står der for der er jo mange venindeflokke og de havde det jo vildt sjovt. Det var ligesom om at folk er meget sådan, at man godt kan grine sammen selvom man ikke kender hinanden. Og sådan har det faktisk været på de timer jeg har været på. Folk er meget....*

**I: Åbne?**

*A: Ja.*

**I: Det er også dejligt. Så er det igen det der med at man tør åbne sig op og dumme sig lidt når man føler sig tryk.**

*A: Lige præcis*

**I: Kunne du mærke forskel på første gang til anden gang hernede, altså i de ting du lavede? Altså en udvikling i ...**

*A: Altså fra første gang i Polefitness og så til min første dag på timen. Altså det kunne jeg jo godt mærke. Der var jo en verden til forskel altså fordi man ligesom vidste hvad jeg gik ind til. Det vidste jeg jo overhovedet ikke for 3 år siden. Der var det bare sådan lidt; "hvad er det? Det prøver vi lige." Der kunne man måske godt lidt mærke at man havde lidt mere teknik og teknik – det kan man måske ikke rigtig sige.*

**I: Der ER meget teknik i det.**

*A: Men bare det der med at man vidste hvad det gik ud på tror jeg. Og ja, der var forskel. Jeg synes i hvert fald at jeg kunne noget mere end allerførste gang ik.*

**I: Så når du er ude at løbe for eksempel, hvad tænker du på når løber? Altså hvor er dine tanker henne? Det lyder måske lidt fjollet, men...**

*A: Nej, det gør det ikke, men grunden til at jeg griner af hvor mine tanker er henne, er at jeg tænker at jeg bare skal igennem den der løbetur. Jeg synes ikke det er specielt sjovt at løbe faktisk.*

**I: Nej?**

*A: Jeg gør det fordi at jeg har brug for noget motion og fordi det er en nem måde for mig at få, eller ikke en nem, men hvad skal man sige. Det der med at skulle ned i et træningscenter skal jeg bruge utrolig meget overtalelse af mig selv på bare at komme ud ad døren, hvor at det er nemmere for mig at komme ud ad døren hvis jeg bare skal ud og løbe en tur... Men jeg tænker bare "Kom nu, du kan godt. Det er ikke så mange kilometer" og så tonser jeg bare igennem den der rute så godt jeg nu kan, og når jeg så er færdig så har jeg det så dejligt. Så det jeg tror jeg jagter når jeg løber er den der følelse jeg får bagefter, fordi jeg ved at den gør mig så meget mere glad.*

**I: Ja... Er det den samme følelse du får når du pole dancer?**

*A: Ja, men poledance er noget helt andet fordi... Jo jeg kommer fordi jeg ved at jeg bliver rigtig glad bagefter og jeg får den der "Yes, nu har jeg ydet noget". Men jeg bliver også glad på en anden måde. Det er ikke ligeså svært for mig at bliver overtalt, altså overtale mig selv når jeg skal hjemmefra og skal herved som det er når jeg skal ud at løbe. Men det er jo også fordi at det er sjovt – undervejs også og det er det jo ikke når jeg løber.*

**I: Pole dance, når du siger at det er så sjovt, det virker som at det er lidt noget du gør fordi du får en glæde af det, og ikke fordi du skal motionere?**

*A: Jo jeg tror det er sådan en kombi af at, i det store hele er motion for mig at jeg kan se ud som jeg gerne vil, men samtidig ved jeg at jeg bliver meget glad. Jeg bliver i hvert fald meget gladere af at motionere og pole er meget det samme som jeg går efter. Både motion og at blive glad. Men det er bare på en anden måde. En sjovere måde. Jeg får et kick ud af det.*

**I: Har du endnu oplevet at du blev lidt afhængig?**

*A: Jeg tror ikke endnu. Jo, både og fordi jeg har det sådan at jeg skal være her en gang om ugen kan jeg mærke på mig selv, fordi jeg når mine arme ikke er tunge mere, så ved jeg at det er på tide at komme af sted. Når jeg ikke er øm mere, så er det ved at være for lang tid siden. Så jeg kan godt mærke at jeg gerne vil af sted igen fordi jeg vil gerne have den følelse jeg har i min krop de dage efter jeg har trænet. Men jeg tror der går nogle gange endnu før jeg sådan – altså jeg har lidt af det nu, men jeg tror godt den kan vokse den følelse.*

**I: Har du været inde i et spin eller trick som du tænkte at det her lærer jeg aldrig, men hvor du følt dig tvunget eller presset dig selv til at komme ind idet?**

*A: Det er jo fra da jeg startede – bare fra dag 1 af har jeg ikke kunnet noget til nu, hvor jeg kan lidt mere fordi man presser. Og jeg kan huske sidste gang hvor jeg prøvede den der hvor man skal gribe fat bagom. Det tog jo næsten to hele timer hvor jeg bare prøvede igen og igen og igen. Og det lykkedes! Og selvom den ikke er perfekt, men bare det at jeg fik gjort det.*

**I: Er bare en udvikling!**

*A: Ja lige præcis. Og det samme med at komme op brugte jeg en hel time på sidste gang. Og så kom jeg op første gang sidste gang jeg prøvede. Det synes jeg er fedt at der er den her... Og det er jo fordi at du bliver med at sige : ”Kom nu du kan godt”. Så tænke man ja, jeg kan godt. Men der skal meget, altså man skal presse meget selv synes jeg.*

**I: Er det meget psykisk eller er det meget fysisk du mener når du siger presse meget selv?**

*A: Jeg tror det er begge dele fordi sidst på timen kan jeg mærke det i mine, altså jeg kan mine arme næsten ikke mere. Jeg føler at jeg er en kæmpe bamse. Men jeg tror også at det er psykisk det der med at der sker ikke noget, kom nu bare op. Men jeg synes også at det er lidt svært for eksempel det der med at komme op på hovedet.*

**I: Men lægger du mærke til i løbet af timen hvor meget du egentlig laver eller er det først til sidst på timen at det egentlig går op for dig ”gud hvor har jeg egentlig knoklet for mine arme er altså tunge”.?**

*A: Ej, det først tror jeg når de begynder sådan at blive så tunge at jeg føler at jeg ikke kan gøre noget, at jeg ikke kan gøre mere.*

**I: Så du kan faktisk godt lidt glemme at du træner?**

*A: Ja. Helt sikkert. Så det glemmer man fordi man er så koncentreret om at gøre tingene og få det til at lykkes. Så glemmer du at du rent faktisk bruger din krop.*

**I: Hvis du så skulle, nu du siger at du er ret koncentreret, sige på en skala fra 1 til 10 sige hvor fokuseret du er når du pole dancer hvor 10 er det højeste og mest fokuseret.**

*A: Det ved jeg ikke – øhm... Altså jeg er så fokuseret at jeg aldrig nogensinde får set mig i spejlet. Og der er tit hvor folk har spurgt hvordan ser du så ud? Men det ved jeg ikke for jeg får ikke set mig selv i spejlet. Så jeg vil sige, så er man ret fokuseret. Men nu er det ikke fordi jeg sådan er fokuseret på mig selv hele tiden fordi jeg kigger jo også på hvad de andre gør og lige sådan, når det er sådan de gør.*

**I: Ja, for lige at komme ind i tingene. Men tænker du så, ah det er sådan og sådan de gør når du så laver tingene? Men hvis du bare skal sætte et tal på og der er jo ikke noget rigtigt eller forkert.**

*A: ej, det ved jeg ikke – en 8'er måske.*

**I: Hvis du skulle vurdere på den samme skala når du løber hva vil du så sige?**

*A: Hvor fokuseret jeg så er?*

**I: Ja. Hvor fokuseret er du på at løbe?**

*A: Ej, men der tænker man jo på noget helt andet. Der tænker man ikke på at løbe, men ej hvor er det hårdt. Det gør ondt i benene. 4... 5... Måske. Den ligger i hvert fald under.*

**I: Har du så nogensinde oplevet at du slet ikke har haft styr på hvor lang tid du har stået og trænet? Altså hvor tiden den bare var en faktor der fløj af sted.**

*A: Ja, det har jeg faktisk. Men jeg kunne mærke at på de to delight hold jeg har været på der er tiden bare gået sådan her. Hvor at på de to position hold jeg har været på, der kunne jeg godt mærke at puhaa, nu må timen godt snart være overstået. Men det er fordi at jeg er så træt. Fordi jeg har brugt mine arme så meget.*

