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STORIES OF SURVIVAL

BOOK REVIEW

STRIPPED: 2ND EDITION: INSIDE THE LIVES OF EXOCTIC DANCERS BY BERNADETTE BARTON (NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017)

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ONE OF THE REASONS I BECAME INTERESTED in psychology is because I wanted to understand how people different from me lived, survived, and thrived, particularly those with experiences very different from mine. This book does an awesome job of allowing the reader to step into the shoes of women who strip for a living, at least a little bit, including the good parts of the job as well as the bad parts. At times, the author transports you to the smoky, male dominated establishments, and to the women, in that moment, who are entertaining those male clients (or less often female clients). Sometimes the women feel powerful and empowered while, it seems. many other times they feel discouraged, degraded, and frustrated. The industry seems to treat the strippers as disposable rather than valued. Given the strippers are the draw in the establishment, that is surprising in some ways while completely expected in others. However, to the extent that some women talked about how at the end of a long night of work—they still owed the establishment money rather than making money.

As an applied researcher one big challenge is getting people to participate in your research, particularly if you are researching a hidden or stigmatized population. In particular, many people do not trust researchers because researchers are often outsiders. Breaking down barriers to trust requires one to assure people you are not there to reinforce a stigma, or that you are not trying to scam them or to involve them in something that will bring negative consequences, or that you will not use them or their stories to exploit them or others like them. Although women who strip for a living are not hidden per se, they do not necessarily trust outsiders as they are stigmatized, demonized, and stereotyped by the media and society. One thing I really liked about *Stripped* is that the author writes about her issues of finding and gaining trust

of women working in the industry. I enjoyed reading about her journey in studying strippers over the last several decades as well as her thoughts about how to gain trust (e.g., thinking about working at a strip club) during both time periods and how she eventually resolved the issue. She also discusses what interviewing the women looked and felt like at various times. I think students at all levels interested in doing applied or community-based research could benefit from this text.

Another positive thing about this book is it is well researched and highlights the stories of the women interviewed. I especially appreciate that the author had done this work about a decade earlier with the original edition of the book published in 2006 entitled *Stripped: Inside the Lives of Exotic Dancer* (NYU Press). This allows for an interesting comparison of how things regarding establishments that feature strippers have changed (e.g., laws and regulations, work environment, culture, the number of establishments) as well as thoughtful attention to issues such as race/ethnicity, the explosion of pornography on the internet and how that impacts the industry, and feminist controversy surrounding sex work. The author also talks, along the way, about how conducting this kind of work is, or is not, accepted by both friends and colleagues.

There are seven chapters with an introduction, and reading the book goes fast, in part, because of the narrative content of women's stories. The author not only covers how the women became involved in stripping but also how they survive it, what their day-to-day looks like, and how they transitioned out (if they had by the time of the interview).

At the end of the book the reader will have a pretty good foundation for understanding the environment and issues that women who strip must navigate. In some ways, the book is more depressing than I thought it would be. However, the author concludes the book with stories of survival and protective factors which helps to bring the reader into a more positive way of thinking about the context of working as a stripper and the resilience of the women who are in this profession. Additionally, the author discusses where this work might go in the future given the digital technology landscape.

This book is a well-researched, well-written, well-rounded peek into the lives of women who have worked as a stripper. However, if you are looking for hard numbers or estimates, for example, of how many women who have worked as a stripper had ever been abused or the average length of how long a woman might work as a stripper, you will not find it in this book. Additionally, if you are looking for an in-depth exploration of women's journey before, during, and after stripping you will not find that in the book either. This book is a qualitative inquiry utilizing multiple interviews with women who have or do work as strippers but also some other club employees. If you are at all interested in the sex industry, I would strongly recommend this book for all the reasons I mentioned above.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

TK Logan, Ph.D., is a professor at the University of Kentucky, Department of Behavioral Science. Her research focuses on stalking/cyberstalking, partner abuse, coercive control, sexual assault, firearm-related risks, and safety planning and efficacy. Dr. Logan is an author on over 175 research articles and book chapters as well as five books. She also serves on the editorial board of four international journals. Dr. Logan is also involved with a several community boards and national organizations working to prevent gender-based violence.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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