

BETWEEN BELONGING AND FITTING IN: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF AGING, GENDER AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FROM AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Dominika Czarnecka
Polish Academy of Sciences

It is often emphasized in the feminist sport discourse that referring to aerobics, fitness training, and other similar forms of physical activity as “feminine sports” simply devalues them. Many scholars note that although aerobics and fitness contribute with their “goals, contents and, in particular, presentation, to traditional feminine clichés,” the analysis of these activities should not be limited to the public discourse around them.¹ To understand a given culture of movement, it is imperative to explore the personal experiences of its participants.² The present article takes this postulate into account, giving priority to the voices of older female exercisers. Accentuating the experiences of female gym goers and the multitude of effects fitness culture may produce (in this case fitness culture being “the symbolic and cultural ideas that constitute a specific way of approaching the body and physical culture”) results in an analysis that goes beyond the one-dimensional, often externally imposed (e.g. by the media) interpretations of this complex and heterogeneous cultural phenomenon.³

The aim of the present work is to explore (in the local Polish context) elderly women’s experiences of belonging to a community of female individuals that identify with fitness culture. Belonging is discussed and understood not objectively, but through the exercising women’s subjective experiences. The article tackles the following questions: What kind of belonging is constructed by elderly female fitness culture participants within the fitness setting in Warsaw? What are the reasons for the development of a sense of belonging? What facilitates or impedes these belongings? These issues are discussed to present a more nuanced understanding of elderly women’s attachment to a fitness community.

The article pertains to the experiences of a specific group of women—namely fitness culture participants over sixty years of age, who engage in various kinds of group training. These women only exercise in mixed-age groups (and thus, essentially, in the company of younger gym goers) and do not seem interested in training sessions targeted at senior citizens.

Dominika Czarnecka is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Modern Ethnology and Anthropology at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Her research focuses on the anthropology of the body, anthropology of sport, visual anthropology, and the post-Cold War military heritage of Eastern Europe. Correspondence to: d.czarnecka@hotmail.com

It should be noted that most of the data gathered through ethnographic qualitative research and presented in this study pertains to the period between the first and the second lockdown of the fitness industry in Poland (14 March—6 June 2020, and 17 October 2020—28 May 2021 respectively), caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ The epidemiological situation profoundly affected the functioning of gyms, imposing numerous changes. One crucial detail in the context of the present article is that after the fitness industry reopened, many gym chains removed classes for senior citizens from their schedule. This policy of minimizing risk (financial on the part of the club; and health-related in the case of elderly gym goers) is likely to have been one of the reasons why some senior citizens decided not to return to fitness clubs after the spring lockdown.

After presenting the theoretical and methodological framework for the research, the article shall examine the local context of physical activity for the elderly in Poland. This is a necessary step towards a more thorough understanding of elderly women’s experiences of belonging to a fitness community in Warsaw. The section entitled *Findings* presents the research results. The data provided in this article are a part of a broader research project, in which fitness culture in Poland is analyzed as a gendered phenomenon.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of belonging may mean various things in different contexts. In the broadest sense, the concept of belonging refers to diverse social and spatial attachments that relate individuals to other people, groups, places or modes of being.⁵ Belonging is processual (i.e. becoming rather than being), situational and relational in character.⁶ Due to the temporal nature of belonging, it is negotiated and constructed across one’s lifespan, and ageing can impact one’s ability to build a sense of belonging in time.⁷

Two subjectively experienced forms of belonging are usually mentioned in the context of sport: “normativity” and “expressivity.”⁸ Normativity is defined as an individual’s wish to be a part of the community through participation in collectively defined practices, norms and rules. Expressivity connects an individual with the community by the confirmation of the self which that participation produces. For the purpose of the present analysis, belonging is defined through expressivity “as a sense of ease with oneself and one’s surroundings that is fundamental to our

sense of self.”⁹ However, for expressivity to be used as the theoretical framework to explore and make sense of elderly women’s subjective experiences of belonging within the fitness setting, the concept needs to be defined in a more precise fashion. In itself, participation in fitness practices does not automatically result in the emergence of feelings of belonging. Involvement in motion practices may engender and enhance feelings of belonging, but it may also weaken them (the same is true with feelings of difference). For feelings of belonging to emerge, a person must have the impression of being a fully-fledged participant of a given culture of movement, and being accepted for who they are.¹⁰