**I: Så du blev udfordret noget mere end hvad du lige har fysik til måske. Ja, lige præcis.**

*A: Og der har jeg tænkt at timen godt snart måtte slutte og udstrækningen begynde, for der har jeg ikke kunnet mere. Men Dleight holdene fløj af sted. Der havde også både sådan god opvarmning og så dansede vi meget, men man brugte nok ikke armene ligeså meget. Eller det var i hvert fald ikke lige så hårdt for armene. Men det er ikke den der med at nu må time godt snart være slut, men den der med at ej, nu kan jeg ikke mere i armene.*

**I: Når du så lærer en ny ting eller prøver at lære den- hvad er det bedste ved den? Det der med at der er en ny ting du skal begynde at komme ind i.**

*A: Hvad der er det bedste?*

**I: ja.**

*A: Når det lykkes. Tror jeg.*

**I: hvad er det værste så? Når det ikke lykkes? Når det er for svært måske?**

*A: Nej, ikke det med at det er svært, men mere fordi det gør ondt. Og jeg kan mærke at min krop forhindrer mig i at det lykkes fordi jeg ikke er trænet nok eller sådan noget. Jeg kan godt mærke at jeg skal have noget mere styrke i mine arme, men det kommer på et tidspunkt. Så kan det godt irriterer mig det der med – ihhh hvorfor er alle andre så stærke når jeg ikke er? Jeg vil også have styrke så jeg også kan gøre det!*

**I: Det får du også snart.**

*A: Jeg synes godt at jeg kan mærke det hvor jeg tænker, er det flere muller eller er det bare psykisk. Jeg ved det ikke.*

**I: Jeg tror at det også er fysisk. Du nævnte også lidt med at du fik sådan et rush når du har været til pole dance timer. Er det stadig noget du får efter hver timen eller er det kun engang imellem?**

*A: Altså, det kommer meget an på hvad mit humør er vil jeg sige. Den første postion time jeg var til, der var jeg sådan helt høj bagefter. Men det var samtidigt fordi at jeg var så udfordret selvom jeg var den ultimative dårligste på holdet, så har jeg udfordret mig selv rigtig rigtig meget for at kunne mere. Så bagefter var jeg meget "fuck hvor var det fedt".*

**I: Men nu du siger udfordret, hvordan var der nogle ting du ikke kom i ind så? Altså hvor du prøvede, men det ikke lykkedes.**

*A: Jaja. Der var en masse ting, altså du viste et eller andet, og der var så en masse ting jeg ikke nåede til, men en masse af de andre ting jeg kunne.*

**I: Så du kom stadig op på hovedet på den time?**

*A: Ja lige præcis. Men jeg får sådan nogle rush af det, og det varierer lidt. Sidste gang var jeg i dårligt humør, så der kunne jeg godt mærke at der var rushet ikke lige så stort, men det var der. Så jeg er glad inden når jeg kører herfra.*

**I: Det var det.**

## **Appendix 2. Interview with respondent B**

**Interviewer is abbreviated to I and respondent B is marked as B.**

**I: Så –ehm- når du poledancer ved du så helt præcist hvad dit mål er?**

*B: Jeg vil sige det er meget forskelligt fra time til time, hvis der re noget jeg har arbejdet på f.eks. dagen før så vil jeg rigtig gerne arbejde videre med det. Ehm, men hvis nu der er noget nyt, så bliver det pludseligt et nyt mål, sådan inde i den time, men ellers så ja...*

**I: Så du får et mål og så er det du egentlig går efter?**

*B: Ja*

**I: Altså i løbet af timen eller i løbet af nogle dage?**

*B: Ja, hvis jeg ikke når det der, så de næste gange*

**I: Ehm, er de tit realistiske de her mål så? Eller er de for svære eller er de for nemme?**

*B: Jeg synes sjældent at de er for nemme.*

**I: Ja.**



*B: Det kan godt være nogen gang at de er lidt for svære. Specielt når jeg også kommer op på 2'er timerne tænker jeg.*

**I: ja.**

*B: at øh de kan blive lidt for svært og jeg vil helst kunne dem. Jeg vil helst kunne alting med det samme og kunne det ordentligt med det samme, så derfor tænker jeg at de bliver lidt urealistiske, men øhm ofte bliver jeg også overrasket over mig selv, at jeg kan noget jeg ikke havde regnet med jeg kunne.*

**I: Det er fedt! Hvordan har du det så?**

*B: Det er totalt fedt! Så bliver man helt høj (Sagt med megen entusiasme) og glad.*

**I: Ja.**

*B: Og man kan meget bedre overskue – alting. (griner) .*

**I: Ja. Så får du sådan en lykkefølelse?**

*B: Ja, total god følelse og jeg cykler bare helt glad hjem. Det er så fedt.*

**I: Hvad så med når du så egentlig har arbejdet på noget som har været rigtig rigtig svært og det så endelig er helt perfekt? Hvordan har du det så med det?**

*B: Jeg vil godt fortælle mange om det. (griner). Jeg bliver så stolt af mig selv og jeg synes det er, det er bare sådan en enorm succesfølelse som jeg ikke rigtig har haft andre steder, fordi et er at man laver en skoleopgave og det går godt og sådan noget, men det er lidt noget andet. Jeg synes det her er en anden følelse. Før har jeg løbet meget, men det var ikke det samme, fordi "Nå, så kan jeg løbe et minut hurtigere"-agtigt. Det gør altså ikke så meget forskel. Og her synes jeg virkelig at jeg kan mærke at, jeg kan jo se at pludselig kan jeg mærke på min krop at jeg kan noget. Pludselig kan jeg noget som jeg ikke har kunnet før.*

**I: Ja.**

*B: så det er helt vildt fed følelse når jeg endelig kan noget der har været rigtig svært.*

**I: Kan det være sådan noget med at man også udvikler sig hurtigt måske eller...?**

*B: Ja, helt sikkert. Jeg tror det er det eneste sted hvor jeg nogensinde har følt at jeg har udviklet mig så hurtigt. Hehe.*

**I: Ja. Når det er at du så eh træner, har du så nogle andre ting du lige tænker over eller tager dig af imens. Altså står du meget og snakker eller?**

*B: Hmm. Jeg synes at jo længere tid jeg har gået hernede jo mere kender man jo folk og det er jo meget hyggeligt også lidt at vide hvad folk læser eller om de er ved at købe bil eller et eller andet. Det synes jeg er meget fedt at følge med i. Jeg har meget god kemi med nogle af pigerne hernede, jeg synes det er hyggeligt at snakke med dem, men når jeg først er i gang med at lave noget, så er jeg egentlig meget fokuseret og glemmer egentlig ret meget, sådan alt omkring mig.*



**I: Ja. Ved du med det samme, når det er at du laver de her ting, sådan poledancer, ved du så om du fejler eller om du har succes med de ting du har lavet?**

*B: Jeg synes sådan ret hurtigt at man kan mærke sådan, man kan mærke at nu er jeg på vej, nu kan jeg næsten få mit ben rundt eller nu kan jeg næsten få fat i min fod eller. Så man mærker også hurtigt at okay; altså det er jo ret kropsligt så man mærker sådan hurtigt at okay nu kan jeg, og nu er der lang vej igen.*

**I: ja. Så du får sådan en hurtig feedback på de ting du laver ?**

*B: Ja.*

**I: Og eh hvad med instruktøren, eh giver de også feedback til deting du laver?**

*B: Ja. Rigtig meget også selvom det er altså nogen småting f.eks. at strække vristen og sådan noget. Og det er jo rigtig vigtigt og men kan ikke rigtig se sig selv lave det fordi det tit går hurtigt, men så er det rigtig fedt at man får noget feedback ud over det man får fra ens egen krop der kan eller ikke kan finde ud af det man skal lave.*

**I: Ja. Hvilke følelser har du når du, når du træner?**

*B: Uhm. Det er rigtig hårdt. Og jeg er rigtig glad og fokuseret. Øhm, jeg kan også godt blive ret frustreret hvis jeg ikke kan det som jeg godt ville kunne.*

**I: ja.**

*B: Øhm.*

**I: Hvordan tackler du denne her frustration?**

*B: Jeg plejer at blive ved med at gøre det, og prøver ligesom at finde de fejl jeg gør, og jeg spørger træneren hvilke fejl jeg laver eller... Så jeg kan prøve at arbejde med det fordi tit er det jo en eller anden lille ting med at der er luft mellem knæhasen og stangen og så kan jeg bare ikke finde ud af det. Og det er ikke altid at man selv kan mærke hvad der er galt.*

**I: Ja.**

*B: og øhm og så kan jeg ligesom arbejde med frustrationen ved at få noget feedback på det og prøve at gøre det bedre.*

**I: Så du bruger det på en konstruktiv måde også?**

*B: Ja, helt sikkert.*

**I: Super. Hvad, nu har vi været lidt inde på det, eller du har selv været lidt inde på det. Det med tiden og folk omkring én og så videre, det er noget du glemmer nævnte du lige før.**

