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Dirty Dancing

-A case study involving pole dancing and the importance of corporate values within dirty work.

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Abstract:

Recent developments within sensual and sexy exercise have led to fashionable dance studios and gyms introducing their customers to pole dancing and other forms of sensual exercise. From the aspect of pole dancers being dirty workers the studios who teach pole dancing are now struggling to get away from the negative prejudices of the sport. We have been studying the corporate identity and image in two specific studios in Copenhagen in order to examine if and how they are working towards getting away from prejudices around pole dancing. In order to elaborate on this subject, theories related to dirty work, corporate values and identity have been explored. The empirical evidence indicates that the studios attempts to get away from the dirty aspects are achievable but it is difficult. One of the studios in the empirical case study has achieved their attempts of getting away from the sexiness associated to pole dancing. However, the other studio, which is also prosperous on the market, has not succeeded. This conclusion could be helpful if observed as a road sign indicating that the owner of the studio should articulate a clear image and values for all included in the studio to acknowledge and execute thru all sections of the studio, including every day interactions and media such as the web site and the pictures displayed.

Key words: Dirty work, Image, Identity, Pole dancing

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we will describe the background to our research area and the stated problems. Further on, we will describe the main problem followed by the purpose of the study and the research question. Finally, the limitations of the research area will be presented to delimitate the investigation.

1.1 Background

“In the eyes of the public, they are what they do.”

(Ashforth et al., 2007:3)

In today's society it is important for the majority of individuals to be respected by significant others and to achieve being seen as successful, employment is a significant factor. For most individuals having a job is seen as something honorable, accepted and as something everyone should have. Job titles often serve as prominent identity badges and are ascribed by the society to occupational identities. (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) However, some work is stigmatized by the society to be dirty. Everett Hughes (1951) explained the term “*dirty work*” as tasks or occupations that are likely to be perceived as something disgusting or degrading. Dirty work is frequently perceived to be threatening the “*cleanliness*” of society (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Douglas 1966). The construct of dirt has tremendous social significance because society draws a sharp distinction between purity and pollution and this stigma creates a challenge for dirty workers because they rely somewhat on others for validation but are likely to be denied this validation by society (Hughes, 1951). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) imply that identity work in dirty occupations is especially interesting to study because of the dirty workers need to improve meaning and identity is often unprocessed in stigmatized work.

Developments within sports have been ongoing and new “*sexy sports*” have been discussed in media for a time now. Lap dance, chair tease, pole dancing and many other sexy sports have been popular around the world for an extended time and are approaching Scandinavia. Even though it is gaining popularity pole dancing is still

associated to strip tease and strippers which has had low status within society for a extended time. The old associations where pole dancing involve stripping and sexy moves are still wedged in the majority of people's minds (Ashforth et al., 2007). Often society tends to associate cleanliness with goodness and dirtiness with badness, meaning that dirt is stigmatized as something that should be avoided. The individuals who perform dirty work come to be seen as "*dirty workers*" and the taint of dirty work creates a real dilemma for its practitioners (Ashforth et al., 2007). Nevertheless pole dancing is now becoming more popular and accepted as an established form for physically demanding exercise. The sport and its followers are now working towards changing the perception of the activity and get ride off the stigmatization attached to pole dancing in order to become a "*clean*" occupation.

This thesis examines conceptions of identity work and image among a group of dirty workers, more specifically pole dancers in two pole dancing studios in Copenhagen. Murphy (2003) discuss the connection between pole dancing and a subculture in which men enter specific clubs with the intention to watch women present their bodies in a sexual way. Pole dancing has been conceptualized as a form of pornography and has been used exclusively to sexually arouse the viewers (Murphy, 2003). If pole dancing instead is exercised in a gym or dance studio where the majority of practitioners are women who wear clothes for exercising and not minimalistic and sexy clothing, do the pornography aspect then fade away? Our intention with this thesis is to investigate the identity work of pole dancing.

We have chosen to do a study concerning two poles dancing studios located in Copenhagen in Denmark. We chose the studios particularly because they are both claiming that they want to get away from the sexiness and dirty aspects associated to pole dancing and instead be "*clean*". This includes de-stigmatize pole dancing and change the prejudice of the sport being about pleasing men and be sexy for someone else. The studios are different in their way of presenting themselves, their core values and what they want to express with their studio. The articles written in media are declaring that many pole studios are making attempts to move away from the stripper pole dance in order to perform fitness. For example in Sweden one studio does not use the word pole in order not to scare people away (www.aftonbladet.se). In

Denmark another instructor said in an interview for another newspaper that she wants the prejudice of pole dancing being about stripping to be erased (www.bt.dk)

The reason we chose to work with studio 1 and studio 2 is because they are presently working towards getting away from the dirty aspects of pole dancing. Studio 1 is a small studio in central Copenhagen. To get away from the associations of sexiness the owner Lina and her instructors at studio 1 are working hard to be clear in their communication towards the students in general and the instructors in particular. In the classes and routines there are no sexual vibes or moves. Instead the instructors want the students to laugh and try their best to become strong. The website is also used as a method for communicating the organizational values towards students and potential students. The language and pictures on the website describe a hard workout influenced by street dancing and fitness. Studio 2 is another small studio in central Copenhagen. The studio instructors teaches classes from beginners to more difficult pole dancing classes like cross pole and pole on heels. The students can choose when they want to try another class but most of the students start in the basic class. The students also choose to exercise classes of yoga and chair tease. The respondents at studio 2 also try to get away from the sexy aspect that is associated to pole dancing. The owner at Studio 2, Malin and her instructors communicate values that take distance from the sexiness and instead converse a more fitness view and self-esteem building towards the students. However, the body language and expressions within the studio and the pictures on the website correspond differently.

1.2 Research purpose

Research concerning different dirty work occupations is not an established well known subject within economy and business. It is however an interesting subjects in the way many dirty workers wanting to get more credit for what they do and not being degraded by society. Our interest concerns the business area of these issues. We wanted to investigate a certain organizational setting within the field of dirty work. Dirty work occupations struggle with stigmas and prejudice from society which lead to negative associations even from the employees themselves. Because of our academic education within marketing and business administration we find it

particularly interesting to investigate one area that is struggling to succeed within their market. We particularly believe that in all organizations it is significant to understand the importance of corporate values and image. We believe that these are also the main struggles for the pole dancing studios that we have considered in this thesis.

Our aim is to understand how the two owners of the studios and the instructors handle the image that they send out. These two studios both claim to try to get away from sexual aspects of the sport. They also claim to be “*clean*” studios that do not focus on sexuality. One intriguing aspect for us to study is the reason why these two studios find it important to get away from the old stigmas concerning pole dancing. How do they handle other people’s reactions to what they do and the prejudice that exist within? We also question if it is really possible to get away from the sensual and sexual aspects of pole dancing and if it is possible, is it really necessary? We are interested in looking at and study their way of communicating their values and opinions. The coherence between their stated desired values and the values that they communicate and act upon are also interesting to study in this thesis particularly because of their differences. One of the owners has succeeded to eliminate the dirty aspects within her studio whereas the other owner has not. Because of the difference we found it interesting and valuable to study both studios within this thesis. It was relevant for us because of the possibility to compare how the studios attempt to get away from the dirty aspects of their work and what made one of them succeed and not the other.

1.3 Thesis question

In regard to the discussion of the research purpose above the following question is presented in an attempt to further clarify for the reader what the focus and main interest will be in this thesis. We would like to use the research to try to answer the following thesis question:

1. *What kind of values/image is important for the owners and instructors at the pole dance studios and how do they try to communicate them?*

1.4 Delimitations

Limitations of this research are primarily that we have chosen only to study the situation at the two studios presented in this thesis. This because it is interesting and makes more sense for us due to time limitations, to focus our research on these two studios in order to achieve a deeper understanding. We have also made the decision to compare the two studios in Copenhagen because they claim to work towards getting away from the sexiness. Because we chose to use a qualitative methodology we are aware of the delimitations of only performing interviews. Our aim has been to gain deep data through interviews but we are aware of the fact that even more interviews could have resulted in an even deeper understanding of the field. If the time limit would be different we would be able to follow the respondents for a longer time and also conduct more interviews and observations. With an extended time limit we would also consider conducting focus groups in order to achieve more depth to our thesis.

2. Methodology

This chapter aims to discuss and present the selected methodology techniques for this particular thesis. The research approach is characterized by ontological and epistemological reflection. The research process and the chosen method to collect qualitative data will be introduced to the reader. Last we will discuss the issues of bias.

Initially we were interested in studying an organization that was in the process of change. We wanted a subject that was new for both of us and the market. We both share a passion for training and after reading about pole dancing and its difficulties as a newcomer on the market for sensual exercise, we began to further investigate the subject. We started to look into the field of dirty work and pole dancing and found two pole dancing studios in Copenhagen that were differentiating themselves as not being focusing on sexuality, instead they claimed to be “*clean*” which mean that they want to get away from the dirty aspects. These studios had the intention to get away from the sexiness associated to pole dancing. The way that pole dancing wants to get away from the dirty aspects and become clean was to us interesting. Pole dancing has been taken out from the clubs and into the fitness studios but they still seem to struggle with the old stigma of dirty work. Our field of interest for this thesis was to study and research how organizational values, identity and communication were used and in which way the two studios in Copenhagen were affected. We were interested in investigate what values they use and if these values were used as a successful way to distance from the dirty aspects. Because of the stigma within dirty work we believed that the identity of the dirty workers play a significant role and we wanted to investigate how their identities were affected by this. Questions we had in the beginning were: how does the pole fitness industry try to distance from dirty aspects and what are their challenges when trying to create new image? Is it really possible to get away from the dirty aspects and become recognized as a form of exercise without any associations to strip dance? More specifically, why do these studios feel that they want to get away from the sexiness of the dance? In order to understand the connection between dirty work, pole dancing and the values associated with pole dancing we conducted an extensive literature review.

When initiating the empirical studies we were uncertain in the beginning if the studio we wanted to look into were interested in participating in this thesis. After many attempts to get in contact with one studio we ended up with two studios that wanted to be part of this research, studio 1 and studio 2. We then conducted interviews with both studios and decided that it would be interesting for us if both studios would be included in our research. Both studios state that they want to get away from the old values and associations towards pole dancing. Although, we found that one of these two studios, studio 2, were not fully successful in their attempts to communicate their preferred values. When we found out that the two studios were trying to achieve the same goal concerning their communicated values but only one succeeded we wanted to know why one of them were successful but not the other. This was the main reason why we chose to include both studios in our thesis.