Ageing is not without importance in the context of creating a sense of belonging, since “time itself is an important source of belonging, but one that is unequally accessible to people of different ages because of contemporary cultural scripts that present life as a linear progression into the future.”¹¹ Future horizons may significantly affect the way an individual constructs and orients feelings and sense of belonging within the present, whereas normative social clocks influence a person’s ability to build a sense of belonging, often having a limiting effect.

For the purpose of analysis, the present article moves away from naturalistic views in which age and ageing are assumed to be fundamentally biological phenomena. Following theoretical categories established by Cheryl Laz, I assume age and ageing to be social and cultural constructions that “we (individually and collectively) work at making meaningful (in general and in particular) in interaction and in the context of institutions and social structures.”¹²

The last of the key categories in the theoretical framework of this article is “fitting in.” In the context of fitness culture, “fitting in” may be defined as continual work to obtain the desired body; in the case of elderly fitness culture participants, the objective is not a young, toned, sexually attractive female figure, but has more to do with connecting the cultural demand for attractiveness with the “aesthetics” of a healthy looking body.¹³ “Fitting in” is related to the basic self-image. The process of reducing differences between fitness culture participants through the pursuit of an ideal body is directly connected to an individual’s readiness to accept the norms located within the current consumer culture. Juxtaposing feelings of belonging and the category of “fitting in” within the fitness setting is all the more justified given the fact that the latter may affect individual identity construction and the development of subjectively positive or subjectively negative experiences of belonging in gym goers.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on ethnographic qualitative methods: (a) four semi-structured in-depth interviews with female fitness culture participants (recorded and transcribed), (b) observant participation, (c) informal conversations.¹⁴ To ensure the credibility of the qualitative data, triangulation of data was applied.¹⁵

The four semi-structured in-depth interviews

and informal conversations with female exercisers were face-to-face. All the interviewees were White women between sixty and eighty-nine years of age, who have for many years been regular participants in various types of group training. The shortest period of participation was five years, the longest, around thirty years. Three of the respondents are retired, one is still professionally active. For the sake of anonymity, the names appearing in the article have been changed. All respondents were given prior information about the objectives of my research and participated in it willingly.

The field research was conducted after the end of the spring lockdown of Poland’s fitness industry, in one of the low-cost fitness clubs of Warsaw. All participants in the study were elderly female exercisers who have returned to the club after it reopened. Reducing the scope of research to a very specific group of physically active elderly women may be regarded as a significant limitation of the present study. Experiences of elderly women who only participate in training dedicated for senior citizens are likely very different. However, given the fact that female fitness culture participants over sixty years of age constitute a diverse group, the focus on women who do not (nor wish to) attend classes dedicated for seniors results in a more nuanced picture of the complexity of experiences of belonging within the group of elderly female fitness culture participants, leading to a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

The focus on women’s experiences may also be a limiting factor, yet the choice was not accidental. First of all, group fitness activities in Warsaw are attended predominantly by women. Secondly, since I have myself worked as a fitness instructor, the experiences of female gym goers are closer to my own. Thirdly, the present article was a part of a broader research project, focused solely on the experiences of women in fitness culture.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN LATER LIFE IN POLAND

As is the case with other European countries, the Polish society as a whole is progressively ageing. By the end of 2019, Poland’s population amounted to 38.4 million, over 9.7 million (more than 25%) of which were people over fifty-nine years of age, 58.1% of them women. This means that the number of senior citizens rose by over 900 thousand in comparison to 2015.¹⁶

