

Bodybuilding, Gender and Age: A Qualitative Exploration of the Perspectives of Older Canadian Females

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Abstract : Existing literature on older athletes in competitive sports is often male-dominated and limited. This study explores how age and gender impact the experiences of older female bodybuilders in Canada using the social theories of deviance and intersectionality. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Canadian female bodybuilders over the age of 45. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analysed. This study was approached from a phenomenological perspective. The participants deviated from their perceived social norms of women their age. They exhibited deviance with their actions, such as prioritising themselves and following extreme dieting practices, and with their aesthetics, such as maintaining a muscular appearance. Participants received both positive and negative reactions from society resulting in both admiration and stigmatisation. These reactions varied based on the environment, audience, and context of the situation. Overall, the intersection of age and gender results in a unique position for older female bodybuilders within society and within the sport.

Keywords : age, bodybuilding, gender, females

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