2.1 Research approach and process

We have chosen to use a qualitative method conducting this thesis. Olsson and Sörensen (2004) describe the qualitative approach being a method to gather in-depth understanding to be able to describe the nature or characteristics of human behavior. Qualitative research methods include qualitative interviews, interpretation and analysis of textual material. Christensen et al. (2007) argue that qualitative data consists of printed words, language and symbols. Within epistemology we gain knowledge and understand the world by using our senses and experiences (Patel & Davidson, 2007). According to Patel and Davidson (2007) the researchers prejudice, knowledge, thoughts and impressions is to be considered a benefit in order to make interpretations. Our aim has been to try to understand the individuals included within our thesis subject by interpreting their life, intentions and existence expressed through language and actions (Patel & Davidson, 2007). The major approach of social constructionism assumes that reality is socially constructed. Reality is constructed and given meaning by people, which mean that it becomes significant to understand those meanings that people assigns to their experience. This also means that it can be impossible to get objective and “*true*” knowledge because of the researchers own subjective experiences (Patel & Davidson, 2007). We consider social constructionism to be beneficial for our thesis due to our research that wants to investigate actions,

experiences and opinions of our respondents. Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2010) believe that all data are value loaded which leads to the assumption that there are no objective facts. Calás and Smircich (1999) question if it is possible to be self-conscious of the choices made in the research process. These choices contain what is included, excluded, seen as interesting or not, favouring people, favouring topics and questions in the research. Because of our subjectivity, knowledge and prejudices we are limited and cannot fully take part in the external reality. (Calás and Smircich, 1999) We believe that our previous experiences and knowledge has influenced the way we have interpreted and processed collected data. This means that we use our ability to interpret stories and language from different perspectives (Patton, 2002). We have used the hermeneutic approach in order to interpret the interviewee's acts and body language. As researchers we have tried to be open and engage with the people we have come in contact with (Patel & Davidson, 2007). In order to discover different elements concerning the subject we have worked hard on staying open-minded (Silverman, 2004). We have executed a qualitative study and will be presenting first order, empirical data collected by interviews and observations and second order theory found in books and articles. The research process is conducted with a qualitative method which includes an interpretative paradigm.

2.2 Data collection

In order to achieve a qualitative research thesis we decided to implement interviews with individuals which were interested in and possessed the accurate knowledge to be able to answer our questions. We have conducted interviews with the individuals involved in the two studios that we have been in contact with. The number of interviews was decided in order to accomplish a study with a deep empirical base. The interviews were executed with owners and instructors in the two pole dancing studios. We wanted to interview the owners of the two studios and then the instructors. We decided that only one of us should ask the questions during the interview in an attempt to make the interviewee feel at ease. It was also effective because the one who was not active in the interview could listen and read the body-language of the respondent easier and also make sure no question were left unspoken. The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. We interviewed the two female

owners from the two different studios and six of their instructors, where one of the instructors is male.

We wanted the interview persons own opinion and view on the matter which is why we decided to use open questions. Open questions lead to the interviewee getting to tell their story without getting led on to any enforced answers (Patel & Davidson, 2007). Our aim was to ask explorative questions because we believed that could lead towards more interesting answers. Open questions allow the interviewee to talk about what is important and relevant according to the interviewee (Alvesson, 2003). Olsson and Sörensen (2004) emphasize the flexibility within qualitative research process concerning the formulation of questions. This flexibility leads to elaboration and the possibility for the researcher to change the alignment within the questioning and because of that the researcher could acquire deeper results. In order to achieve this open approach to the interview questions we used themes rather than specific questions. We were confident that a semi-structured interview plan would make it possible for us to easier follow and explore the topics in the responses of the interviewees. We found the semi-structured plan to be customized in a way that made it uncomplicated for us to follow the interviewee and ask questions concerning the topics that emerged in the interviews (Ellen 1984). Our interview plan was constructed before we gathered any more knowledge about the pole studios in order for us not to affect the questions and themes in a way that would be leading. We believe that our lack of experience within pole dancing in the beginning gave us a chance to be open-minded during interviews.

All interviews were conducted in person in the different studios in Copenhagen. We asked the interviewees to decide where and when to conduct the interview (Bell, 2000). When conducting interviews it is significant to attempt to get the interviewees to feel relaxed (Payne, 2000) and create reliance between the interviewer and the interviewee. We believe that the interviewees were positively affected because they were able to decide when and where they wanted to meet up with us for interviews. The security of being in a familiar place probably helped making the interviewees feel more comfortable and open to answer questions. It also gave us the opportunity to observe the respondents in the different studios and the atmosphere inside of the studio. Although, it is important to not forget that the interview situation is an unusual

circumstance and that the interview object might feel uncomfortable answering specific questions and need to feel secure in the situation (Alvesson and Deetz, 2010). The majority of the interviews were conducted during the day, before the studio had any classes, in hope to get a relaxed and undisturbed meeting. We also made the commitment not to dress too fancy because of the way the instructors and owners dress when they are at the dancing studios. Naturally they wear trainers and sweatpants when training and we interpreted it to be more comfortable for all parts if we as researchers did not come to the interviews in very fancy clothing either.

2.2.1 Participatory study

In order to be able to interpret pole dancing ourselves we wanted to take part in a beginner's class at the pole studio. With the participative study we were able to observe the messages and signals that the instructors actually send. We also believe that the participative study helped us in our observations and interpretation of the way the participants feel when exercising pole dancing. Interactive methods like this participating in a pole dancing lesson gave us the opportunity to observe in their natural environment (Johansson Lindfors, 1997). As Patel and Davidson (2007) states we decided to do open observations because of the size of the studios. Making closed observations and not telling anyone why we were there could have made the students uncomfortable. We also felt that we got closer to the subject and the individuals at the studio showing an interest and making a real effort to understand the techniques within pole dancing (Patel & Davidsson, 2007).

2.2.2 Observations

We wanted to see the instructors and students in action because we believed that the study would not be completed with only interviews. Values, knowledge and image can be transferred not only through language but also, and even more specifically, through body language. We practiced passive and open observations in the natural situation at the studios (Johansson Lindfors, 1997). The people present at the studios at the time for the observations knew that they were being observed and that might have disturbed the natural environment (Patel & Davidson, 2007) for a while but we

believe that they became comfortable very fast with us being there. We made two observations each at the two studios for about three hours each time. We asked for permission to stay and watch when they were practicing and teaching classes. In that way we believe we got a glimpse of both what messages and image they signal to the students and also we got to observe how they act in the meeting with students. With the interviews and discussions in the back of our heads we observed body language and the way the instructors talked and also how the students acted in response to the instructor's ways. We were both present when we were doing observations. In this way we were able to discuss what we thought and what tendencies we had seen during the observation. During the observation we were sitting on the floor in the studio watching from behind in an attempt to not disturb the class. We both used pen and paper to write down what we saw and what we thought. The day after the observation we talked about what we had seen and wrote down our thoughts.

2.2.3 Analytical approach

When the interviews were done, one after one, we sat down and transcribed them in order to be able to later in the process code and summarize the empirical material into text. During our observation we tried to make field notes both during the time we were at the studios but also after we had left the studios. After presenting the empirical material we analyzed the material by confronting it with theory. According to Alvesson and Skjöldberg (1994) an abductive research approach process consists of a continuous interaction between empirical and theoretical findings. Because of the stories and the words the owners and the instructors constantly use, tell and act upon we decided to analyze our material from a discourse analysis and a narrative analysis (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). A discourse analysis takes into account the broader social context consider data such as signed language for example body movements, hand signals and so on to make a point about meanings where there is a response. The narrative analysis is based on the analysis of how people describe or account for events, real or imagined, often referred to as the telling of stories. (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008) We found in both of the studios that the stories and words they used were significant for their communication. The words used inside and outside the studio have been found to form the values and corporate identity. Accordingly, the

individuals at both studios need to pay attention towards which words are used because these words directly affect the corporate identity and values the studios are associated with. We have used discourse analysis in order to find what words support or ruin the desired values that they want to communicate.

2.3 Credibility and Reflexivity

We made an effort not to use words and terms as dirty work, image, value and transferring knowledge within the interviews in order not to affect the interviewee's answers. It is important to keep in mind that the interview is not a normal conversation because it is also important for us as researchers to collect some kind of information useful for the study (Bell, 2000). The interview can give information about the perceived reality and the subject as a whole which then will be interpreted by the researcher (Christensen et al., 2007). Westwood and Jack (2007) emphasizes that naturally in any research process a restraining view is present that hinder conversation of the wider epistemological and ontological concern. Within the research process we have met with individuals that have made different statements. We have worked hard to avoid biases in the form of distorted statements (Bell, 2000) from our interviewees. This was especially important because of our research purpose being trying to identify why one studio succeeded with desexualize their studio but the other did not.

Language and body language in the interview situation could be read beyond what is said. It is important to critically reflect on the validity of the discussions within the interviews (Alvesson and Deetz, 2010). Language and behaviour of the interviewees were interpreted and analysed in order to make sense of the material gathered (Ellen, 1984, Alvesson and Deetz, 2010). The statements of the interviewees have been treated as subjective and context related instead of nominal value (Alvesson 2003). We are aware of the fact that the interpretations made within the interview process result in other possible interpretations being neglected (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000) but we believe that we would make the same kind of interpretations if we were to do this research study again.

3. Theory

In this chapter we want to discuss the theoretical parts that we find of central significance for our study. The chapter aims to describe and discuss the theoretical aspects of dirty work, pole dancing, identity and values. The objective of presenting these theoretical aspects is to increase understanding of the subjects before introducing the reader to the proceeding analyzing chapters.

3.1 Dirty work

Huges (1962) argues that the term “*dirty work*” represents work that is physically, morally, or socially tainted. Dirty work is “*a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one’s dignity, or work that ‘in some way goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions’*” (Hughes, 1951:319). Hughes (1951) explained the term dirty work as tasks and occupations that are likely to be perceived as disgusting or degrading. It is often perceived as threatening to the “*cleanliness*” of society and as something the society considered to be taboo. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Douglas 1966). The concept of dirty work also draws attention to outsiders’ views of the work in question and the difficulties this raises for those who perform it. The profession itself can become connected in some way with work that is not considered respectable in the larger society. Also dirty work is either by society or the dirty worker themselves attempted to be hidden and imply that dirty workers often share the dominant values of the outside society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 2010). Dirty work can in varying degrees be found in any type of work which is why the importance of the concept lies in how it “*draws our attention to the socially embedded nature of all occupations, and of occupational identities*” (Dick, 2005:1385).

The construct of dirt has tremendous social significance because society draws a sharp distinction between purity and pollution, this stigma creates a challenge for dirty workers because they rely somewhat on others for validation but are likely to be denied that validation by society (Hughes, 1951). Often dirty work is stigmatized by society and requires emotion work to uphold a positive sense of self. Society often tends to associate cleanliness with goodness and dirtiness with badness, meaning that dirt is stigmatized as something that should be avoided. The individuals who perform

dirty work come to be seen as “*dirty workers*” and the taint of dirty work creates a real dilemma for its practitioners (Ashforth et al., 2007). Ashforth et al. (2007) point out that social validation becomes very difficult due to the highly stigmatized image of dirty workers’. Because of the salience of the strong cultures, dirty workers tend to unite through the occupation as a whole or within workgroups. The occupational title and the negative attributions that people attach to it make the occupation salient. Additionally, the stigma of dirty work frustrates the desire for social validation and constitutes a threat to the desire for self esteem. As individuals begin to combine into a group, they view the world in terms of “*us versus them*” (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Dirty workers therefore often construct strong connections with co-workers to be able to express frustrations with someone who understands their work related challenges (Ashforth et al., 2007; Huckabee, 1992; Tracy 2005). Since dirty workers experience a difficulty to bring the job home and to express their job to friends, family and others the dirty workers create in- groups. In-groups are often created because the surroundings do not understand the dirty workers situation or they might feel revolted or get worried if enlightened on the events of the dirty workers’ work-life. (Britton, 1997; Cheek and Miller, 1983; Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000) Therefore, it is important for dirty workers to use justifications to explain or defend their occupational behaviors (Hong and Duff, 2010). Ashforth et al. (2007) label this in-group formation as “*social buffering*” and argue that the responses to dirty work can bounce off against a constructed wall between the in-group and the rest of society. Although, dirty workers often have strong occupational cultures and report high job satisfaction (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Keinan and Malach-Pines, 2007). For example Meara (1974) showed how butchers and meat cutters found great honor in the masculine elements of their work.