In principle, senior citizens “continue to have lower levels of physical activity than the rest of the population.”¹⁷ The most recent data collected in Poland corroborate this statement; regular participation in any kind of sports activity was declared by only 10.6% seniors, with men proving to be slightly more active than women.¹⁸

Physical activity in later life is socially, historically and culturally located.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it cannot be regarded solely in terms of material resources which allow the elderly to be actively involved in the processes of consuming and choosing new forms of leisure. Almost equally important are the social and cultural associations connected with the ageing processes and the physical capabilities of senior citizens, as well as the forms of physical activity

deemed (un)acceptable by and for this age group. Gender norms also play a role in this context. Studies suggest that “Older women suffer more negative stereotypes because they live longer and also because gender is so often the basis of social inequalities.”²⁰ Gender norms may affect recommendations pertaining to physical activity; some forms are presented as detrimental, or even harmful to older bodies, especially female older bodies, which allegedly lose their physical competence.²¹

The Polish society is still exposed to narratives of decline, which portray ageing as a process that is not only passive, but also negatively associated with crisis, deficit and decline.²² With these narratives come specific expectations regarding the (in)appropriateness of given behaviors in later life; these expectations may also affect the causality of individuals and the choices they make. Academic research has confirmed that the physical activity of senior citizens and the associated social participation, “greatly influences the perceived wellness of older adults.”²³ As far as Poland is concerned, despite the promotion of physical activity among the elderly, the gradual elimination of the related stereotypes, and the growing awareness of the benefits of staying in motion, the fashion for an active lifestyle has not yet developed to any significant degree.²⁴

Fitness is an exceedingly institutionalized and commercialized form of physical activity, shaped by the material and ideological conditions of its time. In recent years and before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of elderly people attending commercial fitness clubs in Poland has gradually been rising, yet no official statistics in this regard are kept.²⁵ As “serious leisure” or “rational recreation,” fitness is situated somewhere between amateur ideology and professional sport.²⁶ Fitness spaces allow

people to perform embodied practices, which may, in other social settings, be seen as inappropriate. They also provide an opportunity to demonstrate one’s chosen lifestyle, “feel a sense of social belonging.”²⁷ At the same time, fitness spaces are the stage of the policy of “new ageing,” based on a neo-liberal ideology of health. Within this policy, individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through engaging in physical activity, which is directly related to the demonization of sedentary behavior. On the one hand, the new model of ageing allows older adults to develop identities resistant to the narrative of decline; on the other, it may be used to promote new forms of intervention and presenting physical activity as an anti-ageing practice, in which there is no acceptance for ageing processes as an inevitable stage in human life.²⁸

For senior citizens, fitness spaces may at the same time be inclusive and non-inclusive; they offer the possibility for sharing meaningful experiences with other participants of fitness culture, yet only able-bodied adults are considered welcome.

BELONGING THROUGH BODILY PRACTICES

Fitness plays an important role in the life of each of my respondents. In the period when the interviews were conducted, all of these women participated in group training at least twice a week. Two of the exercisers declared taking part in group training at least five times a week. Acquiring a fitness club membership card, or even participating in group classes, does not automatically lead to the development of feelings of belonging to the “community of practice,” as the fitness community is often called.²⁹ Unlike team sports (e.g. football or basketball), which provide an

opportunity for women to *do* or *achieve* together and develop close bonds with teammates, fitness practices, although sometimes performed in groups, represent a highly individualistic form of physical activity. Rebecca (age 60) admitted: “I don’t have any contacts from a fitness club specifically. I don’t. My only contact is during fitness classes and eventually a few minutes after.” Similar conclusions may be drawn from the statement made by Anna (age 60): “These are not contacts that are very close ... Just casual acquaintances, but we do sometimes meet up [with other gym goers] in a pub or something.”



In Dr. Czarnecka’s study she interviewed older women who were members of group exercise classes in Poland during the time of the Covid Pandemic in 2020. Although older, some of the women participated in Zumba aerobics dance classes as this group of mixed-age women is doing here. The women in this photo were not part of the study.

