

## Exploring Women's Embodied Experiences of 'the Gaze' in Fitness Cultures

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**Abstract :** To date, the focus of feminist research surrounding men looking at women, with the analysis of how women make sense of looks between women remains limited and scattered. Drawing upon ethnographic data obtained from an on-going research project, this presentation delves into the embodied experiences of female exercisers within a UK 'working-class' gym. By exploring the women's own accounts of their living, breathing and sensing bodies as they exercise, the researcher attempts to understand how they make sense of the gym space, their embodied selves as well as broader constructions of the gendered body. Utilising a feminist phenomenological approach, this research examines the social-structural position of women in a patriarchal system of gender relations, whilst simultaneously acknowledging and analysing the structural, cultural, and historical forces and location, upon individual lived body experiences and gendered embodiment. The discussion is provided on how the gym can be identified as a sexually objectifying environment, and how women make sense and interpret specific 'gazes' encountered within the gym.

**Keywords :** embodiment, feminism, gazes, sociology

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