



**SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS**

Gendered Ageism in the Canadian Workforce

The economic, social and emotional effects of isolating older women from the workplace

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Abstract

This research was conducted to examine the impacts of gendered ageism in the workplace for women over 50. The aim of this research was to determine how older women are impacted on an economic, social and emotional level when they experience this type of discrimination at work. The findings show that women over 50 are both unfairly forced out of their positions and have unjustified difficulty reentering the workforce, which then negatively impacts components of their lives such as economic stability, self-esteem, social connectedness and emotional well-being. To alleviate these impacts, it is recommended that programs and policies are put in place that make it easier for women to pursue legal action against their employer, and that social groups are created that provide networking opportunities and emotional support for older women.

Key Words: gender, age, discrimination, workforce, women, employment, isolation, stereotype

Introduction

Across North America, the workforce is aging. As demographics shift, so will the working age population making it essential that older individuals continue to remain active members of the workforce.¹ However, another phenomenon is working against this requirement, which is that women over 50 years of age are a demographic that are presently facing some of the worst discrimination in the workplace.² Studies show that job security for women over 50 is virtually non-existent and that older women are the most likely demographic to become long-term unemployed.³ These findings have sparked a variety of research which has proven that ageism in the workplace against older women is systemic and widespread across many countries, including Canada.^{4,5} While this research is essential, little work has been done to examine how older women who experience workplace gendered ageism are impacted at the individual level. In other words, how does being isolated from the workplace affect individual women on an economic, social and emotional level? It is the aim of this research to explore which facets of a woman's life are affected when she experiences gendered ageism in the workplace and to determine how this experience impacts one's overall well-being.

¹ United States. (1992). *Older women and employment: Facts and myths; hearing before the Special Committee on Aging, United States Senate; One Hundred First [i.e. One Hundred Second] Congress, first session; Washington, DC; August 2, 1991.*

² Ibid.

³ Sachs, Wendy. *Age Discrimination Hurts Women Workers*. Time, March 7, 2017.

⁴ Handy, J., & Davy, D. (April 01, 2007). Gendered ageism: Older women's experiences of employment agency practices. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 45, 1, 85-99.

⁵ Kurland, N. B. (January 01, 2001). The Impact of Legal Age Discrimination on Women in Professional Occupations. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 11, 2, 331-348.

Gendered Ageism

Ageism

Ageism is defined as the stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age.⁶ Thus, gendered ageism refers to the difference in the stereotyping of and discrimination against older men versus older women. In Canada, ageism has been found to be the most accepted form of discrimination and recent polls show that eight in ten Canadians believe seniors aged 75 and older are seen as less important and are more ignored than younger generations.⁷ Moreover, some studies have found that ageism is widespread because the nature of people's action towards older populations is implicit rather than explicit. Implicit ageism is defined as, "the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward elderly people that exist and operate without conscious awareness or control, with the assumption that it forms the basis of most interactions with older individuals."⁸ Thus, any individual who has been socialized in a culture that propagates these beliefs is likely to internalize such opinions and therefore, engage in implicit ageism.⁹

⁶ Butler, RN. 1982. "The triumph of age: science, gerontology, and ageism". *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*. 58 (4): 347-61.

⁷ CTV Staff, 'Ageism' Widespread in Canada, survey finds. CTV News, November 2, 2012.

⁸ Levy, B. R. (January 01, 2001). Eradication of ageism requires addressing the enemy within. *The Gerontologist*, 41, 5, 578-9.

⁹ Ibid.

Gendered Ageism

In terms of the gendered dimension of ageism, the current academic literature on ageism shows that this form of discrimination tends to more adversely affect women than men.^{10,11} Moreover, it is often said that women face a 'triple jeopardy' as they are subjected to a combination of age discrimination, gender discrimination and lookism.¹² In this way, women are judged more harshly than men when they begin to show signs of aging, such as greying hair, and are assumed to 'hit their peak' earlier in life than men do.¹³ In other words, it has been found that the gender dimensions of ageism manifests in such a way that, "the social worth of women has been linked more closely with their physical appearance compared to the situation for men, and these social valuations decline more markedly with age for women than they do for men."¹⁴

In summation, a survey of the academic literature on gender and age discrimination proves that, for older women, many incidences of age discrimination are also inherently gender discriminatory.¹⁵ Additionally, gendered ageism has been found to be present in many facets of one's life including family relationships, social relationships and work relationships. Thus, these

¹⁰ Duncan, C., & Loretto, W. (January 01, 2004). Never the Right Age? Gender and Age-Based Discrimination in Employment. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 11, 1, 95-115.