Dirty workers have three types of ideological techniques to transform the perception of the stigmatized work. These are reframing, recalibrating, and refocusing. The common purpose of the three ideological techniques discussed is to transform the meaning of the stigmatized work by simultaneously negating or devaluing negative attributions and creating or revaluing positive ones. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Ashforth and Kreiner’s (1999) mean that societal perceptions of dirtiness often foster two processes in dirty work occupations that help inoculate occupational members against internalizing those perceptions. The first process is the development of

occupational ideologies that reframe, recalibrate, and/or refocus the meaning of the work. The second process is social weighting, where dirty workers differentiate between types of outsiders. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) believe that the techniques may justify the occupation and render it more pleasant and perhaps even more attractive to insiders and outsiders alike, helping persuade dirty workers to identify with their work role. When the dirty worker uses reframing his or her work is changed in a way that makes the work look more positive. In recalibrating, techniques are used to attribute the positive aspects and downplay the negative. Refocusing is used to remove the focus from the stigmatized parts of work, which enable the worker to completely overlook the stigmatized aspects of the work.

Ashforth et al. (2007) discuss in their article “*Normalizing dirty work: Managerial tactics for countering occupational taint*” a variety of behavioral and cognitive defensive tactics practiced by dirty workers. These are avoiding, gallows humor, accepting, social comparison, condemning condemners, blaming and/or distancing from client, and distancing from role. Their first tactic avoiding is a behavioral tactic that enables the dirty worker to not confront either others’ attributions of dirt or the elements of the job that appear dirty. There are three different variants for avoiding; physically avoiding, passing and withholding information Ashfort et al. (2007) showed that the common denominator of physically avoiding, passing and withholding information was that the dirty worker seeks to avoid having to face the stigmatizing aspects of the work or the negative views of outsiders, this even if the outsider was a family member. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Gallows humor is when the dirty worker use humor to confront stereotypes held by the public (or clients) in a relatively nonthreatening way. Gallows humor encourages the dirty workers to laugh at precisely what is most problematic and laughter may be used to enhance self-esteem or to relieve the stress associated with dirty work and public attributions of dirtiness. The third tactic, accepting, is about realizing that one cannot affect reality and resign oneself accordingly. The forth defense tactic a dirty worker use is social comparison. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Ashforth et al. (2007) claim that research on social comparison indicates that individuals may respond to identity threats by comparing themselves with other individuals and groups that are perceived to be worse off in certain dimensions. Ashford et al. (2007) identified four targets of social comparisons where the dirty worker compare themselves to other organizations, other occupations,

other individuals or subgroups within one's occupation and one's own past. The fifth tactic is condemning condemners, where the dirty workers criticize those who criticize them when their self-esteem is threatened. The defense tactic blaming and distancing from clients involves locating the cause of the taint in the clients themselves or separating oneself from the clients. The last tactic distancing from role of a dirty worker mean that the dirty workers may separate themselves from their clients or separate themselves from their role as a way of protecting themselves. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Although, the techniques may justify the occupation and make it more pleasant and perhaps even attractive to insiders and outsiders alike, helping persuade dirty workers to identify with their work role. However the lower the prestige of an occupation, it is less likely that ideology will be known and accepted by outsiders. (Berger, 1964) Ashforth et al. (2007) argue that ideologies may reframe the meaning of dirty work, and transform the meaning attached to the occupation by infusing the work with positive value and/or by neutralizing the negative value. Additionally, ideologies may recalibrate the meaning and adjust the implicit standards that are used to assess the work, perhaps by making seemingly trivial tasks appear important.

3.2 Pole dancing

There have been many cultural trends and styles for women's health and exercise over the few decades such as aerobics, kickboxing and pilates. However, none of these have been claimed to be both as personally empowering and sexually liberating as pole dancing (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009). Pole dancing has existed in contemporary western culture for at least the last two decades and perhaps longer. Some argue that pole dancing took form in America in the 1920s when traveling show dancers used a tent and poles as prop in their acts (<http://query.nytimes.com>). Pole dancing gradually began evolving from tents to bars as burlesque became more acceptable in the 50s. The Western style of pole dancing is claimed to have originated in Vancouver, during the 1970s and 1980s when striptease became popular in Canada and then in the United States (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009, www.thepolepower.com). It was first in the 1990s when pole dancing became a form of exercise to women it got more attention (www.thepolepower.com). Since pole dancing has begun to transform from

being regarded as a strip activity to a popular form of recreation and aerobic exercise it is interesting to investigate the connection between pole dancing and dirty work (www.thepolepower.com). Pole dancing is often viewed as an extension of exotic dancing, with the pole introduced as a “*support*” upon which to perform spins and tricks on. The performance of a pole dance in the context of a strip club could be conceptualized as a form of pornography and as something being solely intended to sexually arouse. Pole dancing is often bound to a subculture in which men enter specified clubs with the intention of watching women demonstrate their bodies. Although, when taken out of this context and into the recreational pole dancing studio it would be difficult to label this recreational pole as pornographic. (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009)

Over the past couple of years pole dancing has begun to transform from being regarded as a strip activity to one that is currently marked as a popular form of recreation and aerobic exercise, although still within a discourse of sexual liberation and empowerment (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009). It has moved from an underground activity to a more culturally, pervasive and acceptable mainstream social artifact (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009). This movement announced an arrival of a new phase that had an open attitude towards sex and was considered as sexy, cool and most important sexually liberated. (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009) The stigma still sticks because contact with dirt is believed to be contaminating. Individuals who perform dirty work come to be seen, literally, as “*dirty workers*” and believed to be what they do (Rozin et al. 2000). Whitehead and Kurz, (2009) claim that the two discourses of fun and fitness often serve the rhetorical function of negating, shutting down or side-stepping potential accusations or criticism by positioning those who would question recreational pole dancing as somewhat misinformed and as someone who would deny women rights to have fun.

3.3 Identity and Image

According to Ashforth (2001) research on workplace identity indicates that, through social interaction and the internalization of collective values and standards, individuals come to see themselves at least somewhat through the eyes of valued

others. Dirty workers, like others, see themselves through others and the research on identity indicates that individuals need a relatively secure and stable sense of self-definition of who they are within a given situation to function effectively. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) claim that a fundamental belief of social identity theory is that individuals seek to enhance their self-esteem through their social identities. Individuals have a strong desire to view their self-definitions in positive terms. Self definitions are partly grounded in the perceptions of others. Then through social interaction and the internalization of collective values, meanings, and standards, individuals come to see themselves somewhat through the eyes of others and construct more or less stable self-definitions and a sense of self-esteem. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) state that identity work in dirty occupations is particularly interesting *“precisely because the need for edifying meaning and identity is often so raw in stigmatized works that we can learn a great deal about the social construction of meaning from the experience of dirty worker”* (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999:413). Identity is not seen as stable and fixed but rather defined as a social construction which is constantly redefined and under the influences of competing discourses (Tracy and Trethewey, 2005; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

The *"dirtiness"* associated to dirty work is a social construction, which is not inherent in the work itself or the workers but is assigned by people, based on necessarily subjective standards of cleanliness and purity. It is through the social interaction and the internalization of collective values, meanings and standards, individuals construct their self definitions and a sense of self-esteem. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Individuals' sense of self is mainly grounded in one's salient roles within a given context and that the individual looks to others for validation of this sense of self and its inherent value. And given the taint of dirty work validation may be withheld. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Often job titles serve as prominent identity badges and there is a prestige ranking that the society ascribes to occupational identities. The membership in a profession influences self-definition and shapes how others think about the individual. Individuals need a secure and stable sense of self-definition of who they are and self-definitions becomes important. Also, individuals have a strong desire to view their self-definitions in positive terms. To secure a positive sense of self, active identity work is needed where the individual constantly asks questions like *“who am*

I?” and “*how do others’ see me?*” (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) This positive sense of self is largely grounded in socially important and salient roles and implies the difficulty for dirty workers to construct a positive sense of self because of the stigmatization connected of dirty work. Additionally, since self definitions and their inherent value are partly grounded in the perceptions of others it makes its harder. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth and Meal, 1999) Employees constantly engage in identity struggles in the form of identification and dis-identification with professional values and emotional experiences at work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

The stigma attached to dirty work makes social validation highly problematic. Dirty workers, before entering their occupations, are exposed to the same socializing influences as other members of the society with the same stereotypes of their eventual line of work. Additionally, like any occupation, their work tends to bring them into regular contact with others, particularly coworkers and clients. If the management and other power holders fail to communicate and negate common stereotypes of dirty work, coworkers are likely to import those stereotypes and act accordingly. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Active involvement in finding meaning in one’s job and one’s self becomes important and an attempt to do this is to separate the work self from a more authentic personal self in order to preserve a part of oneself not touched by work (Sturdy, 1998; Whittle 2005). Although, to uphold a separation between these two (or more) selves often becomes difficult (Johnsen et al., 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2003) as work constitutes an important source for the way individuals identify themselves (Hochschild, 1997) Some authors claim that workers either identify or dis-identify with a certain group or line of work (Ashforth and Meal, 1989) or dis-identify with a certain group or line of work (Elsbach, 1999; Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001; Pratt, 2000). However, as Humphreys and Brown (2002) argue, with whom and what one wants to identify is both constituted in personal and shared narratives in order to make sense of oneself and the world in which one lives. As such, meanings are created through the use of language (i.e., dialogues, listening, and talking) and not in solitude (Rhodes, 2000). Although dis-identifying with work does not necessarily mean actually resisting the job one does. On the contrary, dis-identifying with organizational norms and practices is often practiced while the job is performed properly (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Contu (2008) labels this “*decaf resistance*” and

mean that dis-identification rarely changes anything in practice. Often dirty workers try to dis-identify themselves from the organization or distance themselves from the dirty aspects of their work. (Tracy, 2005; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Although, a person's identities is often based on his or her work experiences rather than his or hers personal experiences. (Hochschild, 1997) Individuals dis-identifying from their work is often not as successful as the "new" dis-identified self and the risk to feel as fake as the work self one tries to dis-identify from is there. Consequently, attempts of dis-identification risk ending in even greater self-alienation (Costas and Fleming, 2009). Often dirty workers distance their thoughts and feelings through humor, irony, or skepticism in order to maintain a sense of control over their perceived private self (Tracy, 2004).

