

## **One in four lap dancers has a degree, University of Leeds researchers find**

The preliminary findings of the first major academic project on lap dancing by Dr Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy of the School of Sociology and Social Policy have made headlines around the world.

The media in countries as far afield as China, Canada and India joined the quality, mid-market and tabloid media in the UK in reporting the findings, with coverage focusing on the fact that 25% of respondents said they had an undergraduate degree (*see links to a selection of coverage below*). In the words of tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, the Leeds research shows that lap dancers are 'not just pretty faces'. Much was also made of the fact that dancers can earn up to £48,000 per annum, and that 84% of the 300 dancers surveyed reported satisfaction with their job.

But while the researchers welcomed this interest in their work and recognize the level of public interest in the issue, they are keen to challenge media reports which paint a picture of the lap dancing industry as full of 'brainy beauties' making their fortune.

It should not be overlooked that the preliminary findings show that dancers with a degree were in the minority in this survey. Also, dancers with degrees had not chosen dancing in place of a career in their chosen subject after university, but instead were combining it with other forms of employment or education. One third of women interviewed were using dancing to fund new forms of education or training.

The media coverage also tended to focus on other 'good news' elements of the findings, such as the dancer's positive body image. Less attention was given to dancers' experiences of customer harassment, including verbal abuse or touching. Dancers told Dr Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy about unsafe working conditions, lack of insurance, inconsistency of income and fines or high fees in some clubs. The reports also tended to disguise the profound variations between the standards and management in different clubs. Researchers found some clubs were well run but others were significantly more dangerous or exploitative.

This important research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and involved a survey of 300 dancers, and interviews with workers, industry management and regulators.

The findings come at a pivotal time for the lap dancing industry in the UK. A change in the law in 2010 saw authorities given more control over the location of lap dancing establishments, but failed to consider the activities taking place within the club or the welfare of the dancers.

The Leeds report includes suggestions - largely overlooked by the media - about how clubs could be more strictly regulated to ensure the safety of the people working in them. The researchers suggested a number of changes including clearly displayed council rules in a number of places in the club, as well as the use of receipts and proper auditing of fines, fees and commissions. Monthly club meetings to discuss rule changes and insurance for dancers were also put forward as another way to improve dancers' safety and financial security.

The preliminary report is available as a downloadable PDF [here](#); the final findings will be available in May 2011.

Links to a selection of media coverage can be found here:

The Independent: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/one-in-four-lap-dancers-has-a-degree-study-finds-2063252.html>

BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11120165>

The Sun: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3114238/Lap-dancers-not-just-pretty-faces.html>

The Daily Telegraph:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/howaboutthat/7967049/One-in-four-lap-dancers-has-a-degree.html>

The Daily Mail:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1306701/Lap-dancers-One-strippers-university-degree.html>

The Vancouver Sun:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/quarter+dancers+have+university+degree/3461337/story.html>

Malaysian Insider:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/world/article/quarter-of-uk-lap-dancers-have-degrees/>

The China Post:

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/international/europe/2010/08/30/270621/25%25-of.htm>

Khaleej Times (Dubai):

[http://khaleejtimes.ae/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/August/international\\_August1489.xml&section=international&coll=](http://khaleejtimes.ae/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/August/international_August1489.xml&section=international&coll=)

United Press International:

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/International/2010/08/27/Money-motive-for-educated-lap-dancing-women/UPI-21341282946299/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/International/2010/08/27/Money-motive-for-educated-lap-dancing-women/UPI-21341282946299/)

Hindustan Times:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/1-in-4-lap-dancers-have-degrees-in-UK/Article1-592657.aspx>