*B: Ja*

**I: Glemmer du også sådan noget med at du er sulten og alle de her basale behov man jo egentlig har.**

*B: Ja, det er sjovt du spørger mig fordi jeg har faktisk undret mig over at nogle gange så er jeg gået sulten herved og så har jeg fuldstændig glemt at jeg er sulten og så tænker jeg altid at ej, nu begynder min mave at rumle hervede eller et eller andet jeg er helt vildt sulten. Og så glemmer jeg det vildt og tænker først bagefter, gud jeg var egentlig helt vildt sulten, og så kan jeg godt blive sulten igen, men det forsvinder faktisk lidt. Og det gør det også hvis jeg har været uvenner med min kæreste eller en veninde eller noget – det – jeg tænker slet ikke over det når jeg er i gang med at træne det er først sådan lidt bagefter at det kommer tilbage igen eller hvis jeg skriver eksamen så... det kommer først tilbage når jeg stopper med at træne.*

**I: Ja. Når du så, det talte vi også om før, ehm bare lige før at få det uddybet lidt, når det så er at ehm du har glemt alle de her ting og du har været inde i en ny ting måske eller et eller andet, du har formået at udvikle dig, ehm hvordan føler du så fysisk? Altså har du nogensinde sådan at du føler dig virkelig stærk eller føler du dig sådan bare tilpas i kroppen eller?**

*B: mmmm – Jeg får en tilpas følelse i hvert fald. Øhm og det der med at føle sig stærk, det synes jeg meget er når man er til træning at man pludselig kan mærke at ej nu er det her lettere fordi jeg er blevet stærkere eller, det synes jeg man kan mærke.*

**I: Ja.**

*B: Og så kan jeg tage armbøjninger nu! Det har jeg aldrig kunnet før, så det gør jeg derhjemme fordi jeg kan.*

**I: Haha- bare fordi jeg kan! Ehm –når du danser føler du at det er dig der har kontrollen?**

*B: Ja, det gør jeg, men hvis jeg så får at vide at jeg gør noget forkert, så tænker jeg, nå men så havde jeg jo ikke så meget kontrol over min krop som jeg troede, men man skal være enormt opmærksom på alt sådan ved ens krop, og nogen gange så er det lidt svært at have kontrol over det hele så man ikke lige kommer til at gøre et eller andet forkert.*

**I: Har du oplevet at du har udviklet din motorik og den her kropskontrol?**

*B: Ja, jeg synes at man får mere kropsfornemmelse. Altså man lægger mere til hvis man bruger sin ene hånd hvad laver den anden så eller hvis jeg sådan, ehm altså sådan småting. Alligevel er jeg blevet mere opmærksom på det og strækker mine fødder når jeg sådan ja... Både når man sidder derhjemme eller ligger ned så er man bare mere opmærksom på sin krop på en eller anden måde.*

**I: Men det er jo også sådan, jeg tænker at poledance er jo lidt en farlig sport. Man hænger med hovedet nedad i sin knæhase og det er sådan lidt, man må jo føle en eller anden form for kontrol i kroppen før man måske -**

*B: Ja, helt sikkert*

**I: tør at hoppe ud i sådanne ting.**

*B: Ja, jeg tror præcis at når man ikke tør så er det fordi at man ikke hvis man ikke tør svinge sig rundt i venstre og lave det der reversed spin*

**I: Uhm.**

*B: så syne jeg tit at jeg tænker, ej det har jeg ikke kontrol over, så tør jeg ikke gøre det.*

**I: Ja. Hvad tænker du så på når du danser? Altså, er det kun dansen eller tænker du slet ikke eller?**

*B: Jeg undrer mig faktisk over hvor lidt jeg tænker fordi jeg har været til at når man løber så tænker man sådan: Nå, hvad skal jeg når jeg kommer hjem og hvad skal jeg i morgen og så skal jeg skrive det der i min opgave, men her der tænker jeg ikke så meget. Jeg tænker mest på at –*

**I: Ja?**

*B: Hvordan bliver jeg bedre, hvad er det jeg gør forkert eller...*

**I: Ja? Er det der med at koncentrationen ligesom har taget over så det bliver sådan...?**

*B: Ja, meget kropsfonemmelse. Altså nogen gange kan tankerne sådan godt lige flyve væk til et eller andet, netop hvis man er uvenner med nogen eller hvis man sidder og skrive eksamen, men jeg synes faktisk at det er meget sjældent. Jeg tror også at det er derfor at det giver mig så meget fordi det er virkelig... Det folk siger med et pusterum, nu forstår jeg bedre hvad det er.*

**I: Altså har poledancen så haft indflydelse på nogle af dine dagligdagsting eller dine aftaler og så videre?**

*B: Ja, det har det faktisk ret meget. Øhm, nu har jeg så også skrevet eksamen siden 1. Maj, altså halvanden måned, men det var så også der omkring jeg begyndte til pole og jeg har faktisk ikke rigtig set nogen veninder, kom jeg til at tænke på da jeg kiggede i min kalender, fordi at jeg har prioriteret det her. Ehm, måske lidt for højt vil nogen synes, men jeg kan bare mærke at det er det jeg har brug for lige nu, og så kan det være at det ændrer sig igen om nogle måneder, men jeg tror også bare at det måske er fordi at det er eksamensperiode, men jeg har bare ikke rigtig haft behov for at sidde og drikke kaffe med nogle veninder og sådan noget. Det er fint nok bare at skrive lidt sms'er med dem og så kan jeg være her, og mit liv har eller er i hvert fald blevet planlagt meget efter min træning fordi at jeg kan mærke at det er vigtigt for mig og hvis jeg ikke, eller hvis kun i gåseøjne træner 3 gange om ugen så bliver jeg lidt frustreret.*

**I: Ja. Hvor meget tid sagde du at du bruger på det så? 3 gange om ugen i hvert fald.**

*B: Jeg vil godt prøve at være her 5.*

**I: Ja.**

*B: Helst 5.*

**I: Er det 5 lektioner eller er det 5 dage?**

*B: 5 dage. Det kan godt være at der er noget udstrækning eller noget core eller noget oveni.*

**I: Flere timer faktisk end**

*B: Ja, det er flere timer end 5 –hehe*

**I: Hvor meget eh, nu er du jo studerende, hvor meget fritid har du så normalt?**

*B: Men altså nu har jeg jo mest trænet hernede mens jeg har haft læseferie, og så har jeg jo haft ret meget fritid, men man disponerer det jo meget selv.*

**I: ja**

*B: Men ellers normalt så har jeg jo sådan noget øh måske 10-15 skoletimer om ugen. Og 1 arbejdsdag er 8 timer om ugen, så kan jeg alligevel, så jeg har nok meget fritid til at planlægge efter, nå så må jeg læse før eller læse efter og jeg synes også at jeg læser mere intensivt fordi jeg ved, nå men jeg skal nå det inden kl. 17 for der skal jeg afsted eller*

**I: Ja.**

*B: så det bliver meget planlagt efter træning.*

**I: Ehm, hvis du skulle beskrive hvor fokuseret du er når du poledancer på en skala fra 1-10 hvor at 1 er ikke særlig fokuseret og 10 er virkelig altså du tænker ikke på andet.**

*B: 9*

**I: 9?**

*B: Ja, jeg synes jeg er meget, jeg føler mig meget fokuseret.*

**I: Hvordan havde du det første gang du prøvede det?**

*B: Da følte jeg mig lidt som en elefant*

*B: Men øh, jeg kunne også godt mærke at jeg, eller jeg kunne også se på nogle af de andre at man alligevel kunne. Der var nogen der ikke havde gået der så lang tid og som kunne ret meget, og der var nogen af dem der var meget bedre end mig hvor jeg tænkte, det vil jeg også kunne. Det var sådan lidt, selvom jeg følte mig virkelig dårlig i forhold til de andre, så var det også sådan lidt...*

**I: Så var der ligesom et mål du ligesom kunne gå efter...**

*B: Ja, præcist.*

**I: det var også det jeg lige skulle til at spørge dig om. Hvis du følte dig som en elefant nemlig, hvordan kan det så være at du egentlig holdt ved?**