This does not indicate that fitness spaces are lonely and isolating, but rather that fitness culture participants enjoy engaging in activity alongside other members, but “on their own.”³⁰ This self-imposed isolation has certain consequences for the emergence of feelings of belonging within the fitness community. While crafting emotional closeness to, or distance from, other fitness culture participants is possible, it is (at the most) secondary in importance to the possibility of expression through bodily practices.

Feelings of belonging to a particular mode of being and moving do not emerge automatically after an individual joins group practices, but develop with time and in relation to the process of becoming a competent fitness culture participant. Catherine (age 89) expressed this as follows:

I even said at home that I am so glad that I was not like that, because I was a bit embarrassed, because I thought that these young people would do [exercises] and that there was nothing I could look for there. But I noticed that there is not so bad. I don't want to brag but I truly feel inside me that there is not so bad ... Yes, I was a bit afraid, I was. Whether I would, you know, there is a difference after all, a big one, it's not just, well, but it turned out that I can manage. Maybe it's not always easy, or pretty, but yeah, as I feel it, it's not bad at all (laughs).

Catherine's statement indicates that the emergence of feelings of belonging to a fitness community is processual in nature. Despite her initial presuppositions on the physical prowess of younger gym goers and anxiety over the potential of her own ageing body, through comparing herself with younger female exercisers in actual practices of movement and exploring her changing physical capabilities, in time encouraged Catherine to engage in regular training, improved her self-esteem and consolidated in her the view that age does not have to be an impediment to leading a physically active life.

This being said, in the case of elderly gym goers, the emergence of personal and subjectively positive experiences of belonging through participation in practices of movement is not dependent solely on developing the physical capabilities of gym bodies. Rebecca confessed:

Well, when I look at all these girls, but usually it happens that there is someone like me, who can't perform everything perfectly. Just like these sit-ups today, none of us could do it, only you (laughs). So I am encouraged by the fact that the others don't work out either. It is not about being better than others, no, it is just good for my psychological well-being when I am not the only one in a group who is unable to perform correctly.

In Rebecca's case, feelings of belonging to a fitness community developed not only through involvement in practices of movement, but also through the experience of inability to perform certain exercises being shared by most of the people in the group, which in turn had a profound impact on weakening her feelings of difference due to age.

Involved participation in practices of movement and being able to “keep up” during mixed-age fitness group classes made my respondents feel like fully-fledged participants of fitness culture. Significantly, all of them were convinced that they would not get this feeling if they chose to participate in classes dedicated solely to elderly gym goers. This matter shall be explored in detail in a further section of the article.

THE PLEASURES OF EXERCISING

To develop positive feelings of belonging to a fitness community, my respondents needed to become involved in exercise practice, but also to derive pleasure from it. For the purpose of the present article, pleasure through fitness activity is defined as “diverse emotions that make a person ‘feel good.’”³¹ Embodied pleasures of physicality (which are multidimensional in nature) transcend the imperative to stay healthy and take responsibility for one's own wellbeing. In the case of my interviewees, enjoyment and the experience of positive sensations of movement seems to have been an equally important factor in maintaining regular physical activity and developing a subjective feeling of acceptance, which in turn resulted in a deepening emotional attachment to fitness community. My respondents' statements point to various kinds of pleasure they experience when participating in group fitness practices. Rebecca expressed this as follows:

So, I think, this is because I simply exercise. That it gives me a lot, affects my immunity. And my psyche, my psyche above all else. So well, and I say this, it is a source of pleasure. Why would I deny myself this? So the main goal is just to relax ... And even if sometimes I get out of there all drained, 'cause with the Zumba it can get like this, to me it is enjoyable.