¹¹ Granleese, J., & Sayer, G. (August 01, 2006). Gendered ageism and "lookism": a triple jeopardy for female academics. *Women in Management Review*, 21, 6, 500-517.

¹² Marjut Jyrkinen, and Linda McKie. 2012. "Gender, age and ageism: experiences of women managers in Finland and Scotland". *Work, Employment & Society*. 26 (1): 61-77.

¹³ Walker, H., Grant, D., Meadows, M., & Cook, I. (January 01, 2007). Women's Experiences and Perceptions of Age Discrimination in Employment: Implications for Research and Policy. *Social Policy and Society*, 6, 1, 37-48.

¹⁴ Hatch, L. R. (January 01, 2005). Gender and Ageism. *Generations : the Journal of the Western Gerontological Society*, 29, 3, 19-24.

¹⁵ Kurland, N. B. (January 01, 2001). The Impact of Legal Age Discrimination on Women in Professional Occupations. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 11, 2, 331-348.

findings indicate that older women are a particularly vulnerable group as the likelihood that they will be subjected to some form of harmful discrimination increases as they age.¹⁶

Gendered Ageism in the Workforce

While gendered ageism can occur in many instances throughout a woman's life, evidence shows that the workplace is an arena in which this issue is highly salient. In fact, a study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco created 40,000 fictitious job applications and submitted them to 13,000 online job postings. The research found that older women were least likely to receive a response, regardless of their experience levels and concluded that there is systematic patterns of age discrimination in the workforce, particularly for older women.^{17,18} Women over 50 now account for more than half of the long term unemployed population; this is cited as a key reason why more women than men live below the poverty line in North America.^{19,20}

Studies have also shown that women over the age of 45 can begin to experience gendered ageism in many different areas of their career such as training, promotions, job assignments, and salary allocation.²¹ Additionally, there is a notable pay disparity between

¹⁶ Condon, Mary. 2001. "Gendering the Pension Promise in Canada: Risk, Financial Markets and Neoliberalism". *Social & Legal Studies*. 10 (1): 83-103.

¹⁷ Nicolaci da Costa, Pedro. *Age discrimination is real, especially for women, and new research shows how it's harming everybody*. Business Insider, March 8, 2017.

¹⁸ Cohen, Ronnie. *Older Women get the Brush-off from Potential Employers*. Reuters, March 15, 2017.

¹⁹ United States. (1992). *Older women and employment: Facts and myths; hearing before the Special Committee on Aging, United States Senate; One Hundred First [i.e. One Hundred Second] Congress, first session; Washington, DC; August 2, 1991*.

²⁰ PBS NewsHour. *Women over 50? Help not wanted*. PBS, January 14, 2016.

²¹ Barnum, Phyllis. Liden, Robert and Ditomaso, Nancy. 1995. "Double Jeopardy For Women and Minorities: Pay Differences With Age". *Academy of Management Journal*. 38 (3): 863-880.

older women and older men in which women are paid less than their male colleagues and the disparity tends to widen as the woman ages.²² Due to these biases, reports find that older women are being forced out of the workforce through demotions, job losses and the inability to get rehired.²³

In addition to being unjust, the social isolation of women from the workforce is problematic for a multitude of reasons. One key reason is that the discriminatory actions that force women out of employment causes the individual to feel devalued, which hinders their confidence and future performance.²⁴ This then puts older women at risk for 'stereotype threat' which is defined as, "a situation in which there is a negative stereotype about a person's group, and he or she is concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of this stereotype."²⁵ This added concern puts additional pressure on the target group and has been found to undermine older women's performance in their current job, or when applying to, or starting a new position.²⁶ Another problem that is associated with gendered ageism in the workforce is that, as the population in North America is aging, more older persons will be required to participate in the workforce if it is to operate at capacity.²⁷ Thus, it is integral to ensure older women are not pushed out of the workforce as they will increasingly become a

²² Ibid.