3.4 Values

To have coherent values is important for an organization to be able to communicate their identity and thereby affect the organization image. It is through the internalization of collective values, meanings and standards, individuals construct their self definitions and a sense of self-esteem. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) To be able to discuss the different theoretical aspects of values we would like to define the term. According to Ferguson and Milliman (2008) values are used to describe what is important to an organization and the heart of the organizational culture. The organizational values affect both the organization and the people who work in them. Core values have long been discussed as one significant component in order to provide organizational efficiency and improve employee attitudes and performance. At the same time poorly argued and implemented core values could instead lead to negative impact on the whole of the organization. Since the concept of dirty work draws attention to outsiders' views of the work it may create difficulties for those who do it. The profession itself can become connected in some way with work that is not considered respectable in the larger society. Dirty work can either by society or the dirty worker themselves attempted to be hidden, this imply that dirty workers often share the dominant values of the outside society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 2010). Even though it is argued to be important with unambiguous and articulated corporate

values many organizations have not fully gained the benefits. (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008)

Values work together with the corporate culture in order to work as a perceptual framework that sets the differences between right and wrong. Core values within an organization needs to be visible for the people operational within that organization. The set of values are ought to shape and express the preferences and behavior of the individuals in the organization (England, 1978). Visible values within the organization therefore help the people involved to relate to a common identity. If shared by the whole organization the core values, which basically describe the identity of the organization culture, will serve as guidelines for decision making (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). It is through the social interaction and the internalization of collective values, meanings, and standards, individuals come to see themselves somewhat through the eyes of others and construct more or less stable self-definitions and a sense of self-esteem. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) Dirty workers, as others, see themselves through others and the research on identity indicates that individuals need a relatively secure and stable sense of self-definition of who they are within a given situation to function effectively. (Ashforth, 2001) This means that it is essential that the values and beliefs within the organization are widely shared and fostered in order to achieve a strong work culture. To use values instead of command can be an effective alternative which enables employees to make their own decisions and can also lead to higher levels of satisfaction with the employees (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008; Leopold and Harris, 2009:97). To achieve a common understanding of what the organization stands for it is important to possess essential values within the organization. These values are worthless if the employees do not understand or even know the values of the organization (Krona and Skärvad, 1999). By understanding the values of the organization the workers get more attached and able to identify themselves with their work. Core values can inspire people and feel connection to the organization (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008). It is important for the leaders in the organization to maintain and entertain the common values of the organization in order to make sure they are present in the daily work (Krona and Skärvad, 1999).

For the employees to be able to connect to the image the values needs to be genuine and unambiguous (Buckingham, 2011). If succeeding with this aspect the employer

and employees communicate the same values and are able to make decisions aligned to the corporation (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008). Explicit core values in the organization open up to autonomous working environment where decisions can be made that support the core values of the organization (Grönroos, 2008). Values and performance are behavioral aspects of the brand and should be within the everyday activities and language (Buckingham, 2011). Values that are not lived are not accurate or imperfectly implemented (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008).

Buckingham (2011) accentuates that vision, mission and values of the organization need to be reflected in the brand. The values of the organization need to be placed on the core of the strategy (Buckingham, 2011). Employees work harder when they feel that they are doing something that makes a difference. Values can guide employees and managers to act in an ethical and socially responsive way which is especially important in a time of crisis (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008). Murphy (2003) states that the organization can be negatively affected if the employees do not identify themselves with the corporate values and goals. If the employees do not feel connected to the organization and what it stands for they will not feel committed and loyal to the organization. It is also important to make sure the core values are given the same attention. If concentrating on one of the core values within an organization there is a high risk that another will affect the goals of another environment. These actions could lead to a dysfunctional organization (Belasen and Frank, 2010).

4. Empirical findings

This chapter presents the results we have received during the data collection. We have chosen to interview two studios, studio 1 and studio 2, in order to receive information about their desired image and the actions they take towards the communicated values and image.

4.1 Studio 1

4.1.1 About Studio 1

The studio is located in the middle of Copenhagen very close to the big shopping street. The studio gives the impression of being a modern place with its big windows, white walls and floor. When entering the studio for the first time we got the feeling of visiting an art studio and not a pole studio. Also, there were few pictures on the wall which enhanced the feeling of cleanliness. Classes held at the studio gives no allusion connected to pole dancing if it were not for the poles in the middle of the room. The owner at studio 1, Lina, claims she has developed her own concept and the word pole dancing is not used in the studio or at the training sessions. She claims that both the students and her instructors do not use the term pole dancing. Already from the start Lina has been clear about what she wanted to express with her studio:

“The basic for me in this is technique, strength and courage and that is really the three things it is about.”

To become an instructor at studio 1 there is a training program that the students needs to go through to successfully become an instructor. The training program is conducted with the owner of studio 1 and includes theory, practical training and meetings once or twice a week. The moves the instructors are taught and later also teach are strictly athletic and build a lot upon how to develop strengths and technique to be able to do the tricks or spins gracefully. All of the instructors believe that in order to be able to work together it is important to share a common understanding and appreciate the fact that the people within the studio has common values. Rebecka is an instructor at studio 1 and she explains that the values that Lina communicates are very clear and reflected in the people she has chosen to be her instructors:

“We all have almost the same values, not exactly the same but our values reflect hers because it is her studio so I think she picks out the people that she can see has the same values.”

The instructors at studio 1 express how much fun they all have together and that they feel strong connections with each other. The instructors at the studio spend a lot of time laughing with each other and during the classes we observed when the instructors were training together the friendships were visible and when someone had problem succeeding with one movement the other instructors helped by explaining how to do it and gave each other tips and were at the same time laughing with and at each other when doing something wrong or right.

Both Lina and her instructors at studio 1 express that in order to perform pole dancing at more advanced levels the students need to show more skin. In the beginning it is important to have clothes the students to feel comfortable in. In classes and in training the instructors and students were wearing spacious sweatpants and t-shirts and when climbing they had small shorts to be able to stick to the pole. The skin is used in order to get a grip and to be able to climb high up on the pole and not fall down again. The skin is also the secret when doing movements that are more advanced which is why they start with regular clothes for exercising and later, when they advance or do shows it is necessary to show more skin in order to get a good grip on the pole. When executing advanced pole dancing the dancers use feet's, thighs, stomach, arms and hands in order to stay high up on the pole and at the same time be able to change position so the performance almost looks like a dance. Thighs and arms are pressed together around the pole and make it possible to get high up and stay on the pole.

4.1.2 Desired image

The respondents at studio 1 have a clear understanding that they do not want to be associated with the sexiness or feminine aspects of pole dancing. Instead the focus lies on the technique and the movement. In studio 1 pole dancing is about having fun and most importantly to get the technique. When Lina, the owner of studio 1, explains her background and how she started with pole dancing, she tells the interviewer this

episode when she was looking for an instructor job in a studio. Before the meeting the studio had the prejudice that she was “*this stripper girl*” but she believes that the people who then saw her perform changed their mind about pole dancing only being a sexy stripper dance. Rebecka explained that she chose to start pole dancing at studio 1 just because of the clean and street look on the homepage. Rebecka was searching for a place to try pole dancing and fell for the nice looking pictures on the website that gave the impression of being more acrobatic art than sexy. She expressed that it was very important for her when starting at the studio that it was not focusing on sexiness. She explicate that the main reason why she chose this studio was because of the language that is used in the website and also because she associated the studio not to be sexy:

“It is very important to me that it is not the stripping, sexy part of it. I am not sure why it is important to me actually... It just is. I don’t want it to be a sexy thing, I want to do stuff that I think is cool. And I don’t know why sexy isn’t cool.”

Rebecka did have a problem to explain why this was so important for her decision on where to try pole dancing. Later on in the interview Rebecka reflects more about it and explains that she often get very irritated and annoyed because she constantly has to explain what exactly it is that she does when training pole dancing. When trying to explain she states that she does not want to be considered a “*sexy thing*”. Both Lina and her instructors all bring up the issue of how to tell others what they do. Rebecka feels that she always has to explain herself to people that she does not know. Even though she believes that the perceptions have changed the last year she still tries to talk around the subject when someone asks her what she does:

“I explained that I went to some Chinese pole in combination with aerobics, something like that, talking around the subject instead of telling exactly what it is. You don’t really want to say the word pole.”

Lina states that she did not get approval or appreciation from the beginning of her career within pole dancing. The people close to her did not understand it from the beginning and thought about pole dancing only as a “*porn and sexy dance*”. Now friends and family all know about her work and what she do but she still do not tell

people she just met what she does for a living. Lina explains that if she would decide to tell someone that she just met she uses a variety of substitute words in order to avoid the word pole. Instead of saying that she does pole dancing she declares that she is a dancer and an actress and that she is running a dance school where she teaches acrobatics, yoga or motion art. The last thing she say when explaining what she does for a living is that all the activity on her studio is performed with the device of a pole.

“I don’t say pole first because people get this look in their eyes and they just quit listening.”

Lina and all of the instructors we interviewed at studio 1 feel that the knowledge about pole dancing as a form of fitness has been changed. People seem to know more about it now or even know someone who has tried it. Even so, the respondents feel that when they describe their job it is still very common that they have to give the person they are telling a few minutes to ask questions or utter comments that alludes to sexiness; this is especially the case when it comes to telling males. This disrespect for the occupation and sport is not unusual according to the respondents.

4.1.3 Actions towards achieving desired image

At studio 1 the owner, Lina, states that already from the start she has been working with what she wants to communicate with her studio. This is also very apparent when the observations were held at the Studio. The classes were strictly about the technique and movement and there were no allusion to sexiness at all during the class. Also the studio is particular calculated with the white floors and walls and its big windows. The music is also obvious carefully prepared with inspiration from Jazz, Rock & Roll and Hip Hop. Although, the owner admits that she was more strict from the start about the sexiness connected to pole dancing and are now *“loosing up a bit”* for example by doing bachelor parties and also she admits that all kind of dance can be sensual but it does not have to be sexy. She describes her original intention with the studio as follows:

“It is intentional, I want to communicate that it is clean and fresh, it is not about sexiness. It is about the moves and the exercise.”

All of the respondents in studio 1 believe that pole dancing is becoming more and more acknowledge and acceptable in the society but that there are still prejudices. For the reason that dirty work often has associations towards pole dancing Lina acknowledges that she have been working towards changing the prejudice for the studio and for the kind of pole fitness they perform within the studio. The focus on street and cool dance with art associations is mentioned as a replacement for the dirty aspects. Lina has even tried to get away from the sexy associations by using a name on the studio that she thinks associates more towards regular dancing and street dance trying to create a vibe that is not associated to being sexy. She wants to create something that is positive instead of dark and heavy, which is another vibe that she believes many other studios send due to the focus on sexiness. Studio 1 became the final product of many years with yoga, acting and street dance. The love for the pole as a device for doing a sport influenced by many different things was the concept idea for studio 1.

Lina states that there are three things for her connected to pole dancing; technique, courage and strength. Technical skills are needed in order to be able to do the movements and courage is needed too. One of the instructors at studio 1, Niklas, explains that many of the movements are frightening to try the first time because you might not make it and it could hurt a lot if you pinch your skin or fall down of the pole to the floor. He believes you need courage and determination that you actually can *“swing your legs up and end up upside down on the pole”*. The earlier mentioned words; technique, courage and strength were also mentioned during the classes and during the interviews with the instructors at the studio several times. The owner of studio 1 was from the beginning very clear about her dislike of the sexual values and is still very strict and does not want any instructors that do these sexy dances or facial moves. She believes that her students also appreciate the feeling she is trying to create. Lina, the owner, explains that because of her background as an actress and dancer she also wanted the pole dancing to be a combination of movement and theater,

“I don’t put it in a sexy context. Here it can be fresh and sporty, funny and theatrical. It can be a lot of things.”

The studio has also parties and meetings for both the students and instructors so that everybody can engage and become a part of the studios development together. Lina believes that the confidence in her instructors is the most important because if she is able to make them satisfied and happy they will keep on improving which will in the end become transferred to the students as well. Further Lina imagines that one of the main reasons she is successful with her studio is because she has succeeded in creating a friendly and fun atmosphere that the students feel right away when they enter the studio. On the question how she works in order to provide this clean and fun atmosphere, the process in choosing the instructors is explained to be the crucial part. There is an education program where the instructors learn how the owner wants the pole dancing to be presented towards the students. All of the instructors at studio 1 talk about the importance of the students feeling freedom when dancing but they are very strict to tell the students that they need to master the techniques before they can advance to a class in a higher level. Another of the key stones for the studio is that the students should feel comfortable. Lina talks about how important it is to make the student not associate pole dancing to sexiness because she believe that aspect could make the students feel less comfortable, instead she means that the most important feature in her classes is to have fun:

“In my opinion, it can be like “I have to get sexy and I cannot make any mistakes”. I don’t want that, I want people to fall, to have fun, to laugh.”

