

Gender and Ageing

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Introduction

The study of ageing as a gendered phenomenon reveals significant disparities in how society perceives and treats men and women as they age. This thesis explores the differing standards applied to male and female ageing, highlighting the association of male ageing with positive traits and public visibility, while female ageing is often linked to negative traits and social invisibility. This imbalance manifests in various cultural contexts, particularly in Western societies, and influences the lived experiences of older men and women.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the gendered nature of ageing, several theoretical models can be applied:

1. **Social Constructionism:** This theory posits that societal norms and values shape our understanding of ageing. Gender roles dictate that men are often seen as valuable contributors to society, while women may be viewed as less relevant as they age.
2. **Feminist Theory:** Feminist perspectives highlight the systemic inequalities that women face, particularly as they age. This includes the intersection of ageism and sexism, which can lead to increased vulnerability for older women.
3. **Life Course Perspective:** This framework examines how historical and social contexts influence individual experiences of ageing. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how gender roles evolve over time and affect ageing processes.

Gendered Standards in Ageing

Male Ageing

- **Positive Traits:** Ageing in men is often associated with wisdom, experience, and authority. Older men are frequently portrayed as mentors or leaders, maintaining a presence in public life.