Catherine, in turn, mentioned the pleasure experienced in connection to the practice of correcting by touch, stating that she perceives the touch of the instructor during class as “so delicate, of course, very much so ... it's not even a thing to consider. After all, it's all very pleasant.”³² Anna confessed: “I like it, I simply like [workout]. And I have my colleagues. And all of them think nearly the same, they also like it. So it just gives me so much pleasure.” While Rebecca's statement connects pleasure with the sensations experienced through the ageing body after a training session, in Catherine's comment it is sensual pleasures that are in the foreground. Anna's words refer to the positive sensations of movement itself and indicate that, within the fitness community, embodied pleasures of

physicality are not only private, but also public in character. In an “individual but together” modality, the pleasures of exercising are collectively appreciated and shared, which means that their significance goes beyond the individual level. Furthermore, all of the above statements suggest that elderly exercisers construct their understanding of pleasure in the fitness setting based on positive (e.g. joy, relaxation), and not negative capabilities (e.g. the absence of pain, illness, fear).

What my respondents found to be an important aspect of experiencing the pleasures of fitness was performing physical exercises in a group, and therefore sharing these meaningful experiences with other fitness culture participants. Anna admitted:

The group, for instance with Zumba, has to consist of at least ten people, then it is... if two or three people show up for Zumba, then it's not Zumba at all, it does not have the right effect. When there's a whole group, and the sequence comes out alright, and we get praised by the instructor, then it's great, we can see it ourselves that we enjoyed it. So this has a different appeal.

Further in the interview, she added: “Truth to tell, in a group with only older people, I would not want to [exercise], not at all. Because the younger ones, they provide this positive energy.” Thus, similarly to other respondents, Anna identified the source of pleasure not with sharing experiences as such, but with sharing them with younger exercisers. In this context, Amy's (age 60) statement seems all the more direct: “I like to come, to make myself younger (laughs). I like to come, to make myself younger, there's music, and I like this kind of disco music. And you feel different, more relaxed . . . Being around young people is the best.” Aside from referring to various pleasures of exercising, the above statement draws attention to the affectively transformative experience of looking at younger women, training alongside them and being in their company.³³ It results in deeper feelings of being more comfortable in one's own ageing body. In conclusion, the fact that elderly female exercisers experience various kinds of pleasure leads to the development of positive feelings of belonging to a community of practice through the confirmation of self and constructing a positive self-image.

“I WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN SUCH CLASSES ...”

In the case of my respondents, the construction of a positive self-image and reinforcing the feelings of belonging to a fitness community happens, in a sense, in opposition to other individuals in their age group. This being said, the interviewees were open about the fact that in spite of their active lifestyle, their ageing bodies do change in time.

Being physically active, elderly female exercisers describe elderly people leading more sedentary lifestyles

using the narrative of decline. Amy put it thusly: “And, as I say, looking at people my age, they are fat, obese, they have no strength, or look terrible, because they don't take care of themselves.” She also added:

Among my friends, I am the exception. I don't know if they don't like exercising, or what...[I exercise] simply for the sake of my health, maybe earlier it was more to keep my figure, because one wanted, you know, not to gain weight...to keep that figure...but now it's mostly to be healthy, not to get any ailments and to be strong, because at some point you start to lose this strength, to keep all of it.

Anna and Catherine made similar statements:

They don't do things and say they can't. And I really don't think this is true, I think she can do anything, only tells herself otherwise . . . They go to various doctors, get treatment, swallow some pills, some physiotherapy here, some procedure there, can't do this, can't do that. I don't go anywhere, don't see any doctors, take no pills and I'm fine. That's the difference. (Anna)

This is either some illness, many people are ailing, if they have a constant headache, they really can't. But there are also people who, out of laziness, go “I'm no longer fit for this,” there's this resignation. Not even because of financial reasons, because it's not like this, I know how it is. It's not because of this. It's just either reluctance or some illness. (Catherine)

In the context of the present analysis, the more important fact is that my respondents placed themselves in opposition not only to less active individuals, but also to other fitness culture participants who only attend classes dedicated to senior citizens. Although all interviewees admitted that such training sessions are needed, they declared no interest in participating in active senior classes. Rebecca justified it thusly:

I mean, I don't feel that I am so old. And usually younger [women] participate . . . It makes me feel good because I prefer to work out in a younger group than to go to these old-timers, I mean seniors. It is like I feel better psychologically, much younger. Because I don't feel as old as I am, even though I am a grandmother. It is somehow better for me when I am in a younger [group], and nobody points out your age, that you are old and you participate in these classes.