The training at studio 1 is not about being sexy and the instructors at the studio also know this. They believe that is very clear and out there and students who want the strip chair classes and sexiness of pole dancing go to other studios. One of the respondents means that how outsiders observe pole dancing depends on and has a lot to do with how the pole dancer uses the expressions when they dance.

“It has very much to do with how you look and how you look at the audience. You know you can have this sleepy cat eyes or you can do it with a smile. It is very much about your intentions.”

Many studios and dancers sometimes use high heels when pole dancing but Lina was known in the studio where she started as “*the girl in sneakers*” because she was doing her style with more influences from being a tomboy and street dancing. The sneaker-story is one narrative that the owner used in order to clarify that she does not do this sport because she wants to be sexy, she does it because it is fun and very challenging. This is one aspect that Lina is very clear about. There will be no stripper shoes inside her studio or outside in her shows:

“I don’t put it in a sexy context. If you do that, then it is a night club, right? Here it can be fresh and sporty, funny, theatrical; it can be a lot of things because I take it out of the high heels and sexiness.”

Today pole dancing is not exercised in dark places where they serve men alcohol and it does not include any sexiness if that is not wanted. Rebecka states that the atmosphere is the main reason why students like the studio and pole dancing. Lina explains that one of the reasons why she is working a lot with the atmosphere, the instructors and the website is to get away from the stereotype picture people have about pole dancing:

“I try to create something positive, that has a positive vibe around it, and that is not dark and heavy”

4.2 Studio 2

4.2.1 About Studio 2

Studio 2 is located in central Copenhagen and offers classes from the beginner to the more advanced to students who want to perform pole dancing. During the observations the interviewers noted that the surroundings of the studio were something Malin, the owner, put a lot of effort in. The studio was recently renovated and has dark, wooden floor and brickworks on the walls which make the feeling comfortable and relaxed. Malin states in the interview that she tries to make the students feel at home by for example put flowers outside and inside the studio Malin, decided to open her studio to inspire women. She wanted to inspire other women to

believe that they can always achieve what they want to. She looks at the pole as something to achieve and accomplish, as a hinder to overcome. She states as a single mother that there are many challenges in life and that pole dancing can help women feel better about themselves and achieve building better self-confidence because they get to feel feminine and sexy again. During the interviews Malin talks about the importance in developing the feminine side so that women could feel more confident about themselves.

“I want the studio to be a place where I can inspire women to be strong and to be themselves. I want to help them to develop their skills and grow as women.”

Malin started with pole dancing because she associated it to danger and beauty. She saw the beautiful movements on the internet done by the world champion in pole dancing and she saw how high up on the pole she did the moves and, as she said, she fell in love with it. Throughout the interviews Malin states that it is crucial for her to create a studio where the importance lies in femininity, self-confidence and self-esteem. Also the instructors have a similar approach of what they want the studio to signal. She was certain from the beginning that she wanted a studio with personality. With personality she means that she wanted a place where the women got to know each other, a place where they wanted to stay and socialize and get inspired by each other.

“People are very aware that this is the modern form of pole dancing...Of course people have the pictures in the head but they are very interested in the art of pole and not the porn of pole.”

4.2.2 Desired image

During the interviews held at studio 2 all of the respondents used the same words; freedom, inspiration and self-confidence to describe pole dancing and the feelings it creates. The instructors and the students at studio 2 seems to find reasons to come to the studio, they come to exercise, have classes or just hang out together for a while in between training. In between interviews there have been a lot of laughter and we feel

that they are almost keeping each other's backs, making jokes and calling each other sweet things. Malin states that she wants the students to feel inspiration and movement when attending the studios classes. She wants to create a place where the students can have their breathing place, a place where they can relax and develop themselves both as individuals and as women.

“We want to create a studio that is open to everybody. No matter how you look, no matter whom you are, if you've danced before or not are not important. This is kind of your own space for developing yourself.”

The instructors at studio 2 are very focused on giving the student a good experience when coming to the studio. The instructors have talked about the strength that is needed to be able to perform the right techniques. Moa explains that it does hurt and it is very demanding which makes the student really appreciate it when actually succeeding with a difficult motion. Malin believe that any kind of woman can come and get the training which is very physically demanding and at the same time contribute in making the students feel more feminine and good about themselves. It is discussed as some kind of selfishness because the students should only compare with themselves to be able to develop and learn. All respondents in the studio state that the clothes, when exercising pole dancing, should be very casual but as soon as the students advance up to higher levels they need to show a lot more skin otherwise they will not be able to perform some of the tricks and spins on the pole.

The careless feeling within the studio is visible in the different kinds of women that are in different stages of life, the attitude that you can come as you are and the student do not have to be all dressed up and with makeup on to feel good when exercising. Sara, one of the instructors, believes that the instructors and students have fun together mainly because of the atmosphere in the studio:

“We laugh at each other and also about what we do. There is no difference between the one who teaches and the students.”

Malin believes pole dancing and the way she and her instructors teach helps develop the students' self-confidence and their self-esteem. Malin explains further and says that pole dancing:

“Is a great opportunity to get to know yourself and the different parts of life as a woman.”

Sara declares that pole dancing helped her to feel more confident and she explains that when she developed and learned more tricks and spins her self-esteem and self-confidence increased. Both Sara and Moa, instructors at studio 2, think it is an important factor to look and feel good when exercising pole dancing and both stress the importance to feel feminine. Although, they mean that the studios main focus is not just to look good but also to feel good. Sara explains that they use the mirror a lot in the training:

“We say look in the mirror and see how good you look and they actually get happy and fall in love with themselves.”

Most of the respondents at studio 2 assume that people still have pictures in their head which are inspired by the media and strips clubs. However, Malin explains that once someone sees one of the shows they perform, the prejudices often change. Malin admits that she before trying pole dancing had the same prejudices and believed that pole dancing would be dirty and that it was all about sexiness. Also she claims that at her previous studio it was very stereotypical. She explains the studio with girls with big boobs, blond hair and a lot of makeup. Malin continues and explains that she has nothing against women with silicone breast but admits that she has preconceptions about these women and often questions their intentions and why they come to the studio. One common statement heard from many of the respondents at studio 2 is that the prejudice differs between men and women. All the respondents believe that men have more prejudices against pole dancing than women.

“I have heard many guys associate it with stripping, and naked girls. But that is guys, you know.”

However Malin and the instructors at studio 2 believe it still depends on the person and how open-minded the person is but states that it was even more difficult for people to understand the sport when she started for two years ago.

“I think that people still judge the same but they don’t say it the same way anymore .Because now you are supposed to have a more open mind about it because it is so popular.”

Additionally, Moa believes that the change of reaction depends on the attention the sport has got the last year in Scandinavia, which has resulted in a bigger awareness within society. She believes that the attention that Zumba got when it came to Scandinavia gave pole dancing free ride on the wave.

“...people said if you want to be happy just do Zumba and pole dancing even though it is totally different things”

4.2.3 Actions towards achieving desired image

Studio 2: s owner, Malin, explained that she does not want instructors that are only good dancers she wants people who are interested in interacting with others and like teaching and explaining to others. She states that she is very consciousness when she is selecting her instructors for her students. That one of her rules is that the instructors should be very different from each other. Most of the instructors at studio 2 mean that they do not have programs or structures they follow to communicate to the students. Instead it is about making the student feel good about themselves and develop their own capabilities. Although, Moa talks about the structures within studio 2 and believes that this is necessary. However she implies that she does not believe in only having a lot of structures and policies because this she means can be boring for the instructors and “kill” the individual creativity of the instructors. The instructors at studio 2 utter that there has not been any training program for them to become instructors but that they often talk about how important it is to communicate the same values. Although, when the interviewer ask the respondents about this subject the answers and the actions are not coherent to each other. Most of the respondents clarify

that they do not perform any “*dirty moves*” or anything that is “*sexy*”. Although when the observations were held at the studio, the moves, tricks and spins had a lot of connections to sensuality. Also the studio with its dark decoration and the music that is played during the classes oppose the statements from respondents in the interviews. Classes such as pole on heels and chair tease are perceived as sexy and sensual. During observations we felt that pretending to wear high heels during class enhanced the sensual feeling within the movements.

The same statement is discussed by Emma who explains that in order to build their students self-confident and self-esteem the instructors use a lot of positive words. This is also supported by Linda who explains that the studio has a big focus on the intrinsic values. Malin and the instructors want their students to feel self-confident when they dance. This common subject about developing the students is discussed in all of the interviews at studio 2. Linda states that pole dancing gives confidence to the students because they feel that they have achieved something. Moreover she declares that pole dancing moves the boundaries because it constantly challenges the inner limits an individual has, which Linda believes make the students develop the self-confidence and self-esteem even further.

“People really develop in their mental ways and they get a whole other dimension when doing this in a group”.

Studio 2 has an individual approach toward teaching the students. Instead of having levels where you are supposed to learn a few specific techniques Malin believes that the students can develop and benefit from the instructors getting to know the specific student and their strengths and weaknesses in order to give individual challenges during every class. This way the instructors are responsible and involved with the process. Malin explains that any kind of woman can come and get the training which is very physically demanding and at the same time it makes them feel more feminine and good about themselves. It is discussed as some kind of selfishness because the students should only compare with themselves to be able to develop and learn. The careless feeling within the studio is visible in the different kinds of women that are in different stages of life, the attitude that you can come as you are and the student do not have to be all dressed up and with makeup on to feel good when exercising.

“We laugh at each other and also about what we do. There is no difference between the one who teaches and the students.”

All of the instructors believed the reason for why the students return to studio 2 is because they liked the atmosphere. The students felt good about themselves which is what all the instructors at studio 2 are saying they try to achieve. The feeling should be part of the experience. They should leave feeling good about themselves as women. Emma related to students at the studio who do gymnastics and are more like tomboys which sometimes did pole dancing on high heels. She experienced that the students really liked the high heels pole dancing because after been dancing in their own party shoes for a couple of times they actually bought stripper shoes with even higher heels. She declares that the students did not feel that they could be feminine but when they then eventually tried it because of the studios atmosphere, they allowed them to laugh about what they were doing and the instructor also felt they were more comfortable trying it because no one expected them to be something that they were not.

“It is fun to see them develop from those body-building types of girls towards moving more feminine and they love it themselves”.

Sara declares that pole dancing helped her to feel more confident and she explains that when she developed and learned more tricks and spins her self-esteem and self-confidence increased. Sara and Malin thinks it is an important factor to look and feel good when exercising pole dancing and both stress the importance to feel feminine. All of the respondents at studio 2 have had some kind of problem or resistance when telling their friends and family what they do but explain that after a while their close ones just got used to it. For example Emma explained that her parents did not have a problem with her being a pole dancer and she thought the reason for that was that they were used to her *“doing stupid things”*.

“It is difficult to explain to others why you do a kind of sport that might be considered to be about strip and an erotic theme. It is not the first thing I tell people when I meet them.”