²³ Rikleen, Lauren. *Older Women are Being Forced Out Of the Workforce*. Harvard Business Review, March 10, 2016.

²⁴ Walker, H., Grant, D., Meadows, M., & Cook, I. (January 01, 2007). Women's Experiences and Perceptions of Age Discrimination in Employment: Implications for Research and Policy. *Social Policy and Society*, 6, 1, 37-48.

²⁵ Spencer, S. J., Logel, C., & Davies, P. G. (January 01, 2016). Stereotype Threat. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 67, 415-37.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ United States. (1992). *Older women and employment: Facts and myths; hearing before the Special Committee on Aging, United States Senate; One Hundred First [i.e. One Hundred Second] Congress, first session; Washington, DC; August 2, 1991.*

vital component of a functioning economy. For example, in Canada, if more older persons do not remain in employment long enough, pension plans will not remain viable as they will not be able to be maintained by the traditional working age population.²⁸

Gendered ageism is widespread throughout the workforce and has harmful implications at the individual and societal level. For the most part, it seems as though this discrimination is being perpetuated due to the fact that many employers and society as a whole hold the opinion that older women's work is irrelevant and not valuable. This study seeks to examine the impacts of workplace gendered ageism at the individual level by trying to determine how the devaluation of older women's work affects their economic, social and emotional well-being. In this way, the research hopes to achieve a holistic understanding of the hardships older women endure due to workplace discrimination and from there, outline policies that can be developed to address the entirety of this issue and create beneficial circumstances for the individual, the economy and overall society.

Methodology

The data going forward is drawn from semi-structured interviews with four women who endured difficulty remaining in or re-entering the workforce as a result of discriminatory behaviour due to both their age and gender. All participants interviewed identified as Canadian females aged between 50-66. The first two interview participants were found through word-of-mouth and from there, a snowballing technique was utilized as a way of finding the two

²⁸ Gunderson, M. (July 01, 2003). Age Discrimination in Employment in Canada. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 21, 3, 318-328.

additional interview participants. The aim of the research was explained to each interview participant who then signed a consent form in which anonymity was guaranteed. The interviews lasted approximately two hours and were conducted in a location agreed upon by both the interviewer and the interviewee.

The women were asked a series of open-ended questions throughout the course of the interview and were probed to further explain statements or add additional detail. The women were encouraged to speak openly about their experience and contribute as much or as little detail they felt comfortable sharing. The interview questions addressed topics that may have been impacted by the participants' experience with workplace discrimination such as: economic stability, personal relationships, self-esteem, social isolation and legal recourse. The topics in the interviewee questionnaire were derived from a vast body of research on women in the workforce, discrimination, aging, and gender.

All interviews were transcribed, which yielded approximately 30 pages of notes. Once all four interviews were completed, the data was analyzed to compare each woman's experience. The aim of this exercise was to determine any key similarities or differences in order to obtain a greater understanding of how workplace discrimination impacts one's life on a social, economic and emotional level.

As with many qualitative research projects, a limitation of this endeavour is its restricted scope that does not allow for empirical generalizations.²⁹ The strength of this approach is that it enables more depth and complexity, which in turn allows for a holistic understanding of women's experiences. A key strength of this study is that it addresses a multitude of areas

²⁹ Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage Publications.

impacted by workplace discrimination against older women and found that, post discrimination, all women interviewed dealt with similar hardships in each area of their lives. From this finding, there is a great need for enhanced policies that support women in overcoming the many issues that arise from gendered ageism in the workplace.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Interview Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Children (Y/N)	Previous Employment	Current Employment
A	66	F	Divorced	Y	Anchor, Television Broadcasting	Co-host, Radio Broadcasting
B	50	F	Single	Y	Reporter, Television Broadcasting	CEO, Public Relations
C	57	F	Married	Y	Anchor, Television Broadcasting	Producer, Radio Broadcasting
D	56	F	Separated	Y	Director of Operations, Hospitality	Human Resources, Technology

Findings from Interviews

Gendered Ageism is Prevalent in the Canadian Workforce

The first key finding from interviews was that discrimination towards older women does occur in the Canadian workforce and in some cases, it occurs in an extremely explicit fashion. This finding ultimately reinforces what has already been found by numerous studies of different sizes and scale, but is nonetheless important as it exemplifies the nature of the discrimination that older women are forced to endure in the workforce. In fact, all of the women interviewed believe that, at some point in the later part of their career, they were discriminated against due to their age and gender. Some even provided examples in which their employer made outright discriminatory remarks. For instance, when Participant C was asked if she feels as though she was fired due to discriminatory beliefs, she stated:

“Yes, I do feel they were discriminatory because I was told that out of the three individuals they had to choose from, the other two were men and one had three ex-wives to support and the other was so senior that it would cost the company considerably more to get rid of him. So, they picked me and they even had the gall to say that it was okay because I had a well-off husband on whom I could depend.”