*B: Uhm... Jeg tror bare at jeg har danset, førhen har jeg danset i, fra jeg var 7 til jeg var 19 så jeg har altid danset meget. Og det har jeg så mistet lidt fordi at jeg var begyndt at gå til ballet og så var det for langt væk og sådan noget. Og så har jeg altid godt kunnet lide det der med at man har sådan et mål og jeg synes det der løb der altså det er altså lidt kedeligt. Det er fint nok, men det bliver lidt for meget en pligt, og så kunne jeg bare mærke at der var sådan et eller andet jeg synes var spændende og man kunne blive god til og man kunne udvikle sig og... Det betød også meget at, fordi der jeg overvejede at starte hernede var jeg lidt i tvivl om jeg skulle starte og det var oven i eksamen og så skrev jeg en mail til dig om det bare kunne lade sig gøre at jeg var der en måned eller sådan noget, for jeg var lidt i tvivl om det. Og jeg tror også at det betød meget for*

*mig at der var meget god respons fra dig og du svarede hurtigt, og jamen alt kunne lade sig gøre nærmest, så jeg tror jeg tænkte, nå, men så kan jeg lige så godt bare prøve det. Og så meldte jeg mig ind samme aften selvom jeg følte mig lidt som en elefant, så tænkte jeg ej, jeg skal lige prøve.*

**I: Fedt! Det er måske også lidt din personlighed der lægger lidt i det, at du ikke lader dig skræmme.**

*B: Nej, jeg har tit fået at vide at jeg er meget stædig i hvert fald. Jeg vil rigtig gerne blive god til noget eller blive bedre i hvert fald.*

**I: Hvis du skulle sammenligne din daværende egenskaber da du startede indenfor pole og du skulle sammenligne det med dine nuværende – hvor meget vil du så sige at du har udviklet dig på en skala fra 1-10, hvor 1 er det laveste, hvor du næsten ikke har udviklet dig, og 10 det er bare du har bare lært sindssygt mange ting?**

*B: Altså, forstået som så hvis jeg siger 10 så er det ikke fordi jeg kan alt?*

**I: Nej.**

*B: Jeg vil sige 9 igen.*

**I: ja.**

*B: Altså jeg føler at jeg har udviklet mig rigtig meget fra ikke at kunne lave de mest basis ting og være meget tung i det og få meget mere kropskontrol i ting jeg ikke havde troet at jeg ville kunne så hurtigt.*

**I: Hvad med psykisk? Har du udviklet dig der også?**

*B: Ja det har jeg helt sikkert!*

**I: Er du blevet mere selvsikker eller...?**

*B: Ja, også det der med at turde flere ting at jeg ikke er lige sådan at ej, det der tør jeg ikke, jeg er for tung eller... Selvfølgelig er der stadig mange ting man ikke kan, men jeg synes det har helt sikkert givet et rigtig stort boost det der med at udvikle sig rigtig meget indenfor ret kort tid .*

**I: Ja.**

*B: Og jeg snakker også rigtig meget om det til min kæreste, og veninder og familie for det fylder bare enormt meget hos mig. Men jeg synes det er helt vildt fedt og jeg går til alle mine veninder og sådan, ej, men I skal gå til det for det er så fedt og sådan noget. Det er nogle gange lidt svært at forklare folk synes jeg.*

**I: Har du nogensinde oplevet at du kommer ind i sådan et flow når det er du danser? Vi har været lidt inde på det og faktisk nogle af de ting som du siger at du oplever er lidt indenfor den her flow-teori, hvor man glemmer tid og sted og så videre. Og er meget fokuseret og man går med denne her lykkefølelse bagefter. Hvis jeg nu skulle lægge ord i munden på dig, ville jeg jo sige at det var lidt flow følelse du har haft og oplevet. Oplever du det hver gang du er til træning?**

*B: Jeg synes næsten hver gang. Ikke på for eksempel udstrækningstimer, så kan jeg godt sidde og snakke med nogle af de andre og sådan noget. Det er ikke på samme måde i flow, men på de rigtige træningstimer der kan jeg mærke at jeg tit bliver ved og ved og ved fordi at. Jeg synes også tit at timerne går meget hurtigt, jeg glemmer tiden. Jeg føler nogen gange at jeg kun har været her ti minutter og så er der gået en time, så jeg synes helt sikkert at jeg glemmer tiden. Måske det også er fordi at der ikke er noget ur man kan holde øje med. Så glemmer jeg tid og sted, at man er sulten og dem man er uvenner med og eksamen og alt det der*

**I: Så du oplever faktisk ikke rigtigt at du ikke kommer ind i det her stadie når det er du poledancer?**

*B: Nej, altså ikke til træningstimerne. Nej, det synes jeg ikke.*

**I: Okay. Ehm, har du nogensinde oplevet at du har lavet en fejl på pole'n? Altså sådan en lidt større fejl måske?**

*B: Jeg kan huske på et tidspunkt på Stinnes time hvor jeg øvede mig i at skifte fra outside til inside leg hang og hvor jeg ikke lige havde teknikken rigtig. Og så selvom jeg var meget langt nede med kroppen så fik jeg ikke fat og så faldt jeg lidt hårdt ned. Ikke noget der gjorde ondt eller noget, men det var jo en fejl fordi jeg ikke havde den rigtige teknik og havde kontrol over det jeg gjorde, men hvor jeg tænkte ej, nu prøver jeg bare.*

**I: Ja?**

*B: Så...*

**I: Okay så det var det der med at det måske var lige lidt for tidlig at begynde på skiftet?**

*B: Ja.*

**I: Et lidt for højt mål?**

*B: ja*

**I: Keder du dig nogensinde når det er at du er på de her timer?**

*B: Nej, det gør jeg faktisk ikke, selvom vi laver nogle af basis tingene som jeg godt kan så kan jeg jo altid blive bedre til dem*

**I: Ummm**

*B: Så jeg synes ikke det er kedeligt. Så prøver jeg bare at tænke over alle de ting du har sagt til mig som at strække det ene og det andet og huske den anden arm som ikke laver noget og bøjer lidt i armen og alt det der tænker jeg.*

**I: ja?**

*B: Så der er altid noget man kan arbejde på selvom det er småting.*

**I: Super. Det var faktisk mit sidste spørgsmål, så nu lader jeg dig slippe. Off the hook.**

### **Appendix 3. Interview with respondent C**

The interviewer is abbreviated as I and respondent C is marked as C.

**I: Når det er du poledancer ved du præcist hvad dit mål er på timen?**

*C: Ja, som regel bliver vi informeret om hvad det er vi skal lave og så får vi jo instruktioner undervejs i hvad det skal ende ud i og se ud. Øhm. Og så tror jeg som regel også at jeg har sådan et, mit eget mål for hvad jeg gerne vil lave hvis vi får mulighed for at få 5 minutter på egen hånd så har jeg som regel altid et eller andet jeg selv synes jeg gerne vil øve. Så som regel er der en dagsorden.*

**I: Men øh målene plejer at være rimelige klare?**

*C: Ja, det synes jeg. Altså vi ved jo aldrig hvad vi møder op til kan man sige, så på den måde er der jo ikke noget mål når vi kommer – øhm, som vi er forberedt på, men jeg synes det bliver sådan ret tydeligt hvad det er vi skal lave.*

**I: Hvad synes du så om de mål der bliver sat for jer eller dem som I selv sætter, er de så urealistiske høje eller for lave eller er de bare helt umulige?**

*C: Nej, jeg synes ikke de er urealistiske. Altså der er meget forskel på niveauet for gang til gang. Det svinger lidt om man bliver udfordret på noget helt nyt både i styrke og så smidighed og så andre gange så kan man næsten komme tilbage til et basic som man aldrig rigtig har fået helt fat i. Så på den måde så synes jeg niveauet svinger lidt, selvom jeg er på Position 2. Og det synes jeg egentlig er meget rart fordi der er altid noget man kan finpudse eller arbejde videre med.*

**I: Så når I så får en ting, en figur som du godt kan, men du måske ikke har finpudset helt, så er det fint nok eller – du synes ikke det bliver kedeligt når det er?**

*C: Altså hvis hele timen er sat af til at lave crusifix for eksempel, så kan det godt være at jeg måske ville synes at det var lige kedeligt nok.*

**I:Ja?**

*C: Men altså der er jo mange spins for eksempel som stadig godt kan finpudses og man kan lære mere af. Så hvis det ligesom kan blive en del af timen så synes jeg det er fint nok at gå tilbage i niveauet.*

**I: Har du så sådan nogle personlige mål selv når det er at du er på timerne. Så er der noget du tænker wow det der vil jeg kunne eller jeg vil være bedre til at danse eller jeg vil være bedre til at lave spins**

*C: Altså jeg tror generelt at jeg har en tilgang til timerne når jeg kommer at jeg vil gerne opnå det som var positionen på timen altså. Det er nok det der driver mig når jeg kommer at målet er*



også at gennemføre det. Ja, så er det jo som om det lykkes, altså det er jo alt efter sværhedsgraden. Men mit mål er i hvert altid at holde fokus på at det skal lykkes.

