What leads to flow experience in indoor wall climbers?
Kaspar Schattke, Franziska Lindlacher, Anja Schiepe, & Hugo M. Kehr

Theory
According to the compensatory model of motivation and volition (Kehr, 2004) flow experience results when (1) activity related incentives (i.e. challenge) arouse one’s implicit motives (i.e. implicit achievement motive), (2) no competing explicit motives are activated, and (3) the subjective abilities are sufficient.

Hypotheses
We hypothesized that indoor climbers with a high implicit achievement motive should experience more flow climbing a challenging but manageable route than climbing an easy route. The challenge should arouse the implicit achievement motive.

Sample
We observed N = 30 indoor wall climbers who were on average M = 28.93 (SD = 7.62) years old and practiced M = 1.55 (SD = .69) times per week. All climbers were experienced.

Measures
Implicit achievement motive: Multi-Motive-Grid (MMG, Sokolowski et al., 2000)
Explicit achievement motive: Personality Research Form (PRF; Stumpf et al., 1985)
Flow-experience: Flow-Short-Scale (Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008)

Procedure
We examined the climber’s flow experience while they were climbing an easy and a challenging route. The experimenter used a radio headset to ask the subjects the Flow-Short-Scale twice on an easy and twice on a challenging route.

Results
We computed a 2 × 2 × 4 repeated measures ANOVA with implicit and explicit achievement motive (high/low) as between-subject factors and time of measurement as within-subject factor on flow experience. The whole model is highly significant (F(3,24) = 16.89, p = .00).

Discussion
The explicit achievement motive had an impact on climbers’ flow experience. This effect was larger for climbers with a low implicit achievement motive. The difference in flow between climbers with a high and low explicit achievement motive disappeared on the easy route for climbers with a high implicit achievement motive. Therefore, we conclude that the activity related incentive “challenge” leads to flow experience particularly in climbers with a high implicit achievement motive.

References