

THE HEALING JOURNEY: INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

by Linda DeRiviere. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, co-published by RESOLVE, 2014. \$18.95 CAN., paper. ISBN: 978-1-55266-654-8. Pages: 1-199.

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The Healing Journey: Intimate Partner Abuse and Its Implications in the Labour Market seeks to provide insight into the challenges that women confront when leaving an abusive partner within the labour market as well as their everyday lives. Linda DeRiviere argues that examining women's paths to employment, income, and employment training outcomes are crucial to understanding women's experiences with intimate partner abuse. The book draws upon two theoretical perspectives: 1) *human capital theory* emphasizing education, employment training, and work experience as needed for an individual to progress in the workforce; and 2) *segmented labour market theory* focusing on workplace characteristics consisting of 'good' secure, high paying occupations with advancement opportunities versus 'bad' undervalued, intermittent work with limited new skills. Considering the highly competitive market and the financial and time commitment needed to gain skills and experience, women may face obstacles in competing to earn a living wage upon leaving the abuse. For DeRiviere, labour market and welfare policies do little for women who have difficulties maintaining employment in terms of getting them out of the secondary labour market. This places women in 'bad' jobs and exacerbates their continued dependence and chance of re-victimization.

Data for this study were part of a tri-provincial (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) longitudinal, labour market study with 414 women interviewed in seven-wave, six-month intervals from 2006 to 2010. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide empirical evidence to determine the importance of abused women taking part in any employment, education and training throughout their healing journey. Results indicated participants were economically disadvantaged irrespective of their level of education and employment. Trauma from abuse including childhood

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victimization may have hindered participants' educational and career performance early on creating a lasting barrier to participating in labour market opportunities. Many women had irregular employment histories which may have hindered their attempts to secure a connection to the labour market; 44.7% of the women reported that they had taken a leave of absence, quit, or been fired due to abuse (42). Additional education and/or training did not necessarily result in a corresponding growth in earnings for these women. Women who increased their income did so by working more hours within low paying, peripheral employment. Upon leaving the abuse, women often became the primary provider, however, their earnings within the secondary labour market fell short of securing a family wage. Finally, stalking or harassment occurred frequently while attending school or work and this was exacerbated for those who were obliged to maintain child custody agreements with their abuser. Taken together, these findings provide strong support for DeRiviere's argument that the impact of abuse places women at a disadvantage in the labour market extending beyond the duration of the intimate relationship itself.

Chapter 5 discusses health-related causal factors to explain why abused women experience difficulties participating in or progressing within the labour market. The findings suggest that some low-income women suffered from chronic physical and mental health concerns including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, which resulted in extended absences in the workforce. The author advocates for gradual training and workforce entry for abused women, while recognizing the need for welfare policies that promote extended assistance for those who may never be able to participate. However, the author points out that further inquiry is needed with respect to the impact of health conditions on employed immigrant women.

In chapter 6, the readers are presented with the effects of the abuse by comparing the women's prior aspirations and the actual outcomes after separation. Upon separating from their abuser, nearly half of the women re-evaluated or abandoned their aspirations citing the need to be pragmatic about their employment and training goals. Narrative analysis provides a glimpse into the lived realities of mothers who share testimonials relating to their abuser's efforts to thwart their familial aspirations by alienating them from their children. Chapter 7 provides an estimate of the costs of intimate partner abuse. By drawing upon each participant's job classification, average hourly wages and weekly hours on the job, and number of years until retirement at 65, DeRiviere calculates that "the net present value of lifetime earnings losses totalled \$37.2 million (2012 dollars) for participants who experienced health issues that

were attributed to abuse” and that this shortfall “translated into earnings-related productivity losses in the economy” (152). This figure did *not* account for any additional lifetime reliance on social welfare and social housing, or any loss in revenue that the government would have generated from taxable incomes.

The final chapter discusses labour market policies in terms the similarities and differences among the three provinces. DeRiviere argues that current and supposedly “gender-neutral” policy strategies that center upon assisting individuals and families in becoming financially self-sufficient are, in actuality, examples of workfare that do not adequately address women’s realities. While a thorough list of the strategies is presented to assist abused women in successfully participating in paid work, it would have been beneficial highlight where priority should be given considering the scale of this undertaking.

The Healing Journey is unique in its contribution as the first labour market study to analyze their labour market outcomes of Canadian women who have experienced intimate partner post separation. One key criticism of this study is the limited use of narrative analysis; increased use of narratives could have provide greater insight into the complex realities that hindered the women’s ability to pursue their goals and this would have been a valuable addition throughout the rest of the book. Also, while the book makes an effort to explain statistical significance and correlations between variables to the novice reader, it lacked a thorough discussion regarding the methodology, interview guides, and data analysis. Furthermore, the analysis requires greater recognition of the experiences of visible minorities and immigrant women.

Overall, this book provides valuable insight to academics, activists and policy makers advocating against violence against women in Canada. The findings highlight the need for policy responses that begin from the ground up in order to provide meaningful assistance to women whose everyday lives are faced with poverty and violence. The book provides a degree of insight into the labour market and everyday challenges faced by women leaving abuse and the quantitative analysis is valuable in highlighting patterns of earnings and occupational outcomes as well as economic costs associated with intimate partner abuse.