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Impact of the ReSet Program on Internalized Feelings of Ageism

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Introduction

Internalized ageism has been identified as a powerful determinant of well-being for older adults (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Moser, Spagnoli, & Santos-Eggimann, 2011; National Seniors Council, 2014; Tovel, Carmel, & Raveis, 2017). This project was intended to better understand how internalized ageism impacts the entrepreneurial mindset of Canadians over 55. Canadians aged 55 and older account for a growing portion of the working age population, amounting to 36% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). By 2026, 4 in 10 working-age Canadians could be aged over 55 (Statistics Canada, 2017). The rate of participation of this population group in the labour market will therefore gain an increasingly important role for our economy. However, it is well documented that this group is confronted with a number of obstacles for its participation in the labour market. Ageism is one of these.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines ageism as “the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age” (“Ageing and Life-course,” n.d.). In Canada, older workers are perceived by other generations as well as by themselves as being not overly adaptable, especially with technology, and less productive in the workplace (Krywulak & Roberts, 2009). In her article on age-related stereotypes in Québec, Lagacé draws attention to the fact that being exposed to such stereotypes can constitute a factor encouraging older workers to leave the labor market prematurely (2008). The Revera Report on Ageism, a Canadian national survey, indicates that over 20% of those over 66 years had suffered this type of discrimination in the workplace (Revera & International Federation on Ageing, 2012).

Ageism can be internalized from a young age, as predominantly negative societal views of older people are shaped throughout the life course (Kotter-Grühn, & Hess, 2012). A cross-cultural meta-analysis on modern attitudes toward older adults emphasized the importance of demographic trends, establishing that rises in population ageing significantly predicted negative attitudes toward older adults (North & Fiske, 2015). This analysis also highlighted the inadequacy of geographic generalizations in understanding contemporary attitudes toward this population. Self-perception of ageing (SPA), defined as “a personal evaluation of one’s own ageing” (Moser, Spagnoli, & Santos-Eggimann, 2011), has been identified as a powerful psychological process determining well-being and health, influencing factors such as physical functioning, self-efficacy, and vulnerability to adverse outcomes (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Moser et al., 2011; Tovel, Carmel, & Raveis, 2017). As Robertson and Kenny (2016) explain, the focus of research on SPA has been on health behaviours, but its impact on career development and entrepreneurial activity has not been explored.

Whilst we found literature on the association between age and entrepreneurial activity (Blanchflower, Oswald, & Stutzer, 2001; Bohlmann, Rauch, & Zacher, 2017; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999), we found no exploration of how SPA affects older adults view of themselves as older workers, especially as entrepreneurs. Bohlman, Rauch, and Zacher (2017) addressed the

relevance of perceived opportunities and skills in the decision-making processes of older adults surrounding entrepreneurship, but did not address ageism or SPA as significant factors. Instead, they focused on a lifespan approach and justified the negative association between age and entrepreneurship, claiming that a shorter foreseen lifespan discourages older adults from making the time investment needed to yield the potential results of an entrepreneurial activity.

This gap in knowledge is especially relevant considering the relative share that seniors have in entrepreneurship. In the United States, seniors constitute the most entrepreneurial age group, with over 34 million boomers wanting to start a business (Isele & Rogoff, 2014). Moreover, previous research indicates that SPA may play a role in predicting behaviour in later life, and that negative perceptions are likely to generate disengagement from social and cognitively stimulating activities (Robertson & Kenny, 2016). A relation thus exists between SPA and social isolation, identified by the National Seniors Council as the number one emerging issue facing seniors in Canada (2014). In turn, it is well-documented that the social isolation of seniors is associated with negative health outcomes and increased risk factors (Valtorta & Hanratty, 2016). Our research therefore examines how SPA impacts the entrepreneurial mindset of older Canadians. As a sub-question, we asked: can ReSet, a professional and personal development program, reduce internalized feelings of ageism and encourage an entrepreneurial mindset in older adults? These research questions rested on the premise that encouraging entrepreneurship in the older Canadian population would have positive impacts on the economy, as well as on the well-being of that population group.

