



9-1-2020

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Recommended Citation

Rigakos, Bessie (2020) "Kissling, Elizabeth Arveda. 2018. From a Whisper to a Shout: How Social Media Activism is Challenging Abortion Stigma. New York: Repeater Books.," *The North Meridian Review*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.

DOI: 10.7825/2769-5115.1015

Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/thenorthmeridianreview/vol1/iss1/16>

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Kissling, Elizabeth Arveda. 2018. *From a Whisper to a Shout: How Social Media Activism is Challenging Abortion Stigma*. New York: Repeater Books, 127pp. \$14.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-91224-02-5

Reviewed by Bessie Rigakos

Driving to and from work over the last six months, I decided to start listening to audiobooks since I had a forty-minute commute each way. During this time, I listened to five books; all were stories told about women, by women, or for women, such as *Becoming* (2018) by Michelle Obama, *Dare to Lead* (2018) by Brené Brown, *Bad Blood* (2018) by John Carreyrou, and *Educated* (2018) by Tara Westover. Sometime in March, I received a copy of *From a Whisper to a Shout* by Elizabeth Arveda Kissling while simultaneously listening to the audiobook *Sbrill* (2016) by Lindy , who is a self-proclaimed feminist. Situated on the cover of Kissling's book is the face of Venus de Milo, the goddess of love and beauty. In smaller font reads "Abortion Activism and Social Media" hanging in a large quotation mark over Venus de Milo's mouth. Kissling's argument parallels West's mission to eliminate the shame surrounding abortion by encouraging women to share their abortion stories and/or listen to and support the women who want to share their stories. This book addresses the issue of societal control or policing of women's bodies, specifically women's reproductive health, by focusing on abortion using women's narratives.

Kissling uses a feminist approach to address the issue of how society polices and controls women's bodies through abortion regulation. Her argument is that women experience abortion stigma

and shame because they are not welcome to share their abortion stories. In her previous book, *Capitalizing on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation* (2006), Kissling explored the profound gender bias inherent in the lucrative business of menstruation. She revealed how menstruation is stigmatized and used by corporations to portray women as hindered by their menstrual cycle. Her current work demonstrates the antagonism toward abortion and pushes her argument forward by profiling four organizations that are integrating feminist tactics and political strategies in an effort to eliminate abortion stigma.

In six chapters, Kissling documents the history of abortion through practices, legislation, and regulation in the United States. “Abortion,” Kissling states at the beginning of her book, “Can we finally stop whispering about it” (p. 1)? She explains that she is not celebrating the act of abortion or making a value judgement but is encouraging women to support and listen to women who want to share their abortion stories. In the book’s middle three chapters she focuses on how four organizations, *#ShoutYourAbortion*, *Lady Parts Justice*, *#WeTestify*, and *The Abortion Diary* are utilizing social media to provide women with safe places to share their abortion stories. She concludes that even though one in three women have an abortion, the abortion stigma exists, and women are shamed for this choice. Moreover, Kissling states that because silence surrounding abortion is the norm, challenging and confronting abortion stigma while promoting abortion access becomes impossible unless women share their stories.

One of the great strengths of Kissling’s scholarship is the use of the theory of consciousness raising and the method of subjectivity. She uses women’s narratives to normalize the discussion of abortion and reduce stigma. West, who co-founded the *#ShoutYourAbortion* social media campaign on Twitter also used a storytelling method to share her abortion experience to destigmatize. Kissling uses a similar approach to advance her argument—by profiling the four organizations mentioned above, she shows that allowing women to share freely and support each other’s narratives without shame

helps destigmatize abortion. The method of women sharing abortion stories is also an effective and powerful tool in organizing activists to mobilize an action or movement.

Kissling's book is eminently readable. In the final chapter, she circles back to her thesis and writes, "Silence lets abortion opponents write the story—the wrong story" (p. 101). Her book encourages readers to share their stories, listen to other's stories, and most importantly, to support all women whether or not they share their narrative. Her book favors narrative over argumentation, and, as a result, it is suitable for a wider readership, as the text is accessible. Scholars and students are challenged to explore the shameful issue of abortion through a new lens—perhaps using a shift in consciousness to understand that abortion is not a gift but a fundamental right.

Bessie Rigakos is an assistant professor of sociology at Marian University in Indianapolis, where she serves as the chair of the Department of History and Social Sciences.