**I: Hvordan ved du så om det lykkedes eller om du fejlede?**

C: Jamen, det er jo enten den feedback man får fra en instruktør eller de andre. Nu er der jo et ret godt sammenhold på timerne så tit er vi o, kigger vi jo lidt hinanden over skulderen. Og der kommer jo altid feedback eller nogen der retter en til eller et eller andet. Men altså hvis man kommer op i positionen og kan mærke at man også har styrken til at udføre det, så vil jeg betragte det som om at man har gennemført om det så lige ser ud som professionelt, det ved jeg så måske ikke- men det at man kommer op og på en eller anden måde får en fornemmelse af hvordan man skal hænge eller du skal helt herud eller du skal holde fast; så vil jeg betragte det som

**I: som lykkes?**

C: som lykkes eller at man i hvert fald er på vej til at opnå det.

**I:Ja. Okay. Hvad, nu har du lidt været inde på det, men jeg tænkte på om du får feedback fra instruktørere siger du. Er der andre måder du sådan føler at du får noget feedback fra?**

C: Ja, de andre på holdet. Altså der er lige så meget som man ved at instruktørerne går rundt og retter på en og hjælper og viser det op til flere gange. Så er der lige så meget i det at man begynder at kende hinanden mere og mere på holdet og det gør også at man får en eller anden, hvad skal man sige, ikke sympati, men giver lige, jeg hjælper hende med det sidste fordi så kan hun lige komme op eller sådan et eller andet. Så feedbacken kommer lige så meget i at vi hjælper hinanden og holder lige hinanden så man får den der succes oplevelse i at komme op eller et eller andet.

**I: Hvad med spejlene for eksempel, ser du dig selv i spejlet når du træner?**

C: Nej, jeg glemmer faktisk tit spejlene.

**I: Så der har du brug for instruktørerne til at...**

C: Ja, altså spejlene er nok, det er mest instruktørerne der husker én på; kig i spejlet, nå ja jeg har et spejl fordi jeg er ikke særlig god til selv at kigge i spejlet. Ja, jeg tænker faktisk sjældent over det, at de er der. På en eller anden måde selvom de er hele vejen rundt.

**I: Hvordan kan det være?**

C: Det ved jeg ikke. Jeg tror måske jeg er meget fokuseret på at, øhm, at udføre det. Eller hvad skal man sige, jeg tror jeg er fokuseret på at få fornemmelsen af hvordan det er.

**I:Kropskontrollen?**

C: Ja, mere end at jeg skal kunne kigge på om jeg hænger i den rigtige vinkel. Så der tror jeg måske at jeg går mere indad end at jeg egentlig kigger på mig selv.



**I: ja**

*C: Hvis det giver mening.*

**I: Det giver mening. Hvordan har du det så når du er på holdet og poledancer.**

*C: Fedt! Det ved jeg ikke. Altså jeg bliver glad af at komme herved. Jeg bliver glad af at blive udfordret. Og sepecielt også fordi at jeg er på et niveau hvor jeg bliver udfordret. Uanset hvad vi næsten laver så vil der altid kunne sættes noget på som en ny vinkel eller noget der udfordrer. Ja, og styrkemæssigt vil man også opleve at der er lang vej endnu, at der stadig kan ske rigtig meget.*

**I: Nu siger du at målene også, at de er tilpas at du synes ikke umiddelbart at de er for svære, men det plejer at være rimelig godt.**

*C: Ja, altså jeg synes at det passer ret fint, men nu tror jeg også at jeg måske ligger på et niveau hvor at jeg kan være med på det er måske lige en tand mere udfordrende, hvor jeg så kan være med noget af vejen måske, og sådan få fyldt lidt på, og så stadigvæk være med på det der er basic. Så jeg synes egentlig ikke at målene er for høje.*

**I: Men har du prøvet hvor at, nu siger du at dine mål er for eksempel når du kommer på timen det er at lave den her position, har du så også prøvet hvor du ikke har kunnet lave den. Altså hvor det simpelthen har været for svært?**

*C: Ja, altså i starten havde jeg jo mit famøse problem med at spinde. At jeg simpelthen ikke kunne holde fast. Og der tror jeg da nok at jeg havde det sådan en lille smule anstrengt forhold til polen. Fordi jeg simpelthen ikke kunne gennemføre det på samme måde, og der kunne jeg da godt se at de første timer jeg havde der løb de andre lidt fra mig på en eller anden måde. Og det er da super frustrerende.*

**I: Hvordan kan det være at du blev ved?**

*C: Fordi at jeg er virkelig stædig. Og fordi at jeg synes at det var sjovt. Altså jeg kunne godt mærke at jeg synes det var sjovt, selvom at det ikke lige lykkedes for mig. Så var der alligevel noget der tændte mig. Men jeg har da, jeg er da gået herfra og været pænt, temmelig frustreret og synes at man lige havde lyst til at sparke til en pole på vej ud ikke; fordi øv hvor var det bare irriterende.*

**I: Men hvad så med, altså har du nogensinde også hvis der er noget der er lykkedes for eksempel, har du så følt dig sådan helt øhm altså sådan stærk bagefter?**

*C: Ja! Altså så bliver man super høj. Så får man nemlig den der følelse i maven og sådan - ah, det er derfor, og så skal man lige give den lidt mere. Altså prøve lidt mere. Og så føler man at man kan det hele. Det er jo det der holder en til at man har lyst til at fortsætte. Hvis man i et halvt år ikke havde haft nogen succesoplevelser, så tror jeg at så havde man jo ikke kunnet holde ud at blive ved.*

**I: Nu du siger at man bliver sådan helt høj. Altså, hvordan, kan du uddybe det?**

*C: Mmm det er den der følelse af sådan en sejr. Personlig udvikling på en eller anden måde- at man kan mærke at man er blevet stærkere og at man, det lyder måske sådan lidt, men på en eller anden måde når det lykkedes at man kommer ud i en eller anden position, så er det som om at tingene går op i en højere enhed.*

**I: ja.**

*C: Kan du følge mig i at det sådan når, for eksempel når jeg har øvet butterfly her om og om og omigen, og når det så endelig lykkedes og jeg kan mærke at det er rigtig at jeg hænger der, så får jeg den der følelse med at så er det det hele værd.*

**I: Det var da dejligt**

*C: ja!*

**I: Føler du så også at det er dig der er in control så at sige når det er?**

*C: ja, jeg får sådan en, når jeg får de der succes?*

**I: ja – eller bare når du poledancer generelt.**

*C: Ja, altså mere og mere vil jeg sige. I starten der tror jeg at jeg eh- når mere bare prøvede at følge med og sådan hvad kan man sige, prøver at holde holde fast eller bare hæng i og se hvordan de andre gør, men når man begynder sådan og skille positionerne fra hinanden og se at de hænger sammen, så begynder man også lidt mere at føle at man er i kontrol og vide hvor man vil hen med det vi laver.*

**I: kan du også mærke at din kropskontrol er blevet øget?**

*C: ja.*

**I: Er det sådan noget der er vokset hen af vejen?**

*C: ja, det er nok en af de ting der gør at det giver mere og mere mening. Det er også det at man kan mærke når man ved at man skal spænde i maven eller i lårene eller den der kontrol. Og det tror jeg gør sådan lidt, for at vende tilbage til det der med at gå ind i sig selv, der tror jeg at det er der jeg bliver mere bevidst om det. Hvor jeg glemmer at bruge spejlet, men så mærker jeg måske mere efter.*

**I: Nu hvor du siger sådan at du går ind i dig selv, hvad er det når du poledance, hvad tænker du så på?**

*C: Ja, det er godt spørgsmål. Jeg tror at jeg tænker sådan meget at det skal lykkes. Og sådan holder fokus på at holde fast eller klemme de rigtige steder eller...*

**I: Nu tager jeg dig lige på det du sagde –det er et godt spørgsmål; det lød som om at du ikke rigtig tænkte på noget når du**

*C: Nej, det tror jeg ikke at jeg gør... Altså, jeg ved at jeg bruger rigtig meget tid inden jeg laver en position på at kigge. Jeg er sådan meget visuel i min tilgang til tingene, så derfor så er jeg også – det ved jeg ikke om du også har lagt mærke til, jeg går tit rundt om, sådan hvordan*

*hænger du så der med hånden og sådan nogle ting. Så jeg er meget visuel. Fordi når jeg har det visuelt oppe i mit hoved – hvordan det skal se ud, så kan jeg på en eller anden måde bedre omsætte det til hvordan jeg selv skal hænge, i stedet for at bruge for eksempel spejlet eller noget. Så kan jeg lige gå ind i mig selv og sådan lige prøve at arbejde med det. Jeg tror ikke at jeg sådan specifikt tænker på noget andet end at jeg måske prøver at fremkalde det billede jeg har fået tror jeg.*