Emma told the interviewer that she kept the fact that she was doing pole dancing secret for a long time before she told her friends. When she finally told her friends she only expressed it to her female friends because she did not know how to explain to her male friends what she was doing and why she even wanted to exercise pole dancing. Moa and Linda also believes that the cultural aspects are one factor and that depending on peoples cultures people are more or less open about pole dancing. Moa states that:

“This sexual thing is such an issue in so many ways. It is dirty and it got this culture thing that we just have when we are born and now it is so porno focused because of the media and everything.”

“It was not so many years ago that sex was still something you needed to hide and it was like a shameful thing, like a taboo.”

Malin and the instructors at studio 2 believe that the prejudice in society is very much inspired by the image from media and from old associations to porn clubs or strip clubs. Linda enlighten us that she believes the reactions of strangers when she tell them what she do, has changed the last year. This argument is also discussed by Emma, which believes it is because pole dancing has become much more popular now and many more people have heard about it:

“I would say the last year the reactions have been a lot more interested instead of judging when I tell about it.”

Although Malin tells the interviewer that she believes that highly educated people do not go to pole dance classes. Moreover she tells us that it is often the highly educated students that write her long letters to thank her for helping them finding the inspiration. She believes that educated women have more prejudice and because of their education these women seem to analyze everything they do. It could be that they are interested in trying pole dancing but when they come to the studio they have a hard time letting go of control. This is probably because of their image of themselves as being respectable and educated women and the contradictory image of pole dancing. The educated women have bigger issues in accepting that they like to

exercise pole dancing because they do not relate to the dirty image officially. Malin has given this a lot of thought and expresses that:

“They need to go through these layers and their brain can be very loud”.

Although, all of instructors at studio 2 have seen a transformation in the media and mean that pole dancing is now more focused on the fitness aspect and not so much connected to strip anymore. They mean that today the students are more aware and acceptable towards pole dancing much owing to the internet. Sara states that there is also the difference in *“pleasing in dancing”* and *“expressing yourself in a sensual way”* and believes that most of the pole dancing studios want to get away from the pleasing and instead focus on the sensual expression in pole dancing.

4.2.4 Where does it break down

Emma states that from the beginning she was against the sexy clothes and claims that she never wanted to wear stripper shoes but she has changed her mind about the shoes and now feels good when wearing them.

“...Now, I am very into it, because your legs get so long and it looks so nice. It can be a part of the show, so I like to go this way also.”

Sara, Linda and Emma declare that stripper shoes are a must in their shows because they feel sexy and their legs look long when they wear them. When doing shows Malin states that the show clothes often have aglets, flowers and they use the skin to easier stick to the pole. The clothes are a big part of the show and convey some kind of message or feeling the show is supposed to provide the audience. Malin is aware that this kind of clothes contributes to the image of them being strippers. Even though bare skin is needed to be able to stay high up on the pole there are ways to avoid the stripper shoes or being very sexy in shows but she does not want that entirely. The quote below clearly shows that the owner Malin does not actually want to get away from the sexiness but she is still trying to convince others that she does. In one sentence she states what she believe the society expect from her but in the end she

changes her opinion and tell us what she really wants. This shows her inconsistency in her communication and personal opinion:

“I do a little bit of both; I can also be much more about hip hop and funk... Or not very much...”

One issue at studio 2 is the prejudice the respondents feel when performing pole dancing. They frequently make connection to “*sexiness*” and “*strip*” but are quick to say that the studio does not want to be connected to that association or these words. Emma believes that pole dancers want to get away from this typical picture of being a prostitute or stripper. Within the quote above we can sense two wills. One part of Emma does not want to be perceived as a stripper that only wants to perform in a sexy way to an audience. This part of her is probably influenced by society and the old picture of pole dancing being about stripping and dirty work. The other part is unsure and actually wants to do these sexy performances because it makes her feel good sometimes. This feeling is acceptable within the studio and the instructors and also the students accept and like the sexy performances also. Malin had her own preconceptions before she first started pole dancing:

“When I was looking for a studio, I really thought it was like in a movie, it would be very dirty and the stripper would be very big.”

Malin believes that most studios want to keep the sensual theme in their performances and a class in order to try to live up to the student’s believed expectations. The instructors at studio 2 are confident that their students appreciate the sensual part of the dancing in pole dancing:

“Often they have these prejudices about pole dancing as being striptease, so they expect a little sassiness.”

Emma agrees with this argument and is sure that the new students that are coming to the studio expect a more sensual thing.

“They know that dance is more sensual and they want to explore and play more with the sensuality in pole dancing.”

All of the respondents in studio 2 mention the importance to keep the sexiness when training pole dancing. The respondents believe that without these aspect women will not grow and get more confidence. Pole dancing needs the sexy aspects in order to help women to get more confident and more in touch with their sexual and feminine side. Moa states that pole dancing is basically about yourself and the feeling inside.

“A lot of studios now focus on fitness and forgets about the sexual part... Take Zumba. There you move sexual but this is ok because we put it in a little fitness box. If that is what it takes to get people not to just see pole dancing as porn it is ok”.

5. Analysis

With this chapter the aim is to connect the theoretical framework with the empirical findings based on our interviews and observations within the two studios. Based on the four thoroughgoing headlines in the theory as well as in the empirics, the information from the interviews has been proved and challenged by the data from the theoretical framework.

5.1 Studio 1

5.1.1 Desired image

Values work together with the corporate culture as a perceptual framework sets the distinction between right and wrong. Core values within an organization needs to be visible for the people operational within that organization. The set of values shape and express the preferences and behavior of the individuals in the organization (England, 1978). Studio 1 has been working hard from the beginning to get away from sexiness and strip pole. These values are not only shown with the language and movements they express but also in the interior design of the studio. The white walls and large windows give a clean and innocent impression and if it would not be for the poles reaching from the floor to the ceiling this could be any kind of dance studio or artist workroom. The same is accurate for the website which only shows pictures of difficult moves on the pole that does not look sexy but more like art. Also the text published on the website describes how the pole is used as a device for fitness training and fat burning. These pictures and language used on the website and in the studio are focusing on fitness and gives no associations towards anything else. Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that visible values within the organization assist the people concerned to relate to a common identity. The owner of studio 1, Lina, has really strong opinions about what they do at her studio and she expresses that she wants the sport to be about fitness combined with art and theatre. The classes in the studio should be fun, cool and influenced by street dance. Since the core values inspire people and allow them to feel connected to the organization (Ferguson and Milliman, 2008) Studio 1 has been able to achieve this through the shared values that they communicate.

Krona and Skärvad (1999) argue that the organizational values are worthless if the employees do not understand or even know the values of the organization. By understanding the values of the organization the workers get more attached and able to identify themselves with their work. The instructors at studio 1 agree that they use pole dancing as exercise and what they do is not at all sexy. Some of the instructors have specifically said that they do not want it to be sexy because they do not relate sexy pole dancing to anything positive. Individuals have a strong desire to view their self-definitions in positive terms and that self-definitions and their inherent value are at least partly grounded in the perceptions of others (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). One of the instructors at studio 1, Rebecka, explains that she does not want pole dancing to be sexy at all. She explains that she often gets very irritated and annoyed because she constantly has to clarify what exactly it is that she does when training pole dancing. She states that she does not want it to be considered a sexy thing. Rebecka finds it irritating and tiresome to have to explain herself since her surroundings do not understand why she exercise pole dancing (Britton, 1997; Cheek and Miller, 1983; Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000) Also she does not want the society to describe her as a “*pole dancer*” or a “*stripper*”, which to her is dirty. Ashforth et al. (2007) state that it is common for individuals who perform dirty work not wanting to be associated to dirty workers and it is clear at studio 1 that Lina and her instructor’s take distance from being regarded as dirty workers. The individuals within studio 1 take clear distance from everything within pole dancing that is considered to be sexy. This is consistent in everything the owner of the studio and her instructors do for example through music, language, training classes, the studios environment and surroundings, the clothes and also the shows that they perform outside of the studio. The focus lies almost solely on the fitness part. It is through the social interaction and the internalization of collective values, meanings and standards, individuals construct their self-definitions and a sense of self-esteem. Because the owner and the instructors in the studio are sure about what they want to communicate and do that consequently in all aspects the self-definition becomes more stable (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

5.1.2 What do they do to achieve desired image?

Lina and her instructors have a common understanding that pole dancing exercised in studio 1 is not connected to the sexual aspect of dancing instead the focus is on the movement and technique. The owner, Lina and the instructors at studio 1 do not use the word pole dancing instead Lina use another term for it, pole fitness. The term pole fitness can be one way for the owner to escape from the fact that she does not want others to associate her studio to the dirty aspects. Also the term that studio 1 uses may help the owner, instructors and students to associate it more to cleanliness and goodness instead of dirtiness and badness (Ashforth et al. 2007). The term pole fitness can be more acceptable in the society because pole dancing is not considered to be respectable in the larger society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 1966) The term can be a way of trying to reframe or recalibrate and transform the perception of the stigmatized aspects (Ashforth et al. ,2007)

We noticed that every time the subject of pole dancing being sexy was being brought up in the interviews the respondents reacted almost the same. Every time sexiness were discussed the interviewees and the owner all seemed to add the word “No” in front of the words sensuality, sexiness, strippers or porn. Values and performance are behavioral aspects of the brand and should according to Buckingham (2011) be within the everyday activities and language. Our interpretation is that everyone involved in the studio are working to maintain and entertain the common values and we believe that these values are present in the daily work at studio 1 (Krona and Skärvad, 1999). The values of the studio are also present when they perform and do shows. The owner of Studio 1, Lina, told us that she has been real strict and did not want any of the performances from her studio to be sexy but she also told us that she has come to understand that all dancing are sensual and even though she does not see it as dancing she understand the similarity and the sensual effect the movements has on the pole. She states that sometimes the performance is beautiful and sometimes it is funky and cool but never sexy. Many studios and dancers sometimes use high heels when pole dancing but Lina, the owner of studio 1, is known as “*the girl in sneakers*” because she is doing her style with more influences from being a tomboy and street dancing. This narrative explains how she has been able to act accordingly to her desired image and is succeeding to send her preferred image towards the audience.

5.1.3 Dirty pop-up

All the respondents at studio 1 have difficulty to tell strangers that they exercise pole dancing. As Ashforth et al. (2007) discuss, social validations becomes very difficult due to the highly stigmatized image of dirty workers'. The concept of dirty work also draws attention to outsiders' views of the work it becomes difficult for those who does dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Douglas, 1966). For example the owner of studio 1, Lina, explains that she always uses a variety of substitute words in order to avoid the word pole. Instead of saying that she does pole dancing she declares that she is a dancer and an actress and that she is running a dance school where she teaches acrobatics, yoga or motion art. Because of the social validation from others the (Hughes, 1951) owner and the instructors feel that they struggle to tell strangers what they do because strangers may judge and associated the occupation to something dirty. Avoiding can also be an explanation why the owner of studio 1 and the instructors do not want to tell what they dance because it enables the dirty worker to not confront either others attributions of dirt or the elements of the job that appear dirty. (Ashforth et al. 2007) Lina utters that she always have to "*leave a few minutes for people to think dirty*" when she explains what she does for a living. This implies to one of the techniques Ashforth et al. (2007) discusses, gallows of humor. The respondent tries to laugh at it and confront the stereotypes held by the society in an unthreatening way but it is obvious that this actually upset her. Society or dirty workers themselves often make efforts trying to ignore or hide the existence of the dirty work and dirty workers often share the dominant values of the outside society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 1966). For example the owner of studio 1, Lina, states that she did not get approval or appreciation from the beginning of her career within pole dancing, that people close to her did not understand it and thought about pole dancing only as porn and sexy dance from the beginning. She makes it very clear that the people involved in studio 1 do not dance in a sexual way instead it is about the techniques and the movement. Rebecka, is one of the instructors and she states that the disrespect for the occupation and sport is not unusual. This can be because dirty work as Hughes (1951) explains it is often explained as tasks or occupations that are likely to be perceived as disgusting or degrading.