Entrepreneurship is defined as the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to create new and useful products and services (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). We define an entrepreneurial mindset as a state of mind characterized by three key factors: having an open mind towards learning, mobilizing resources and acting, and creativity. Having an entrepreneurial mindset enables people to continue to grow, learn, and be engaged. Government initiatives have been developed to encourage older workers' participation in the labour market. The Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) is a federal-provincial cost-shared initiative targeting the re-integration into employment of the 55 to 64-year-old demographic. While this program has shown to strengthen self-efficacy beliefs of participants, its inclusion criteria were limited to those seeking employment, and it was not focused on the needs of prospective entrepreneurs (Government of Canada, 2017). In fact, most existing programs targeting older workers focus on retraining and employment opportunities rather than entrepreneurial opportunities (Gray, 2007). For those reasons, the TIOW does not respond to the specific needs of our target population.

Research Objectives

The proposed research had two objectives. The first was to explore how a personal and professional development program could reduce the negative impact of internalized ageism on the entrepreneurial mindset of a target population group: the 55 and older. To do this, we undertook a document analysis, performed in-depth interviews and delivered ReSet. ReSet is a personal and professional development program designed to support the transition of the 55 and over age group who are retired, retiring, or recently lost a job. In all cases, participants were interested in determining their next steps. This could be the pursuit of a legacy career or the pursuit of new business opportunities as entrepreneurs. ReSet focused on diminishing internalized ageism and improving the entrepreneurial mindset. The second objective was to better understand the role that SPA played in older adults' decision making surrounding their professional and entrepreneurial choices. The goals of the program were: to increase the confidence and self-esteem of older Canadian adults in relation to entrepreneurial choices; to contribute to the well-being of the target population; to contribute to minimizing the negative consequences of an ageing workforce.

Methodology

We adopted an exploratory case study approach as we sought, in real-life interventions, to explain the linkages between SPA and the decision-making processes surrounding entrepreneurship, and to analyze how an intervention program could best address SPA as a barrier to entrepreneurship. An exploratory case study allowed the exploration of these issues through a variety of lenses, whilst offering an in-depth understanding of its context.

The research draws from a pragmatic epistemological approach that recognizes the primary importance of the central research question and embraces different types of knowledge to address it. To explore how a personal and professional development program could reduce the negative impact of internalized ageism on the entrepreneurial mindset of the 55 and over population, we did a document analysis, performed in-depth interviews and delivered ReSet. Our approach was sequential: once the document analysis was completed, we recruited participants through purposive sampling. Figure 1 (below) provides an overview of the research process.

Our recruitment strategy was non-probabilistic and purposive. We advertised the program through word of mouth, on the Top Sixty Over Sixty website, social media, radio, television, and in the Carleton University Learning in Retirement newsletter. The inclusion criteria were: aged 55 or older, retired, retiring, or without work and/or in the process of determining next steps of a legacy career or pursuing new business opportunities as entrepreneurs.

In total, 48 persons participated in the program, which consisted of a pre-survey interview, attending ReSet, and a post-survey interview. Three “meetups” were also held. These were

informal, educational, social, and networking meetings held throughout the research process. Each participant attended at least one meetup, but most attended two or more. Participants were assigned to one of two cohorts. The research process was sequential and iterative, starting with cohort one doing the pre-survey interview, ReSet and the post-survey, and was followed by cohort two. Participants were asked to complete feedback forms at the end of each of the three modules of the ReSet program, consisting of a series of open and closed-ended questions and using a four-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Four participants missed one of the three days of ReSet, and three did not complete the post-survey interview.