**I: Det er sjovt hvordan det nogle gange kan virke helt tomt**

*C: Ja, jeg tror – jeg ved ikke hvad jeg tænker, jeg tror bare der er fokus på*

**I: Er der nogle dele af dit live som pole har haft en indflydelse på?**

*C: Jeg tror måske bare egentlig generelt sådan min hverdag. Jeg har savnet noget der på en eller anden måde fyldte noget i hverdagen. Jeg har længe savnet noget at gå rigtigt op i. Og det har det sådan fyldt ud.*

**I: Nu siger du noget at gå op i, hvorfor er det du poledancer. Er det fordi du synes det er sjovt?**

*C: Ja, men altså nu har jeg gået til springgymnastik i rigtig mange år og jeg har danset i mange år og jeg har gået til yoga i mange år, og jeg tror al den tid hvor jeg har studeret har det været sådan noget der aldrig rigtig har hængt sammen eller været råd til. Så derfor har det bare manglet, og det tror jeg sådan gik lige i hak hernede. Der fik jeg lidt den der udstrækning fra yoga og smidighed og sådan lidt fart over feltet med pole'n og koreografi og sådan nogle ting.*

**I: Hvor meget tid bruger du så på det?**

*C: Det svinger lidt, men omkring 2 gange om ugen er jeg i snit hernede. Jeg ville gerne være her mere.*

**I: Er det så en time ad gangen?**

*C: 1-2 timer. Jeg prøver sådan at lave lidt af det så en position 1+ stræk eller en position 2 og så power, alt efter hvordan skemaet hænger sammen.*

**I: Hvordan kan det være at du ikke er her mere end det hvis du gerne ville?**

*C: Det er sådan en kombination af at jeg har travlt med alt muligt andet og hvis skemaet så lige er blevet rykket sådan at det ikke lige har passeret med de timer man ellers plejede at komme.*

**I: Hvor meget fritid har du sådan generelt? Nu ved jeg du både er i praktik her og du arbejder på Bella Sky og så er studerende.**

*C: Der har jeg vel nogle eftermiddage om ugen, ja og så nu hvor jeg også begynder at arbejde i weekenderne så vil det så være hver anden weekend hvor jeg arbejder så der bliver jo taget lidt af de træningsmuligheder. Men altså jeg har nogle aftener og nogle eftermiddage om ugen hvor jeg sagtens kunne træne og hvor jeg også vil prioritere at træne.*

**I: Når du så træner hvis du skulle beskrive på en skala fra 1-10 hvor fokuseret du er – hvor 1 er ikke særlige fokuseret og 10 er at du har intet andet end poledancen og det du lige laver i hovedet. ?**

*C: der tror jeg umiddelbart at jeg ligger på en 7-8 stykker, men det er ikke sådan at jeg bliver fuldstændig stille og står nede i min bobbel med min pole og går i symbiose på en eller anden måde med min pole. Jeg tror at jeg bliver fokuseret på den måde at jeg også sådan socialt suger det hele til mig, så det der med også at udforske med andre for eksempel, det er en del af det at jeg bliver meget fokuseret.*

**I: hvordan var det den allerførste gang at du prøvede det?**

*C: Det var helt vildt sjovt. Men jeg tror også at jeg blev overrasket. På den måde at det var ikke fordi jeg var en super stjerne til de der spins der. De virkede bare ikke rigtig, men jeg tror alligevel jeg blev overrasket over hvor ikke nemt, men sådan min tilgang til det. Og der tror jeg måske at jeg havde frygtet lidt at det var sådan mere uopnåeligt på en eller anden måde. Men på den fede måde at man med den rigtig instruktion og den rigtige vejledning så var det sådan noget man godt kunne tage og føle på.*

**I: Har du så nogensinde på timerne glemt tiden og at du var sulten og...**

*C: Ja, det har jeg. Jeg bliver tit overrasket over hvor hurtigt timerne går. Jeg har også haft timer hvor jeg på et eller andet tidspunkt har tænkt, gad vide hvad klokken er. Hvis det for eksempel har været sådan en dårlig dag hvor man ikke kan holde fast eller noget, så mister man måske også lidt hurtigt fokus. Men som regel bliver jeg overrasket over hvor hurtig timerne går.*

**I: Har du så også nogensinde gået herved hvor du har været sulten, og så været på en time hvor du så har glemt det eller hvor du har skændtes med en eller anden. Er det så noget du overvejer når du står ved pole'n – ej, nu var hun godt nok også dum i dag min veninde der?**

*C: Jeg tror jeg for eksempel med eksamen, der har det været et rigtig godt middel lige at lægge hovedet væk et øjeblik. Og der har det virkelig været sådan et godt afbræk hvor man mærke at man rystet kroppen godt igennem og brugt musklerne og så lagt hovedet væk fra en opgave. Så der kan jeg godt glemme hvad der ellers foregår ude omkring.*

**I: Hvis du skulle sammenligne dine nuværende kvaliteter på pole'n i forhold til da du startede, hvor meget vil du så sige at du har forbedret dig på en skala fra 1-10 hvor det laveste er 1?**

*C: Så er det næsten lige før at jeg vil sige 10, fordi at jeg ikke kunne noget særligt fra starten. Jeg havde aldrig prøvet det før da jeg kom herved, så det var virkelig at starte fra 0. Nu synes jeg da at den udvikling på de få måneder jeg alligevel har gået her, den synes jeg da er ret stor.*

**I: Oplever du altid at du kommer i sådan et flow når det er at du pole dancer, for det er lidt det du gør.**

*C: For det meste.*

**I: Ved du hvornår du ikke gør det?**

*C: Det er de der gange hvor at det ikke lykkedes eller hvis det bare er sådan en dag hvor man slet ikke kan holde fast. Så bliver det lidt skeptisk, så mister jeg mit fokus på en eller anden måde, og så kommer heller ikke rigtig flow i det.*

**I: Men er det som om at tingene skal lykkes og så kommer du sådan i det her flow, for flow er jo lidt der hvor du er koncentreret, eller opnår du flow først og så kommer du ind i de her ting?**

*C: Jeg tror det er sådan lidt en kombination at de dage hvor jeg er rigtig fokuseret og kan mærke at det er en god dag så opnår jeg nok både flow og succesen i en kombination. Andre gange på dårlige dage er jeg lidt mere nødt til at fortælle mig selv at nu skal jeg ind i det her flow. Fordi ellers så lykkes det aldrig. Så jeg tror lidt måske at det er en kombination, at man både er nødt til at fortælle sig selv at det kræver at man er fokuseret, men også hvis man kan mærke at man er på vej til at noget lykkes, så kommer den her fokus og flow på en eller anden måde også automatisk.*

**I: Har du nogensinde lavet en fejl på pole'n altså en større fejl?**

*C: Næ, ikke noget der sådan har...*

**I: Jeg talte for eksempel med en anden hvor at skiftet fra skorpion til eller outside leg hang til inside leg hang, der var det ved at gå galt fordi der kommer på et tidspunkt hvor man ikke har noget greb, og det her skift havde hun måske ikke godt nok, og så var det at hun var ved at falde ned.**

*C: Nej, jeg synes ikke at jeg har haft sådan noget hvor jeg har været ved at falde ned – det synes jeg ikke. Ikke sådan umiddelbart. Men jeg tror også at jeg er sådan ret forsigtig med fordi jeg har ret meget respekt for når man hænger på hovedet – så jeg tror stadigvæk at jeg har, hvis man kan sige at jeg er for ny til at være total overmodig og bare at give slip eller kaste mig ud i noget nyt. Så der er jeg nok ikke helt endnu, at jeg sådan kaster mig ud i dem hvor man sådan rigtig kan komme ud i ulykker.*

**I: Det var faktisk det.**

**Appendix 4. Interview with Respondent D**

**Background info:**

**Nationality:** Danish

**Gender:** male

**Age:** 53

**Marital status:** married

**Kids:** daughter

**Work title:** Chief Dealer FX Money Market

**Description of the work:** Covering the cash flow from the bank, prop trading, reaching the budget by own trading, no customers behind. Some manual and paper work, like reporting to the head office.

