

# Bodies in transition. Making sense of menopause.

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*'Dry vagina, yes, but my orgasms are a-ma-zing! Still #RootingForMenopause'*

*'Highly doubt that just because I stopped bleeding, it's the right time to share my wisdom. #RUKiddingme'*

These tweets provide a glimpse into women's experiences in menopause: welcoming bodily changes and rebelling against the role of a wise woman. Such accounts are at odds, however, with the predominant social silence surrounding menopause and its limited framing in everyday life. In the scarce discussions about this phenomenon, menopause is primarily perceived as an individual's health problem or, conversely, as pertaining to a positive change of women's social roles. Current debates are thus trapped in a dualist deadlock of understanding the menopausal body either as a physical/individual entity or as a socio-cultural one.

This empirical-philosophical project provides a more comprehensive understanding of menopause. It does so by developing an integrated theoretical and empirical understanding of menopause through combining ethnographic research of menopausal experiences with philosophical reflection. Specifically, this project will (1) decipher philosophical and social scientific theories related to menopause, namely about embodiment, aging, womanhood, and illness; it will (2) analyze women's bodily and socio-culturally shaped experiences and sense making of menopause through (a) an interview study and (b) an online ethnographic study; and it will (3) conceptualize new, experience-based philosophical theories about menopausal embodiment.

This account of menopause aims to break the silence about menopause by offering a broader vocabulary of what this bodily transition means for women. In doing so, this project contributes to efforts in philosophy and the social sciences to 'reclaim' the body as a physical and socio-cultural entity. It also aims to increase awareness among women and health professionals about the variety of menopausal experiences, thereby contributing to better health care and inclusive perceptions about menopause that women may draw on in their identity work.