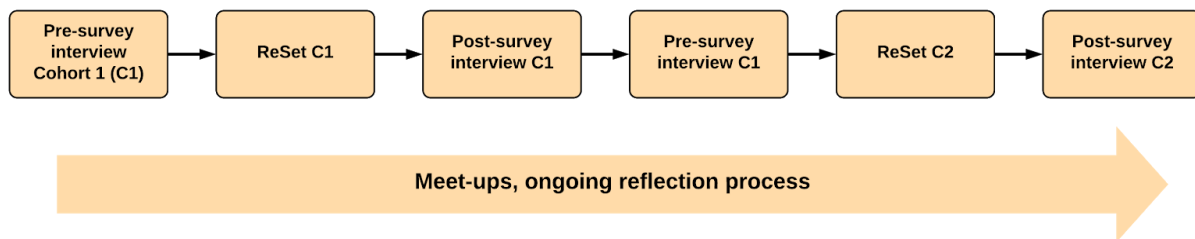


Figure 1: The research process

The ReSet program consisted of three modules, was delivered in three days over a three-week period, and focused on psychometric research and behavioral studies, ageism, reflection and the entrepreneurial mindset. We anticipated that the ReSet program would help older adults better understand their SPA, and that this would strengthen their entrepreneurial mindset. The concept of “entrepreneurial mindset” was based upon the entrepreneurial competencies model developed by the European Commission, commonly known as Entrecomp (Bacigalupo, Kampylis, & Punie, 2016). This model emphasizes the importance of life-long learning and contributing value as determinants of personal satisfaction and of a knowledge-based society. The ReSet program facilitated and encouraged participants to explore personal and professional growth and introduced competencies of the entrepreneurial mindset.

Two semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with each participant. These lasted approximately 45 minutes each. They were conducted by telephone, except one which was done in person. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned a three-letter code. Data analysis was iterative and interpretive. After familiarizing ourselves with the content of the in-depth interviews, we used Atlas.ti to organize this data by questions and keywords, as per the questionnaire. We then compared that data to the data obtained in the feedback forms, which we had summarized in a spreadsheet. Based on those statements and our impressions of the interview content, we deductively established three central themes and obtained descriptive statistics. Giving all pieces of data equal weight (i.e., horizontalization), we organized data into clusters of meanings, forming central themes. Data analysis was undertaken by the three researchers, using frequent consultation and negotiation to reach consensus.

Part 1: Document analysis (February - April)
Part 2: Data collection: Participant recruitment, in-depth interviews, ReSet and post-interviews, meet-ups (March - June)
Part 3: Data analysis: Interview transcripts, ReSet feedback from participants and the research team as a whole (June - August)

Table 1: Overview of the research timeline

Results

Participant Characteristics

Participants all lived in the Ottawa metropolitan area and ranged between ages 54 and 75, with a mean and median age of 62. Four were male and 44 were female. Over 65% of participants were civil servants, and 86% had some level of higher education. Over 20% reported that they felt isolated or feared isolation in the process of ageing. Over 90% were Caucasian. Over 80% were retired, and 21% declared that they wished to start some form of entrepreneurial activity in the years or months to come.

Thematic Analysis

We focused our analysis on three central themes: ageism, belonging, and labour market participation. Throughout this analysis, we paid close attention to the impact of the ReSet program on the experiences of participants surrounding these issues.

Ageism

Over 70% of participants felt younger than their peers, and 98% felt younger than their age. During the in-depth interviews, one participant stated: “I feel younger (than my peers). Because I don’t complain about physical aches and pains. Because I look younger. Because I have a lot of interests, and I am not changing the way I live.”

Only one participant indicated that they felt that their mental age was their actual age, 62 years old. All the others felt that their mental age was significantly younger than their actual age: the mean stated mental age for all participants was 40 years. Despite this, several participants referred to the dichotomous nature of age, as being negative in its physical consequences whilst positive in relation to the mind. One participant stated: “That’s what I have to manage. And that’s what I see with my friends; the effect of age on your body, not on your mind.” The same participant also commented: “I feel younger than my age. It may have something to do with the people I work with.

They are all younger than I am. I feel I relate to them well, sharing experience and points of view as well as activities. They were often surprised when they found out how old I am.”