Amy declared:

There should be [active senior classes]. I would not take part in such classes, because they are slow, the elders are unused to exercise, the ones that don't attend and will not do certain exercises, and certain exercises are not for them, because they don't have this kind of body anymore... An elder who's been exercising since forever will be different.

The above statements indicate that respondents distinguish elderly participants of fitness culture not so much based on the criterion of biological age, which seems to be a porous and permeable boundary, constantly crossed by interviewees, but rather on the basis of physical capabilities, and consequently also meaningful embodied experiences of the ageing body. Thus, it is not only about the (in)ability to perform certain exercises at the right pace, but also about the inability (or limitation of the ability) to experience the sensations of movement itself as something pleasurable. My respondents perceived participation in active senior classes as something that would not only have a negative impact on their self-image, but also deprive them of the feeling of being fully fledged participants of fitness culture. For them, the reaffirmation of the self through practices of movement is directly related to their sense of being able-bodied adults.

BELONGING AND FITTING IN

Each of my respondents acted in accordance with the model of “new ageing,” engaging in physical activity in the belief that the responsibility for their health and wellbeing was theirs alone. By exercising regularly, they showed concern for their body, aware that this body will be changing as time goes by. Amy made the following statement referring to herself:

At my age, looking at other people, there is a difference because fitness gave me a figure that is not fat, not obese, has this capability that, for example, I can walk up stairs, jump, do things, where other people don't...I didn't even realize that in the summer I put on a T-shirt or something, and I have this feeling that I still need to exercise to get somewhere, but when I go to the doctor or someone says “oh, it shows that you exercise, you have a sporty figure.” So people do notice it, it shows in my figure.

Although Amy was aware that she did not look “perfect,” by presenting “external” evidence (opinions she heard about herself) she expressed the belief that she fits in, conforms to the aesthetics of a healthy-looking body. This contributed to a more positive self-image and the emergence of personal feelings of belonging to a fitness community. It should, however, be noted that not all of my

respondents were in a similar situation. For example, Rebecca exercised regularly and at the level of life experience felt healthy, strong, and much younger than her biological age might suggest, yet did not manage to lose weight. Her obesity did not fit the aesthetics of a healthy-looking body, which worried her to some extent:

All in all I know how old I am, I know that this body, this figure is changing. But also to prevent this, not to get, how to put it, any larger. And when I compare myself with my two sisters, because I have two sisters...although I weigh a lot myself, they weigh a lot more. And I say that exercise also prevents medical conditions ... And the psyche, above all, it's for my psyche. So, well, as I say, it gives me pleasure...If I don't manage to [lose weight], it doesn't discourage me that I keep exercising and I still put on [weight].

Later in the interview she added:

You know what, I like if there's someone in the group who is, so to speak, larger than me...It is good for my psyche, to see that, let's say, it's often that I am the largest in volume. But when I see that there are young girls and they are more like this, it is also good for my psyche.

Despite not fitting in at the level of externally imposed body ideals, through participation in practices of movement or, more precisely, the opportunity to express herself and experience the pleasure derived from exercising, Rebecca was able to develop positive feelings of belonging to a fitness community. Furthermore, training with younger women, many of whom were “larger” than her, provided reinforcement for her positive self-image and the feeling of self-acceptance. Rebecca's example demonstrates that while fitting in may have a positive impact on strengthening personal feelings of belonging in elderly female exercisers, its role is not decisive in the context of their potential development.