Rebecka declares that she chose studio 1 because of the cleanliness of the website and its language. She claims that other studios she compared to have an image towards a

more sexy aspect. For her it was very important that to exercise at a studio that distances from sexiness. We believe that she associates cleanliness with goodness and dirtiness with badness and wants to avoid the dirty aspects (Ashforth et al., 2007). She chose studio 1 because of the image and focus on fitness and no sexiness. The owner of studio 1, Lina, explains that she is called “*the girl in sneakers*” because the way she performs and because of the studios image, this is a metaphor for her to use in order to distance herself from the role as a sexy pole dancer. All of the instructors at studio 1 see themselves as different from many other pole dancing studios. They view the world in terms of “*us versus them*” (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) and believe that they perform a more proper form of pole dancing. Rebecka states that students who want the strip chair classes and sexiness of pole dancing go to other studios. All of the instructors at studio 1 express how much fun they all have together and that they feel strong connections with each other. Dirty workers create in-groups. This is often because the surroundings do not understand their situation.

5.2 Studio 2

5.2.1 Desired image

At studio 2 the respondents frequently make connections to “*sensuality*” and “*sexuality*” when they talk about pole dancing but they are quick to inform that the studio does not want to be connected to these associations. Malin, the owner of studios 2 and the instructors consider themselves as working toward the impression and image of not doing anything that would contribute to this image. Since dirty work is perceived as tasks or occupations that is degrading or a threat to the cleanliness of society (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Douglas, 1966) this can be a reason why the respondents feel that they need to express this identity and image towards the society, even if they do not consider that as necessary as the society prescribes it to be. Another reason why the studio tries not being connected to the more sexual aspect could be the fact that society often tends to associate cleanliness with goodness and dirtiness with badness. If the studios owner and instructors then prescribes it to be sexier they may feel the society’s judgments against them which can make it more difficult to handle it emotionally and uphold a positive sense of self. (Ashforth et al., 2007)

5.2.2 What they do to achieve desired image

The owner Malin believes pole dancing and the way she and her instructors teach helps the students' build their self-confidence and to build up a better self-esteem. Sara is one of the instructors at studio 2 and she explains that in order to help building the students self-confidence and improve their self-esteem the instructors use a lot of positive words. Sara one of the instructors at the studio explains that the studio uses the mirrors a lot in the training. This is also supported by another instructor, Linda, who clarifies that the studio is focusing on the intrinsic values. However, as Humphreys and Brown (2002) argue, with whom and what one wants to identify with is both constituted in personal and shared narratives in order to make sense of oneself and the world in which one lives. As such, meanings are created through the use of language; dialogues, listening, talking and not in solitude (Rhodes, 2000). As argued above, to make the studio function effectively they need to communicate and act upon the same values and image. Since Malin, the studios owner and the instructors believe that self-confidence and self-esteem could be improved by using more sensuality in pole dancing they need to communicate this and not communicate that they take distance from sensuality.

Individuals' sense of self is mainly grounded in their salient roles within a given context and the individual looks to others for validation of this sense of self and its inherent value (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Linda, one of the instructors, states that pole dancing helps students to improve their confidence because they get to feel proud and that they have achieved something. Moreover Linda declares that pole dancing moves the boundaries because it constantly challenges the inner limits in individuals. She believes that this make the students develop their self-confidence and self-esteem even further. Once the student get more comfortable within the studio, the instructors and the other students the self-confidence may improve. However this means that the owner and the instructors need to be clear about their image and should not provide the students with mixed values and opinions. One of studio 2 instructors, Moa, claims that sex is something people tend to hide and consider it to be shameful. Moas argument confirms the fact that dirty work is often perceived as threatening to the cleanliness of society and as something the society considered to be taboo. (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Douglas 1966) The owner at studio 2, Malin, tells the interviewer

that she believes that highly educated people do not go to pole dance classes. She believes that educated women have more prejudices and because of their education these women seem to analyze everything they do. These women may be afraid of the associations connected to dirty work and the society's opinions about it. The profession itself can become connected in some way with work that is not considered respectable in the larger society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 2010) and the educated women might avoid taking pole dancing classes because of that. As Berger (1964) argues the lower the prestige of an occupation, it is less likely that ideology will be known and accepted by outsiders.

5.2.3 Dirty pop-up

During the interviews at studio 2 both Malin and the instructors are clear that they want to help the students to get better confidence and self-esteem but not by doing anything referred to sex. Although the actions, values and image they try to communicate oppose from each other. During the observation held at the studio we found that the music, the moves and the surroundings were inspired by sexuality and sensuality. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) claim that if the management and other power holders fail to communicate and negate common stereotypes of dirty work, coworkers are likely to import those stereotypes and act accordingly. We believe that this has happened at studio 2 because Malin does communicate values about avoiding sexiness but does not act accordingly to them. For example she claims to take distance from the sexiness but act upon it with the music, moves and the language. If this keeps on going we believe that the studio might get in trouble because they communicate something totally different from what they are acting upon. Since it is through the social interaction and the internalization of collective values, meanings and standards individuals come to see themselves through the eyes of others and construct more or less stable self-definitions and a sense of self-esteem (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). It is therefore important for Malin to be clear about what they want to communicate to be able to develop the students' self-esteem and self-confidence and at the same time their own.

The individual that performs dirty work come to be seen as dirty workers and the taint of dirty workers create a real dilemma for its practitioners (Ashforth et al., 2007). The

owner at studio 2, Malin, admits that when she started with pole dancing she associated it to be sensual and sexy. Because of Malins own perceptions about pole dancing being sensual and sexy she tries to distance from it. She wants to communicate an image that takes avoidance from the sexual part but it breaks down constantly because she has started to like the sensual and sexy dance and state that this kind of dance makes her feel good. One of Ashforth and Kreiners (1999) three techniques, refocusing can be applied on the owners behaviors since she tries to remove the focus from the stigmatized parts of work, which enables her to overlook the stigmatized aspects of work.

To have coherent values it is important for an organization to be able to communicate their identity and thereby affects the organizations image. It is through the internalization of collective values, meanings and standards, individuals construct their self-definitions and a sense of self-esteem (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Within studio 2 we have identified words that have been used by all the interviewees from the studio. Comments uttered about feelings such as happiness, fun, cool and dangerous are frequently used by the respondents in studio 2. The respondents at the studio focus on the importance of the students and also themselves getting more confident and feel good as a woman. Within studio 2 the belief is that the students feel better about themselves and get more self-confidence when they feel sexy and feminine.

Poorly argued and implemented core values could lead to negative impact on the whole of the organization (Milliman, 2008). Since the concept of dirty work draws attention to outsiders' views of the work it may create difficulties for those dirty workers. The profession itself can become connected in some way with work that is not considered respectable in the larger society. Dirty workers often share the dominant values of the outside society (Ball, 1970; Hong and Duff, 2010). These dominant values could why Malin tries to be less focused on sexiness. However this attempt seems to us to be deteriorating because the sexiness and sensuality is very present within the studio and the classes. Milliman (2008) declares that values are used to describe what is important to an organization and the heart of the organizational culture. During the process of this thesis we have been questioning if studio 1, its owner and instructors actually want to get away from sexiness since we have heard them say that they do but we have also observed the complete difference

when they act. The studio is doing well and is even expanding which might imply that the students like the atmosphere and the classes and then also the sexiness and sensual moves that they are being taught. In the training sessions the instructors use a lot of sexy moves and already in the warm up sexy moves are included and hips are moving in a sensual way and face expressions are serious and sensual. They do not move away from the sensual and sexy part of pole dancing. When doing shows the participants, both instructors and students, have said that they like the stripper shoes because they feel more like women and get long sensual legs. Murphy (2003) argues that the organization can be negatively affected if the employees do not identify themselves with the corporate values and goals. We believe that the talk about not wanting the studio to be associated to sexiness but at the same time perform sexy dancing could become an issue for studio 1 in the future.

It is argued by Ferguson and Milliman (2008) to be important with unambiguous and articulated corporate values. Studio 2 is probably one of many organizations that have not fully gained the benefits of corporate values because of the twofold messages that they are sending towards themselves and the students. According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) it is important for an organization to have coherent values and to be able to communicate the identity and thereby affect the organizations image. As the respondents working in studio 2 has stated throughout the interviews they want to inspire women to become more self-confident through pole dancing. Although, the arguments constantly breaks down when the studio states that they take distance from the sexiness associated with pole dancing. The studios environment, atmosphere, website, language, opinions and way of teaching clearly show inspiration towards dirty aspects. Since the organizational values affect both the organization and the people who work in it, it is extremely important to speak and act accordingly to the core values the studio has. Core values are a significant component to provide organizational efficiency and improve employee attitudes and performance (Buckingham, 2011). Malin declares that they are not sexy but during the observation held at the studio and the interviews with all the respondents it constantly breaks down for example through their actions and expression. Instead of making efforts of getting away from the sexiness and sensual aspects within pole dancing that the participants actually seem to like, the owner could work on establishing unambiguous values for the studio. The studio is fashionable and modern with high poles and the

dances focus on fitness and sensuality that makes women feel like women and helps improve their self-confidence.

Dirty work is often attempted to be hidden either by society or the dirty workers which imply that dirty workers often share the dominant values of the outside society (Ball 1970; Hong and Duff, 2010). The owner Malin and her instructors all hesitated to tell their friends and family that they were exercising pole dancing because of their own and others opinions and association to what pole dancing is (Ashforth et al. 2007). For example one of the instructors, Moa, reports that before she tried pole dancing she thought it was all about sex and pole dancing being close to stripping. During the interviews held at studio 2 all of the instructors assumed that people still have dirty images about pole dancing and they feel that they sometimes need to justify and explain or defend their occupational behaviors (Hong and Duff, 2010) by using different techniques and words to make themselves look better in someone else's eyes (Ashforth et al. 2007). For example all of the respondents have difficulties telling their family, friends and even strangers why they exercise pole dancing. The stigma connected to dirty workers creates a challenge because the dirty workers rely on validation from others which make it even more difficult to explain to others what they do (Hughes, 1951).

Since dirty workers often experience a difficulty to bring the job home and discuss their job with friends and family the dirty worker creates in-groups to share difficulties and challenges (Ashforth et al., 2007; Huckabee, 1992; Tracy, 2005). This was obvious during the observation when the studios owner, instructors and students expressed with both verbal- and body language a friendship towards each other and we felt that they regarded themselves almost like a family. The in-groups can have a huge effect on the dirty worker (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Keinan and Malach-Pines, 2007). This was apparent for example when Malin explained that she was against the stripper shoes with high heels from the beginning but changed her mind about the shoes and now feel good when she wears them. The surroundings and the environment in the in-groups have made it normal to wear stripper shoes (Ashforth et al., 2007). This shows the strong impact in-groups creations can have on the individual (Ashforth et al., 2007; Huckabee, 1992; Tracy 2005). Inside this group it is approved to wear the stripper shoes and do the sexy moves but outside this in-group

within studio 2 the individuals might avoid telling people about it in order to avoid judgment.