The word “old” had predominantly negative connotations for participants. As an introduction to the segment on ageism, participants were asked to answer a brief questionnaire. In the process of describing “old”, participants primarily used negative words such as “weak, painful, slow moving” (126 total words), and used fewer positive words such as “wise, experienced, wisdom” (75 total words), or neutral words such as “ancient, past” (22 total words). Overall, the way in which participants described “old” was in line with the literature, which portrays negative attitudes towards older adults as deriving from stereotypes of illness, irrelevance and incompetence (North & Fiske, 2012). The three most common words used to describe “old” were wise, grey, and experienced. Participants described being old in various ways but associated it predominantly with a process of physical decline: “Being old means that you can’t move around or you have disabilities, you don’t hear very well, you are losing your eyesight.” Another said: “It’s looking old both physically, slowed down, impaired in some way.”

We asked participants what age they considered as “being old”. The mean age was 85, and the median 86. 15% of participants did not answer this question, and one stated “never”. None of our participants were thus “old” according to their definition of this term, but several stated elsewhere that they “felt old.” Overall, participants’ perception of ageing was comparable to that of Michael Rose’s definition in his seminal book on the evolution of ageing: “a persistent decline in the age-specific fitness components of an organism due to internal physiological degeneration” (1991, p.20).

A majority of participants felt that they had not been victims of ageism. Those who felt younger than their peers, were physically active, and empowered professionally were even less likely to report having encountered ageism. However, a larger portion of participants felt that ageism was pervasive in society, and that this type of discrimination was reinforced by a cultural and generational gap, especially strong in relation to technology and with the millennials. One participant noted: “What I have seen is isolation ... Very definitely seen older persons that mostly clash with millennials ... they don’t necessarily speak the same language.”

At least 50% of participants felt that ageism did not apply to them simply because they did not consider themselves as old, and as a result, several felt uncomfortable in discussions addressing this topic. One participant stated: “I really didn’t like that part of the program. I don’t necessarily view myself in that context yet. It is something 10 years from now for me ... I was uncomfortable with the whole topic.” After introducing and discussing ageism during the ReSet programs, over 65% of participants felt that they became more aware of its pervasiveness in our society and paid more attention to this phenomenon. One participant stated: “The experience of that day has made me think about it a bit more ... It’s interesting that the whole concept of ageism is something I haven’t given a lot of thought to. I could be guilty of it myself.” Another said: “It made me realize

that I hadn't really thought about ageism and I would say that it made me more aware of it. Going forward I will notice it whereas in the past I didn't notice it at all." Despite this increased awareness, only 15% of participants felt that they may have been ageist towards themselves.

Labour Market Participation

Prior to starting the ReSet program, the majority of participants (70%) expressed a desire to engage in some form of entrepreneurial activity, defined as "enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets" (Ahmad & Seymour, 2008, p. 14). Participants perceived themselves to be at a turning point in their lives, having reached or approaching the average societal age of retirement. One noted: "What drew me to ReSet was the idea of transition, entrepreneurship, and looking at new beginnings. Acknowledgement of this transition, and exploring it and re-visiting who I am now, as opposed to who I was when I started the career in my early 20s. Reconnect a little bit with myself before I take a jump into something new."

Participants were motivated to be entrepreneurial by a desire for personal fulfillment. Over 26% of participants stated that they wished to engage in an activity that had real meaning for them, or to finally do what they liked after having worked for many years with financial security as their main objective. They felt empowered by their experience and gained better knowledge of themselves. Participants also stated that increased longevity and better financial security constituted significant factors in this context. A few participants indicated that financial considerations were preventing them from engaging in a new entrepreneurial activity as these could have more severe consequences at an older age should their endeavours fail.

One of the main barriers to entrepreneurship expressed by participants was the lack of certainty about the nature of the activity that they wished to pursue. "I have been reflecting on what I want to do in my life. I'm not quite sure what it is that I want to do, but I'm going to keep my ears and eyes open." Another commented: "I am exploring. I am not 100% sure—that's one of the reasons I am interested in this ReSet program."