CONCLUSION

Elderly female gym goers who are over sixty years of age and take part only in mixed-age training constitute a very specific group of fitness culture participants. Following a neo-liberal model of “healthy ageing” (in which physical activity is of key importance), they challenge the negative stereotypes associated with the physical capabilities of the female ageing body, and develop identities “resistant” to the narrative of decline. Conversely, by developing their temporal selves (or, more precisely, their ageing selves), elderly female exercisers have shown interest in the future. Their resistance contains a deliberate element of distancing from other ageing bodies—from both elderly people who do not exercise and fitness culture participants only attending classes dedicated to senior citizens.

Through participation in fitness practices in mixed-age groups, elderly female gym goers develop positive feelings of belonging to a “fully” able-bodied fitness community. Despite the ongoing changes, their positive self-image is enhanced by the ability to feel the pleasures of physicality during exercising, and the fact that their ageing moving bodies are still a site of pleasures (and not only the object of intervention). Thus, the experience of multiple pleasures of physicality and enjoyment is productive in constituting social belongings. At the same time, involvement in group training and the ability to keep up with the pace lets older women “maintain a presence in the world through their physical selves,” produces a feeling of being accepted by able-bodied exercisers and confirms their own identities.³⁴

FUNDING

The research was funded by the National Science Center Grant No. UMO-2018/29/B/HS3/01563, within the project “Through body in motion. Anthropological study of embodied experiences and identity transition of female fitness culture participants.

NOTES:

- Gertrud Pfister, “Women–Fitness–Sport in Germany: The Social-Scientific Perspective,” in *Fitness as Cultural Phenomenon*, ed. Karin A. E. Volkwein (Münster and New York and München and Berlin: Waxmann, 1998), 73.
- Pirkko Markula, “Firm but Shapely, Fit but Sexy, Strong but Thin: The Postmodern Aerobicing Female Bodies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12, no. 4 (December 1995): 424–453.
- Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson, *The Global Gym. Gender, Health and Pedagogies* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- James Brighton, Ian Wellard, and Amy Clark, *Gym Bodies. Exploring Fitness Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021); Dominika Czarnecka, “Instrumental Touch: A Foucauldian Analysis of Women’s Fitness,” *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2020): 23–43; Christina Hedblom, “The Body is Made to Move’: Gym and Fitness Culture in Sweden (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2009); Roberta Sassatelli, *Fitness Culture: Gym and the Commercialisation of Discipline and Fun* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- Dominika Czarnecka, “‘Stay Fit to Fight the Virus’: Ethnographies of Change in the World of Fitness Instructors (Selected Case Studies),” in *Time Out: National Perspectives on Sport and the Covid-19 Lockdown*, eds. Jörg Krieger, April Henning, Lindsay Parks Pieper, and Paul Dimeo (Champaign, US: Common Ground, 2021), 203–214.
- Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Tuija Saresma, Kaisa Hiltunen, Saara Jäntti, Nina Sääskilähti, Antti Vallius, and Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, “Fluidity and Flexibility of ‘Belonging’: Uses of the Concept in Contemporary Research,” *Acta Sociologica* 59, no. 3 (August 2016): 233–247; Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- Marco Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework,” *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (June 2010): 644–659.
- Vanessa May, “Belonging Across the Lifetime: Time and Self in Mass Observation Accounts,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 2 (June 2018): 306–322.
- Kristin Walseth, “Sport and Belonging,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 41, no. 3–4 (December 2006): 447–464.
- Vanessa May, “Belonging Across the Lifetime,” 307.
- Suzanne Lundvall and Kristin Walseth, “Integration and Sports Par-