**Work experience within the industry:** 23 years. (Stopped 3 years ago)

**1) When you were trading, did you know exactly what your goals were?**

*We had yearly goals, saying how much profit we have to make in the group I was responsible. It was split up into the monthly goals. We didn't have daily goals, but within the month we needed to reach the budget. Or they would ask us, what happened. If you make enough or too much, well then you didn't hear anything.*

**a) But what's about daily goals? Maybe you made it for yourself?**

*Of course we could calculate how much we could make each day. But it was difficult to have a daily goal and then stop, because a lot of positions were taking for a longer period, meaning they were going up and down. So normally, it is not possible to make it within one day.*

**2) Did you feel the goals were realistic, easy or too challenging to achieve?**

*That was different from year to year. At the beginning when I started, I don't think that goals were that high, but the longer I worked the goals were higher and higher and really tough to reach. If there was an extremely good year, the expectation was that next year must be even better. Meaning that if you made 50% more than a budget, well then next year it will be plus 10% at least. If you had a good year, you will be punished next year, you could say.*

**a) So every year it was growing depending on how you performed?**

*Yes. An even if you didn't reach the goal which was set up, I have never seen the budgets going down.*

**3) Did you do any additional tasks while you are working? (answering the phone, writing, talking)**

*Yes. I was responsible for some people, so I had a lot of staff I had to take care: speak to them, see if everything was ok, follow on their positions, what they were trading as well, I had to say stop if they lost too many money. Also we had a lot of phone calls. 1/3 our trade done, we had on phone calls. A lot of reporting we had to do every day, concerning profit loss.*

**a) How did it affect your job? Was it disturbing?**

*No, it was boring. Something has to be done, but no one wants to do it. That work could have been done by a student. And then I could have concentrating more on trading.*

**4) How did you know if you failed or succeeded?**

*It was really easy to see on the profit loss. We could see if we reached the goals. There was some time, that even if the goals weren't reached we were told that we did a good job. Because there are periods which are difficult to trade and reaching the goals. But just reaching part of the*



*goals sometimes was really good. And in that case, I got bonuses even though I did not reach the goal. Market situation had an influence on the results as well.*

**a) But can we say that in the end of the day you could see if you succeeded or failed?**

*No. If we are taking the period of the month we could say it was successful even though taking a look to every day, it was ups and downs. Of course, we had some trades during the day, where you could see if you succeeded immediately. It depended on which product I was trading.*

**5) How did you get feedback from your work?**

*Well, normally I got bonus every year. I reported directly to the CEO of the bank, so I got feedback from him. But most time I was on my own and I knew if I did well without the feedback. I was giving feedback to my team. So I didn't get that much verbally feedback, it was just looking on the profit loss. But I spoke with my boss every third day, so I could hear his opinion about me. I knew by myself what it will be.*

**6) Could you describe how did you feel when you were trading? (emotions, feelings)**

*I could say that I was living in my own world. The adrenalin was pumping around in the body. Sometimes it was really exciting and I just loved it. It was like playing cards with my friends.*

**a) So in general you could say it was positive emotions?**

*It was very positive. Of course from time to time it was some negative, but when I look back in those 23 years I was trading it was such a fun and perfect time.*

**7) Did you ever forget time or people around you, hunger or the like?**

*Always! During the very busy days it was normal not to go for lunch. You just couldn't leave your place. And the same thing in the evening, you were sitting late. You are sitting in your own world and fighting with your own figures. You don't think that much about anyone else. A lot of time there could be a lot of noise and you didn't hear it. I was just so concentrated on my own part, that everyone could start screaming and i wouldn't hear it. And a lot of people were taking their lunch to their working places that could eat and watch screens at the same time.*

**a) How long normally did it take the lunch?**

*Most of the time it was ten minutes.*

**b) So also you were working more than your working hours?**

*I had a contract saying that I have to work minimum 37 hour per week. But normally it was much more.*

**c) Did you get paid for the additional hours?**

*No. But we can put it in this way that the salary was quite good. Also I was traveling a lot around the Europe, visiting other banks.*

**d) What about your bonuses?**

*It gave even more. But the normal salary was so much higher than everybody else's.*

**8) How did you feel afterwards? – Did you feel strong and invincible?**

*Main part I was still exciting, even after job. I was very emotional and touched by what had happened in my work. Weather it was positive or negative, it followed you after. When I came back home, I was speaking a lot about what happened at work. 22 out of 23 years it was not stressful. So main part it was very good. Even while I was thinking about my job at home, I could say it was a positive thinking and emotions.*

**9) Did you feel like being in control while you were working?**

*I was in control, because first I was responsible for my team, the guys sitting there and trading. So yes, I was in control.*

**10) What were you thinking of while you were trading ?**

*Making money. About how to make profit, which information is valuable. I followed a lot of information, made a lot of reading on the internet, I followed all the screens we had. We tried to speak about, what would happen if some changes in the market occurs. That what we were thinking about all the time: how to change our positions.*

**a) So all the time your minds were related with your job?**

*Main part.*

**11) How much time did you spend working?**

*Let's put it this way: I left in the morning around 7:00 and I was back home around 18:00 in the evening.*

**12) How much spare time did you have?**

*Evenings after work and weekends. Sometimes I was traveling during the weekends.*

**13) How did you spend your spare time?**

*I was with my family. The money I made from my job was really good, so I could do whatever I wanted. On the other hand, looking back I could say that first 12 years of my daughter's life I haven't seen her more than two hours per day. And I missed a lot. But I didn't miss it at that*



*time. I didn't even notice that. I was living in my own world. If it hadn't been fun, I would have thought about it more. It was good emotions.*

**14) How focused were you on a scale from 1-10 when you were working?**

*Hopefully I was at the 10, but I wasn't. I think 8-9.*

**15) How did you feel the first time you traded?**

*Nervous and afraid I did something wrong. I still remember my first trade... I lost a lot of money, because I was afraid not to get any profit, so made prices way too high.*

**16) If you should compare to present skills how much would you say you improved? (1-10)**

*When I started I didn't know anything about trading. But I improved quite quickly. Comparing the first periods and the last I was trading, it was amazing how it improved. It was a huge development all the time. I had to follow all the new products and news, so I learned a lot.*

**17) Were you always experiencing flow while working?**

*I had some days when it was totally boring. Then I could do some administrative tasks. It's funny, sometimes you just sitting and it's so boring and in 5 min everything is exploding. So even it's nothing happening you have to think what could happen.*

**a) But were there any days when you were not in the mood? You have to do a lot, but it is just not your day.**

*Yes. Everyone have them. I had days, when I didn't like to do anything, but I had to.*

**b) How did it affect your job? You didn't take so much risk, or how else?**

*Then I didn't want to trade that much. Or if I was sick. Then I was still going to work, because I felt responsible and didn't want to give up my positions. That affected on the profit loss, I didn't earn so much. One of my colleagues from the day he was hired didn't have any day off in ten year, even though he was sick.*

**18) How often did you do mistakes and what kind?**

*Every day.*

**a) What is a mistake for you then?**

*When I think that the market will go up and it goes down. That means you lose. As a dealer you always do trades when you lose. It's a part of the job.  
Yes. Very seldom. When I had to do the paper work.*

**19) What was the biggest motivation for you? Money or the job itself?**

*It was the job itself. It was so exciting. But of course money motivated me as well. It had an influence. So I knew if I traded a lot I will get a part of that. But I could say to everyone, if they have a possibility to try, try it. You would get so many possibilities.*

**Appendix 5. Interview with Respondent E**

**Background info:**

**Nationality:** Danish

**Gender:** male

**Age:** 42

**Marital status:** married

**Kids:** two sons

**Work title:** trader

**Description of the work:** trading bonds

**Work experience within the industry:** 16 years.

**1) Do you know exactly what your goals are?**

*I have daily bases goals, but of course we have budgets for months and yearly budgets. But when I am trading, I am trading this day. I have goals for the day.*

**a) So every day you knew what your goal is for today?**

*No, not exactly. If you are sitting as a trader and when you meet in the morning in Denmark, you don't know what had happened in Far East overnight and it can affect your positions and goals. It is so exciting and fantastic, like taking drugs. It is better for me to work as a trader than to be together with my family.*

**2) Do you feel the goals are realistic, easy or too challenging to achieve?**

*It is growing and the budgets are always unrealistic. But that is good. When I see a budget I think I will never reach that goal, but that what it makes it challenging. If I say to my manager that I can reach some specific goal, he always makes it higher for me. And he is right by doing that. If I don't reach the goal at 19 a clock in the evening, I work until 20.*

*When I come home from work, I talk to my wife shortly, kiss my sons and go in front of tv and watch BBS or other news. And I loved it.*

**3) Do you do any additional tasks while you are working? (answering the phone, writing, talking)**

*Yes, but it didn't disturb me. It was a part, where I got a lot of more additional information. It was a part of the game.*

**4) How do you know if you failed or succeeded?**

*It is amounts and earnings. We have very sophisticated systems, so I always can see if I earned or lost during the recent time. But it differs during the day. Sometimes a loose a lot of money but then after some hours it comes back with even more profit.*