Over 50% of participants stated that they wished to engage in a new professional activity but were unsure of what to do. Better understanding of one's personal ambitions and goals in relation to entrepreneurship was a key motivation to participate in the ReSet program. Another barrier to labour market participation which 22% of participants referred to was technology. It is established that older adults experience various barriers in using technology, and that further research is necessary on the needs and experiences of this population (Eisma, Dickinson, Goodman, Syme, Tiwari, & Newell, 2004; Gitlow, 2014; Lee & Coughlin, 2015). Our results corroborate these findings, as participants pointed to technology as one reason for not being able to continue to work,

and/or for feeling disconnected from the professional world. One participant noted: “Unless you are that kind of person who can be retrained and who can learn how to use a computer, by definition, you are left behind. People don’t even look at older people ... I really feel these are difficult times for older people wanting to get back to the workforce.” Although unrecognized, such comments appear to reflect internalized ageist beliefs.

Lastly, a majority of participants also believed that age negatively impacted job opportunities. They pointed to a shorter tenure, cheaper labour with younger, more inexperienced employees, and stigma as reasons for this. As one participant described it: “When people compete for jobs, I am sure, given the same set of qualifications, a younger person has the advantage over an older person, because there is a perception that, well, this older person may stay only for a year or two and is going to retire and we are going to have to retrain somebody.” Research indicates that older workers are more likely to experience longer unemployment, and to be precariously employed (Biggs, 2014; Harris, Krygsman, Waschenko, & Laliberte Rudman, 2018). Overall, participants’ perceptions corroborated the literature on the negative attitudes toward older workers and hiring decisions (Fasbender & Wang, 2017).

After attending the three modules of ReSet, participants reported that they felt better equipped to start something new and had a stronger motivation to become active. One commented: “I was reminded that I have been on autopilot a lot. I let things happen to me instead of choosing what I want, going out and making things happen.” Others said: “ReSet confirmed my views that I would like to be more engaged in the world of employment, but not as an employee. It would have to be something where I own my business.” “I feel like I really have the skills or knowledge to reinvent myself. I found that if you’ve got the toolkit, you just have to know which tools you’re going to choose. I really felt, especially after the last session, a real surprise in my sense of confidence.” The three modules of ReSet encouraged participants to reflect on how closely their personal and professional values were aligned, and to identify potential areas of growth and learning not previously explored. This triggered a stronger sense of self-confidence in participants.

Several participants said that ReSet helped them acknowledge that they had internalized ageism which had acted as a deterrent to enter or re-enter the labour market. As one explained: “I had become complacent and maybe accepted it just the way it was, rather than naming it for what it was [ageism] ... I was reluctant about going out and seeking employment because I felt too old.”

While some participants stated that they were still unsure of what to do, their commitment to start an entrepreneurial activity was nevertheless reinforced. One noted: “ReSet gave me some structure to put my thoughts around. After I retired, I thought that my life would evolve, maybe I would find an interesting activity or a new career and it never did come along. In the three sessions, I’ve realized that I need to make it happen.” Another added: “Now, I’m ready to take a bit of a risk

and I'm ready to do some work again. If I can't figure it out, I may go back to school and do something else.”

At least one participant stated that attending the ReSet program allowed them to realize that they did not wish to pursue entrepreneurial activities. Overall, ReSet had a significant impact on the decision-making processes surrounding entrepreneurship and life choices for over 87% of participants. They stated that factors such as gaining a better understanding of themselves through the exercises and presentations, increased realization of how pervasive ageism is in our society, and the motivation stemming from meeting peers with similar ambitions were determinant in this process.

Belonging

20% of participants stated that they lived in isolation or feared becoming isolated in the years to come. One commented: “When I worry about growing older, I worry about not being able to contribute to our society and about isolation.” Among the reasons stated for isolation, participants included retirement, children having moved out of the home, diminished athletic ability, generational gaps, technology and the passing away of friends and family members. Several participants commented on the fact that ReSet provided them with an opportunity to avoid isolation, with one stating: “What was positive with ReSet was coming together with a group of people who are thinking along the same lines. You think that you're the only one at this stage of your life. You experience less isolation knowing that you are not the only person that is going through this.” Another participant stated: “One of my issues is that I want to avoid isolation in retirement, and I think the program provided a platform to do that.”