- icipation: Cultural Negotiations and Feelings of Belonging,” *Women and Sport: Scientific Report Series*, no. 1.2 (2014): 1–9.
- Vanessa May, “Belonging Across the Lifetime,” 307.
 - Cheryl Laz, “Age Embodied,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 17, no. 4 (November 2003): 505–506.
 - Carole Spitzack, *Confessing Excess: Women and the Politics of Body Reduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).
 - Barbara Heyl, “Ethnographic Interviewing,” in *Handbook of Ethnography*, eds. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland (London: Sage, 2001), 369–383. Loic Wacquant, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Practices and Principles* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
 - John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).
 - Informacja o sytuacji osób starszych w Polsce za 2019 r.* (Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej, 2020), 7–9. [jtt\[s\]//das.mpips.gov.pl/source/2020/Informacja%20za%202019%20r.%2027.10.2020%20r..pdf](https://jtt[s]//das.mpips.gov.pl/source/2020/Informacja%20za%202019%20r.%2027.10.2020%20r..pdf)
 - Emmanuelle Tulle and Cassandra Phoenix, “Introduction: Rethinking Physical Activity and Sport in Later Life,” in *Physical Activity and Sport in Later Life: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Emmanuelle Tulle and Cassandra Phoenix (New York: Plgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.
 - Ewa Kamińska Gawryluk, ed., *Sytuacja osób starszych w Polsce w 2018 r.* (Warszawa and Białystok: Główny Urząd Statystyczny and Urząd Statystyczny w Białymostku, 2020), 15.
 - Tulle and Phoenix, “Introduction,” 4.
 - Elizabeth C. J. Pike, “Growing Old (Dis)Gracefully? The Gender/Aging/Exercise Nexus,” in *Women and Exercise: The Body, Health and Consumerism*, eds. Eileen Kennedy and Pirkko Markula (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 181.
 - Patricia Vertinsky, “Run, Jane, Run: Tensions in the Current Debate about Enhancing Women’s Health through Exercise,” *Women and Health* 27, no. 4 (September 1998): 81–111.
 - Margaret M. Gullette, *Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997).
 - Christiane Mielke, Gerhard Uhlenbruck, and Karin A. E. Volkwein, “Exercise, Fitness and Life-Satisfaction in Older Adults,” in *Fitness as Cultural Phenomenon*, ed. Karin A. E. Volkwein (Münster and New York and München and Berlin: Waxmann, 1998), 15.
 - Błażej Dąbkowski, “Nie dziadziej! Seniorzy w Poznaniu okupują siłownie, kluby fitness i biegają!” *Poznań.naszemiasto.pl* (May 2014). <https://poznan.naszemiasto.pl/nie-dziadziej-seniorzy-w-poznan-niu-okupuja-silownie-kluby/ar/c3-2288796>
 - Ibid.
 - Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992). Jennifer Smith Maguire, *Fit for Consumption: Sociology and the Business of Fitness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
 - James Brighton, Ian Wellard, and Amy Clark, “Introducing (Our) Gym Bodies and Fitness Cultures,” in *Gym Bodies: Exploring Fitness Cultures*, eds. James Brighton, Ian Wellard, and Amy Clark (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 13.
 - Tulle and Phoenix, “Introduction,” 3; Cassandra Phoenix, “The Ageing Body,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies*, eds. David Andrews, Michael Silk, and Holly Thorpe (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 5.
 - Andreasson and Johansson, *The Global Gym*, 75.
 - Andrew C. Sparkes, “Performing the Ageing Body and the Importance of Place: Some Autoethnographic Moments,” in “When I Am Old...” *Third Age Leisure Research: Principles and Practice*, ed. Barbara Humberstone (Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, 2010), 21–32. Brighton, Wellard, and Clark, “Introducing (Our) Gym Bodies,” 7.
 - Cassandra Phoenix and Noreen Orr, “The Multidimensionality of Pleasure in Later Life Physical Activity,” in *Physical Activity and Sport in Later Life: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Emmanuelle Tulle and Cassandra Phoenix (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 102.
 - For more on touch see Dominika Czarnecka, “Instrumental Touch.”
 - Phoenix and Orr, “The Multidimensionality of Pleasure,” 106.
 - Tulle and Phoenix, “Introduction,” 8.