**a) But in the end of the day you always know how successful you are?**

*Yes, all the time I could follow that.*

**5) How do you get the feedback from your work?**

*My manager was checking me every day and giving the feedback. And if you do a really good trade you always say that to your colleagues and then boss comes to me and says that I did very well. I get high on that and continue in the same direction. We call it "high five". And of course when I do the opposite, my manager comes to me and says: you have to do it better or I will have to fire you. So it is black or white all the time.*

**a) So the feedback is immediate?**

*Yes, it was exactly at the time something happens. And I think it's the best way to work.*

**6) Could you describe how do you feel while you are trading? (emotions, feelings)**

*It is very exciting. At the same time it is exciting, dangerous and funny. I can feel that I am alive so strongly. I can never doubt about if I'm really living.*

**a) So in general you could say it is positive emotions?**

*It is very positive.*

**7) Do you ever forget time or people around you, hunger or the like?**

*Yes. Lots of times. Many times I am thinking only about my job. It's like my personal game. And also I am thinking about my salary and bonuses. Because it was dependent on how well I'm playing my game.*

**8) How do you feel afterwards? – Do you feel strong and invincible?**

*When I leave the job I still think about my trades and position on the way home in my car. Many years I was trying to put that away when I walk into my house and close the doors, but I can't. And my wife is always telling to me that I am still at work. My self-phone was ringing during the*

*night, sometimes I was telling to my wife about my positions in the middle of the night. And I'm always looking forward to get up in the morning and go back to work.*

**9) Do you feel like being in control while you are working?**

*Yes, I am feeling in control of the huge amounts of money which were under my responsibility.*

**10) What are you thinking about while you are trading?**

*I am only thinking about my work. I never think about my family or what I'm going to do on the weekend.*

**11) How much time do you spend working?**

*It is at least 60 hours per week. But it's ok for me. I can never say the precise time when I will leave the desk. Even if I am sick, I still go to work, because I feel really responsible for what I do.*

**12) How much spare time do you have?**

*I always have Saturday with my family. I lot of Sundays I am preparing for Mondays at work. So yes, Saturday it is a family day.*

**a) How do you feel about that you spend so little time with your family?**

*I have very good relationships with my sons. But he told me several times that I was never at home when he was a little boy. So he had missed something. But it was good that my salary is sometimes ten times higher than normally.*

**13) How do you spend your spare time?**

*I have all the financial possibilities to spend time with my family very nicely. So we are doing a lot of exciting things. For example, we can go to London for shopping and come back the same afternoon. I have economic to do a lot of things in one day.*

**14) How focused are you on a scale from 1-10 when you are working?**

*I would like to say from 9-10.*

**15) How did you feel the first time you traded?**

*Yes, it was like entering totally new world. I was a little bit scared, all the tough guys shouting at each other and dealing with huge amounts of money. But I knew immediately, that it was my place there. It is difficult to explain, but it's even you have that in your blood or you don't. You can't study how to trade. You have to live. So I used to the job very fast. I had a manager who couldn't wait forever and I had to do my goals immediately. Or he would fire me. Some people were just too nervous and had all the nerve's break downs and were out of the game very fast.*

**16) If you should compare to present skills how much would you say you improved? (1-10)**

*I finished high school and I started in a bank. So I was working in few different banks until one guy saw me and said that I would be a perfect dealer.*

**a) So you didn't have some specific knowledge? You just started and leant during the job?**

*Yes.*

**17) Are you always experiencing flow while working?**

*I had very few those days. The days when it was sickness in my family and so on. During those days I lost a lot of money. It was affecting my results negatively.*

**18) How often do you do mistakes and what kind?**

*I am doing mistakes every day. But if you have ten trades and six of it went well, then it's really good. I am making mistakes all the time. But as far as good trades are taking the top, then it's ok. You can't do a good trade every time. It's not possible. It is very hard when I start the day and the trade is going wrong and the next one- the same. So you have to believe in yourself and keep trying.*

**19) Do you ever feel bored at work?**

*Never.*

**20) What is the biggest motivation for you? Money or the job itself?**

*It was not salary or bonuses. It was very good of course, but it wasn't that. After ten years of working I got huge bonuses, a lot of that money I still have. So I could have stopped if it was just money. It was a game, colleagues, traders in foreign countries. It's like poker. Work itself was driving me.*

**Appendix 6. Interview with Respondent F**

**Background info:**

**Nationality:** Danish

**Gender:** male

**Age:** 35

**Marital status:** married

**Kids:** three

**Work title:** trader

**Description of the work:** dealer of currency and interest rates

**Work experience within the industry:** 5 years.

**21) Do you have specific personal goals at work?**

*Yes. Always.*

**b) Is it a monthly goals or daily?**

*I have yearly goals, monthly goals and daily goals. But it wasn't so important to reach the daily goals, it was important to reach monthly goals. Daily goals were for me.*

**c) So do you set daily goals by yourself?**

*Yes, it is my own initiative. I wanted to know exactly how I'm doing with the budget.*

**22) Do you feel the goals are realistic, easy or too challenging to achieve?**

*Yes, it is realistic. It is challenging, but realistic. Every year I get higher goals.*

**23) Do you do any additional tasks while you are working? (answering the phone, writing, talking)**

*Well, yes... I have some customer meetings. I always have to be prepared about the entire economic situation in markets. I always have to talk to colleagues.*

**a) But during the actual trading time, are you disturbed by phone or emails?**

*It is always phone calls. But it is the part of my job.*

**b) Is it disturbing?**

*No it is not. Because it is related to what I am doing.*

**24) How do you know if you failed or succeeded?**

*PL. Profit and loss. It is very easy. So every day in the end of the day can say if I succeeded or failed.*

**25) How do you get the feedback from your work?**

*From my manager. We have some quarterly follow ups.*

**26) Could you describe how do you feel while you are trading? (emotions, feelings)**

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*Pretty focused, I could say and very focused. When you are a dealer, you have to take action immediately, so you always have a look on the screen, you always know what to do.*

**27) Do you ever forget time or people around you, to go to lunch or the like?**

*Oh yes! Sure. It is very common. I don't even feel how fast days, weeks and even years are passing. Its like a magic circle, you are dragged in and everything goes around you very fast. And lunch is something you take if you have the time. That is the way it works.*

**28) How do you feel afterwards? – Do you feel strong and invincible?**

*When I have a good day then of course I am pretty happy about that. Sometimes I get a bit depressed about everything. It's always you get money or you lose money. My feeling depends on how successful the day is.*

**29) Do you feel like being in control while you are working?**

*In control? Not really. Well Im responsible for the money, but I couldn't say that Im thinking about how Im controlling it.*

**30) What are you thinking about while you are trading?**

*Always I am thinking how the market will react, numbers in the market. Basically its work all the time.*

**31) How much time do you spend working per week?**

*It is around 45 hours. And then back home, I have some research and readings. Because the market doesn't close. So I was continuing reading and deepening my knowledge after working hours. When some news comes, I need to be prepared for the next day. I need to follow what is happening and be on top of that. It's definitely not the job when you close the door and forget everything.*

**32) How much spare time do you have?**

*I don't know. Some of the evenings and weekends. But I am always focused on my work. If I see something in the paper, I think what will happen now. If during weekends politicians are meeting I always watch that. Its a part of the job. It's a part of the knowledge you need to have. And it is not just a wok for me. It is what really interest me.*

**33) How do you spend your spare time?**

*With my kids, family, running.*

**34) How focused are you on a scale from 1-10 when you are working?**

*I would say 8 or 9.*

**35) How did you feel the first time you traded?**

*A bit excited and a bit nervous. Because it's your performance and you need to be aware about everything what is happening.*

**36) If you should compare to present skills how much would you say you improved?  
What knowledge did you have when you started (1-10)**

*Basically I had just interest in the markets.*

**b) What's about your education?**

*I have economic degree. So my skills improved a lot.*

**37) Are you always in the mood of trading?**

*I have some off days and some days when I don't want to trade much. So sometimes I am not in the mood of trading. Then I don't do risky trades. I'm saying that then it's not my day. So I don't take any risk, just do my job normally, and of course don't earn a lot. Usually I end up on 0.*

**38) How often do you do mistakes and what kind?**

*I could say that my mistakes are when I lose money or trade. I don't book the trade on the right time and loose opportunity and money.*

**39) Do you ever feel bored at work?**

*No. Always have what to do, read economic news and find out what should I do next*

**40) What is the biggest motivation for you? Money or the job itself?**

*It was a job itself. The excitement of dealing. The trading itself.*