The large majority of participants did not feel isolated—they felt well supported by their circles of friends. Nevertheless, they still stated that they wished to meet other people at similar stages in their lives. Finding others was important in the context of transitioning towards what is widely accepted as the retiring age, as one participant noted: “This opportunity for me is a very positive one as I am meeting people in my age group who are in similar situations. That is, essentially, they are retired, and they want to continue to be active.”

Approaching or entering this new stage in their life, participants expressed a need to redefine themselves, especially as they did not consider themselves as old, but were labelled as older adults, and also found it difficult to relate to their parents' and older generations' experiences. One participant remarked: “It's a foggy phase right now. When I was young, this stage of life would be like my grandparents' age or my grand-grandparents' age. Some of the definitions I grew up with like were sitting on a rocking chair, reading or something like that. These older images no longer apply and they certainly don't apply to me. So, I am not sure what being old actually means.” Another stated: “Now that I am older, I don't see myself in any way ageing the way my

grandmothers did because, I think, that our generation, in many respects, is so much healthier at the same age as they were.”

Participants felt empowered by meeting and exchanging ideas with others who shared a desire to remain active in the upcoming years of their lives. As a result, a majority of participants expressed a desire to become part of an active community and hoped that ReSet would provide a platform to maintain and nurture that community. In the feedback form provided at the end of the last ReSet module, participants were presented with the following statement: “The ‘learning community’ approach has added meaningfully to my enjoyment and understanding of the information presented in the three modules.” A four-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was provided, and in response, 88% of participants strongly agreed with this statement, 10% agreed, and 2% disagreed.

Strengths and Limitations

The 48 participants in this study represented a largely homogenous group in that they all lived in the same area (Ottawa), were between the ages of 54 and 75, were 90% female, and 90% white. They were highly educated; a majority were civil servants and enjoyed financial stability and security. Our findings could have been reinforced by including a wider diversity of background characteristics, especially age, professional background, socio-economic status, and ethnic origin.

Our research was strengthened by the large sample size and variety of data collection types used: two in-depth interviews, a questionnaire, three feedback forms, participation in three days of training, and informal gatherings. This allowed us to gain a comprehensive perspective on participants’ opinions and experiences. Participants in our study may not have felt comfortable speaking openly about issues related to their experiences of ageing and their future professional aspirations as these can be highly personal, but the use of telephone conversations and the multiple opportunities for exchange that our data collection strategy offered likely reduced that barrier.

The duration of the benefits associated with the reduction of social isolation triggered by the ReSet program is uncertain. Previous research suggests that these types of interventions should have a minimum implementation period of at least five months (Findlay, 2003), whereas the three modules of ReSet took place over a three-week period. Meetups were ongoing, as the program was meant to be part of wider community-building effort and provided a platform to enable continued collaboration and exchange among this population. ReSet allowed participants to explore and re-align their personal and professional goals in a collective and community-oriented context. In this way, participants explored their entrepreneurial ambitions through both personal reflection and collaboration, equipping them with increased self-confidence and a broader outlook on their possible endeavours. Participants were encouraged to question their paradigms and to think outside

the box. By improving the entrepreneurial mindset of participants, we addressed some barriers to labour market participation encountered by this population. For example, Lee and Coughlin (2015) identify ten factors determining older adults' adoption of technology. ReSet covered four of those: social support, emotion, independence and confidence.

Discussion

The findings of this study are pertinent to ongoing discussions surrounding self-perception of ageing, entrepreneurship, and the well-being of older adults in society. The findings are especially relevant in the context of the ageing population and increased life expectancy, given the importance of this group's participation of this group in the labour market and the urgency of addressing senior social isolation.