Ashforth et al. (2007) techniques are used in studio 2 constantly. Social comparison is for example applicable where the respondents compare themselves with other individuals and in-groups that they observe to be worse off than they themselves (Ashforth et al., 2007). The owner and the instructors do this by comparing their studio to others and claim that they are doing it in a better and more proper way. Sara compares studio 2 to her old studio where she explains it to be stereotypical where the instructors and students were girls with big boobs, blond hair and a lot of makeup. Sara feels more connected to the values within studio 2. Malin, the owner and the instructors compare themselves with other studios and begin to see the world as “*us versus them*” (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999), where their studio is better than the studios around them. The avoiding technique can also be applicable here because of how they try to avoid the fact that they have a more sensual and sexy way of pole dancing and then try to avoid having to face the stigmatizing aspects of the work or the negative views of outsiders (Ashforth et al. 2007) Also the defense tactic blaming or distancing can be applied to the owner and instructors behavior when they blame and separate themselves from the clients to deal with either the attributions of dirtiness or the work issues. Another of Ashforth et al. (2007) tactic is the accepting, where the dirty worker accepts that one cannot affect certain events and resigning oneself accordingly. For example all of the respondents at studio 2 claim that the media is now focusing more on the fitness aspect and not so much connecting pole dancing to stripping anymore. They express that today the students are more aware and accepting towards pole dancing much owing to the internet. Emma, one of the instructors, talks about Zumba and she believes as soon as people accept the fact that pole dancing is fitness the judgments will disappear more and more.

All of the respondents at studio 2 mention the importance to keep the sexiness when training pole dancing. On one hand they try hard to get away from the sexiness associated to pole dancing. On the other hand, they keep coming back to the importance to have the sensual bit in pole dancing in order to feel better as a woman and feel more sensual and feminine. One instructor, Emma, explained that the students that come to this studio expect a little sassiness which is only stating that it is

the students who decide what kind of image studio 2 has. Linda claims that without the sexiness and the sensuality they want to provide, the women will not grow and get more confident about themselves. Often dirty workers try not to identify (Fleming and Spicer, 2003) themselves to the organization or distance themselves from the dirty aspects of their work. (Tracy, 2005; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) The owner and the instructors may dis-identify from their true images because they are afraid of what the society may think if they communicate their true values. Costas and Fleming (2009) discuss individuals that try to not identify themselves to their work but state that this is often not successful as the new dis-identified self-risk to feel fake. Consequently, attempts of dis-identification risk ending in even greater self-alienation (Costas and Fleming, 2009) which can become the case with Malin and the instructors if they do not decide which identity they would like to have.

6. Conclusion

This chapter contains our conclusion based on the analysis in the preceding chapters. We have answered the two research questions presented in the introduction of the thesis. Moreover we have presented our explanation of how we believe studio 1 and studio 2 could proceed in order to continue being successful in the future. Last in this concluding chapter we will give suggestions to future researches that can be done in this research area.

6.1 Results

The intention for this thesis is to identify and analyze the corporate values in studio 1 and studio 2, and if they correspond to their desired identity and how they communicate this to their surroundings. We have also investigated if dirty work has any effect on their desired image and values. To remind the reader of our objective presented earlier we start this chapter by again convey our research question. The following problem statements have been our help to achieve the objective.

- 1. What kind of values/image is important for the owners and instructors at the pole dance studios and how do they try to communicate them?*

The owners in studio 1 and studio 2 claim to communicate that they perform pole dancing as a form of exercise with the intention and actions to get away from the dirty aspects connected to pole dancing. We found that this statement was followed in studio 1 but not in studio 2.

During the interviews and observations held at studio 1 both the instructors and the students receive the same message as Lina wants to send out, which is that pole dancing is about fitness combined with acrobatic, art and theatre. Lina, the instructors and the students have a common understanding that pole dancing is not connected to dirty aspects of dancing instead the focus is on the movement, strength and technique. At studio 1 the owner Lina has been working hard from the start towards this clean image and expresses this throughout the whole studio. The studios everyday activities and language take clear avoidance from the sexiness aspect of pole dancing. This is

consistently in everything Lina does for example through the music, the language, the way the instructors teach their classes, the studios environment and surrounding, the website, the clothes and also the shows that they perform outside of the studio. The clothes are baggy and big instead of tight and they never wear high heels. The interior design within the studio and its open space, light and white walls gives no associations to dirty aspects. When we got into the studio we experienced that it was modern and we felt more like being in an art studio than a pole dancing studio. It was obvious for us that the owners focus lies almost solely on the fitness part. We believe that the activities that they communicate are the reason why Lina succeed in distancing the studio from being perceived as sexy pole dancing. Lina takes clear avoidance in every aspect that could be perceived as sexy and through her consistency she achieves sending the message through every channel including her instructors. From the beginning she has had clear opinions of what she wants to express and communicate with her studio. Through this consistency of not changing values and image we believe that she has build up a solid brand of non-sensual pole dancing.

Our impression is that the owner of studio 2, Malin and the instructors believe that they have the same values as studio 1. They consider themselves working towards the impression and image of not doing anything that would contribute to the dirty aspects connected to pole dancing. In the process of our research we have been questioning why studio 2 tries to get away from the dirty aspects when that does not seem to be what they actually want. We discovered during the interviews and the observations done at studio 2 that what they say they want to communicate contradicts to how they act. For example the studios interior, the way they teach, the opinions and values shared during the interviews, the expressions done when dancing, the music played and the website seem to be influenced by sensuality. When we visited the studio we felt that the interior design was pleasant and the soft light gave us a feeling of warmth. The walls and the floor are in a darker color and together with the candles it provides a sensual feeling.

In regard to the above presented theory concerning dirty work we believe that the connection to dirty work affect the individuals at studio 2 in believing the dirty aspects of pole dancing. Our interpretation is that they find it hard to accept being associated to something that is considered to be dirty. This is probably one of the

reasons why they fight so hard to get away from these aspects. Our understanding is that they unconsciously compare themselves to other pole dancing studios that also try to get away from the dirty aspect and perceive those studios as better than the ones embracing sexuality. Discussed in the dirty work theory section dirty workers often need to struggle to achieve acceptance from society and our interpretation is that Malin tries to get away from the dirty aspects because of the fear of being judged by society. Externally Malin and her instructors seem to agree to the prejudices from society and this leads to confusion and contradictory behavior within the studio. Being sexy and sensual is internally believed to be embracing and empowering women.

The main problem, in our opinion, at studio 2 is that they are claiming to take avoidance from the sexiness and sensuality connected to pole dancing but is acting towards it instead which contradicts to their values. We believe that this contradiction contributes to confusion within the studio for all parts. Our opinion is that the consequences for this behavior are that the prejudices about pole dancing and the activities in studio 2 increase. The fact that the individuals in the studio try to get away from sexiness only enhance the society's judgment. This behavior within studio 2 give the impression of them accepting the negative associations of pole dancing. We believe that this may have an effect on their own self-esteem. In our opinion Malin should take advantage of the dirty aspect and find a way to use it in her communicated values both internally and externally. From our perspective the students coming to studio 2 appreciate the atmosphere and the fact that they can act and feel sensual and sexy in her classes without being ashamed of it. We believe that the students and the instructors appreciate coming to the studio and act out their sensual self which is not really accepted anywhere else in society.

6.2 Theoretical implications

A few years ago pole dancing was only associated to strip clubs. Pole dancing is getting bigger and more accepted as a physically demanding form of exercise. During our interviews with the respondents at the two studios we have gotten the impression that the sport has become more accepted by society. Dirty workers have long been struggling with acceptance and there are many other examples of dirty work that

started out being resisted by society but later grew in acceptance. We trust that our research can contribute to further research within dirty work and pole dancing. When conducting our research we had problem finding relevant theory about pole dancing. With our conducted empirical research we believe that we have contributed with new thoughts concerning pole dancing as a form of exercise. We have not found any similar research that treats the problems of dirty workers and pole dancers in the way we do in this thesis.

6.3 Practical implications

Since Lina communicates the same values towards the instructors, the students and the society it is hard to give any practical implications to studio 1. One aspect that is crucial for Lina and her instructors is to make sure their values are clear and unambiguous and represent what they want to communicate and not contradicts to other values. For example, Lina should be careful not to allow too much sensual aspects within her studio if she wants to conserve her present values. It is important that the instructors share similar values and Lina should continue the process of selecting instructors that share the same vales as Lina. We consider the instructors at Linas studio to be one of the reasons that she is successful in her way of communicating her studio. Lina has succeeded in communicating her core values towards her instructors who lives by it in all the everyday activities. Linas students go to the studio because of her success in communicating acrobatics and fitness instead of sexiness.

Even though both of the studios states that they want to get away from the sexiness connected to pole dancing we are not sure that this would be the winning concept for both of the studios. Within our research we have not found any evidence that it is better to embrace sexuality or not, instead it lies in the personal opinions of the owner. Students that want to perform pole dancing do it with different intentions which are why we believe that both studios have their own winning concepts. One student wants a cool work out and the other wants to feel sensual at the same time. Our interpretation is that the owner at studio 2 and her instructors share the same values, to develop women femininity through being sensual and sexy, but do not commit to

them. Instead they claim that they want to get away from the dirty aspects. The studio is doing well and is even expanding which we believe imply that the students like the atmosphere and the classes which include a lot of sensual moves. Instead then to move away from sexiness, we believe that they should consider to take advantage of it since their students seem to expect it. The importance for Malin lies in the fact that she needs to be clear about what she wants to communicate to be able to develop and expand the studio. Malin needs to figure out if she wants to position the studio as taking a distance from the dirty aspects or admit and act upon that she with her studio actually wants to development the female femininity by using sexuality and sensual elements. If Malin succeeds by position her studio on the market it will create associations to her studio which sets it apart and distinguish the studio from other studios in the pole dancing industry. Our interpretation is that Malin needs to decide what she truly believes in and position the studio and consistently communicate this towards the instructors and the students. At the moment she is successful but in the future it could become problematic if she does not have any clear values to communicate. Our recommendation would be for her to use the already existing values inside her studio and communicate them to others. The values we found that is already present in the atmosphere within the studio are sensuality and wellbeing. The classes are influenced by sexy moves which make the students feel good about themselves and we think this is what Malin should communicate. We believe that Malin would benefit from embracing the sexuality instead of trying to get away from it, especially because she is very successful in providing the sexiness and sensuality the student's requests. In our opinion Malins students come to her studio because they want the sexiness and sensual moves that Lina does not provide. Our conclusion is that the winning concept in studio 1 is not the winning concept in studio 2. Through positioning themselves differently towards the market they avoid competing against each other and attracting the same target audience.

6.4 Further research

Considering our concluding remarks we would have found it interesting to further investigate if studio 2 would actually benefit in the future by communicating and acting clear, common values towards their positioned target audience. One common

theme discussed in both studio 1 and studio 2 was the fact that men have more prejudice against pole dancing than women. Many of the respondents claimed that men often considered pole dancing as a stripping. The fact that pole dancing is often bound to a subculture in which men enter specified clubs with the intention of watching women demonstrate their bodies can be a reason why the respondents experience the different attitudes. (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009) Both studios expressed the fact that women are more open about pole dancing and consider it to be a form of exercise comparing to men that are still considering pole dancing as dirty. An interesting study about the different associations and connections towards dirty work and pole dancing between women and men would be very appealing to further investigate. Also the importance of in-groups within dirty work we believe would be interesting to investigate since in our observations and interviews done at both studios it became clear that the in-groups existed and were very strong, almost like families.

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