

International team explores the stigma surrounding abortion

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An international team of researchers says abortion stigma is under-researched, under theorized and over emphasized in one category: women who've had abortions. As a result, they're launching a new direction into research that explores the social stigma surrounding abortion.

Their invited paper, "Abortion Stigma: A Reconceptualization of Constituents, Causes, and Consequences," is published in the current journal, *Women's Health Issues* (Vol. 21, issue 3, supplement). The team of researchers is represented by The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health; the University of Cincinnati Department of Sociology; the University of California, San Francisco, Department of Psychiatry; the Guttmacher Institute in New York; Goldsmiths College, University of London; and Center for the Study of Women, University of California, Los Angeles.

"There is very little research on abortion stigma, and what does exist has focused on women who have had abortions and on those experiences. We're looking at stigma in a broader context," explains research team member Danielle Bessett, assistant professor of sociology, University of Cincinnati.

The authors cite previous research on abortion stigma including that abortion violates "feminine ideals," that abortion is stigmatized because of legal restrictions, and that it is viewed as "dirty or unhealthy."

Bessett explains that each researcher on the project is exploring a specific group that could be affected by stigma, such as [health care providers](#) that perform abortions, supporters of women who have had abortions, the male partner of the woman who had an abortion, women's experience in pregnancy after previously having an abortion and women's self stigma after suffering miscarriage.

"This is new territory into research around the social issues surrounding abortion," says Bessett, who adds the research will be conducted in both national and international settings, including the United States, Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mexico, Brazil and countries in Europe.

"Understanding [abortion](#) stigma will inform strategies to reduce it, which has direct implications for improving access to care and better health for those whom stigma affects," state the authors in the paper.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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