Our results indicate that addressing ageism and the meaning of "being old" was both ambiguous and sensitive. At the heart of this ambiguity was the term "old": although participants acknowledged being labelled as old, they did not describe themselves as such. On average, being old was equated with being over 85. As one participant observed: "I don't necessarily have a view of myself as an older person. I see myself categorized as such." This ambiguity, combined with the fact that the 60-65 age range is associated with the transition stage of retirement (Government of Canada, 2018), having life-long implications for many, triggered a need to redefine oneself in a manner that eschewed this notion altogether. Previous research draws attention to this pattern of dissociation from being old, even when one is identified as such by others (Weiss & Freund, 2012; Weiss & Lang, 2012).

In turn, the need to redefine oneself in this age group (55-75) was strongly associated with a desire to remain active in society beyond the age of 60. Participating one way or another in the labour market was the primary means cited for remaining active, whereas involvement in sports, arts, and politics were other options cited.

To remain active, participants insisted on the importance of being supported by a network of peers. Our results indicate that peer networks of adults over 55 can be characterized by a need to have increased social interactions. The high exposure to isolation stems from professional transitions and deaths in personal circles associated with age. Participants widely agreed that they needed a stronger network and a platform adapted to their social needs. A large majority indicated that the ReSet program had provided them with this, and several stated that they felt less isolated since participating in the study. Our research thus adds to the growing interest on the social isolation of older people and provides some insights in how it can be reduced. Weldrick and Grenier (2018) indicate that uncertainty on how to prevent or reduce social isolation constituted one of the key obstacles impeding efforts to address this phenomenon. The focus of the ReSet

program on improving the entrepreneurial mindset of participants is in line with the recent recommendation to adopt a more social reading on social isolation to address its root causes (Weldrick & Grenier). Such an approach would include a community-oriented perspective.

Whether participants' perception of "old" amounted to a form of internalized ageism is difficult to assess in a conclusive manner. On one hand, our participants' acknowledgments of having internalized ageism, as well as their use of negative words and phrases to describe this term, point in this direction. On the other hand, the expressed desire to redefine this age group and the general understanding of "old" as being over 85 suggest that this may largely be a semantic issue, potentially skewing some of our findings. In this latter case, ageism cannot be acknowledged, as oldness is simply a characteristic that one simply does not share. In other words, if ageism is associated with being old, and if one doesn't perceive their self as being old, how could one feel a victim of ageism?

Our findings did not corroborate previous research indicating that negative views on ageing were associated with increased perceived discrimination in the domains of work, medical care, and social life (Voss, Wolff, & Rothermund, 2017), but did not contradict them either. However, our findings did support research demonstrating that individual meanings attached to ageing were multiple and complex (Kornadt & Rothermund, 2015). The ReSet program exemplified that it was possible to address those meanings at the group-level, and to reduce ageism despite its insidious and pervasive nature. Previous studies have shown that eviction practices towards older workers in the labour force were so generalized that they were often unnoticed (Lagacé, 2008), especially by the victim, who might have internalized stereotype-based expectations into views on his or her own ageing process (Voss, Wolff, & Rothermund, 2017). As such, we were successful in improving participants' general awareness of their self-perception of ageing and of how pervasive ageism is in our society.

Conclusion

Our study confirms that self-perception of ageing (SPA) and the decision-making processes surrounding entrepreneurship are linked. This finding partly addresses a gap in research on the general impact of SPA, hitherto mostly focused on health impact (Robertson & Kenny, 2016), by providing insights into the way in which Canadians view themselves as older workers.

The ReSet program improved the entrepreneurial mindset of participants by providing them with a platform for communication, networking, and a sense of community. It also reduced the negative impact of internalized ageism on the entrepreneurial mindset of participants by increasing self-confidence and awareness of ageism, as well as by encouraging a collective process of reflecting and engaging in personal and professional growth exercises. Overall, it had a significant

impact on decision-making processes surrounding labour market participation, and reinforced participant commitments to engage in some form of entrepreneurial activity.

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