Furthermore, even if these discriminatory comments do not occur during the firing process, many of the remarks made toward older women indicate that they will no longer be allowed to advance in their career. They are perhaps also stated to force them into leaving their position voluntarily. Participant B noted:

“My employer made it very clear to me and told me that I would not be promoted any more. I knew I had a best before date on my forehead so, I decided the writing was on the wall and I sought a voluntary exit package.”

Similarly, Participant B stated that it is made clear that women start to be pushed out of some careers as early as their forties, which is an issue she does not feel men experience as frequently:

“A Canadian woman became lead anchor of a national broadcast and I heard people actually saying out loud that she had a good 5-10 years left in her because she was already 45 (even though she had replaced a much older man). She is an exceptionally qualified journalist but yet was being judged on her age and physical appearance.”

Employers Have Stereotypical Beliefs About Older Women

In addition to these explicit forms of discrimination, the second key finding of this research is that key decision makers in the workforce appear to hold beliefs about the abilities of older women that are both stereotypical and discriminatory. In fact, all of the women felt that they were not given certain opportunities at some point in their career due to stereotypical beliefs about older women. When speaking about her experience trying to re-enter the workforce, Participant A stated she felt that employers believed men her age needed the job more:

“I think many employers have a thing that a guy has to pay for his kids but I am a single mom and have to do that too. I paid for the education of both my children and for a child that isn’t mine, but it’s all about the guy who needs the job.”

Likewise, participant C noted:

“After I was laid off, a former male co-anchor of mine who was also let go was immediately hired by someone who knew him. I was told this same station wouldn’t hire me because the station was ‘going younger’ but this man was a month older than me. They also said he had a family to support and needed the job more, I was blown away someone would actually say that.”

Additionally, all of the women stated they believe that employers associated their age with them being tired, unmotivated and not worth re-training. When speaking about the service industry, Participant D stated that employers “think that us older women don’t have the energy to work in that industry.” Furthermore, older women also face unfair stereotypes when applying for new positions. When speaking about trying to re-enter the workforce, Participant A stated: “I think employers generally feel that older women don’t want to work as hard or aren’t worth retraining.” Participant C said: “I think there’s a lot of ‘you can’t adapt to new technology’ but I was one of the best at adapting to new systems. There’s a lot of ‘you’re too old and too tired to do things’ and I always felt that didn’t describe me at all.”

Legal Recourse is Economically Challenging

The third key finding is that, even in cases where discrimination was undeniable, women often do not choose to take legal recourse due to time, money and stress. When asked why she did not choose to sue her employer for their discriminatory remarks, Participant B replied:

“I needed to pay my mortgage and not be involved in a several year court case. The other thing that weighed on my mind is when you wage a discrimination charge against one of Canada’s biggest companies you become persona *non grata* by other major companies.”

In fact, the fear of suing a large corporation coupled with time and money constraints was a recurring reason for not taking legal action. Participant A noted:

“My company said a \$10 million legal fund had been put aside in anticipation that I might fight them on this. They said they ‘would fight me until the end’ and I didn’t want to be in court for the next 10 years. My lawyer said I would win but that would be at least 6-7 years and I wouldn’t get my severance.”

Moreover, the sadness of just being fired often added an additional layer to the aforementioned concerns:

“I was in a clinical depression and I felt that after spending years in a lawsuit against a giant media company I would probably end up with less than the package they were offering. Also, at the time, I honestly didn’t think it would be a problem to get re-hired. I really didn’t see this problem coming given my experience. It’s the biggest regret of my life not suing them because, as I understand it now, I had a pretty clear-cut case.”

(Participant C)

Older Women Face Economic Burdens

The fourth finding is that older women who experience workplace gendered ageism face grave economic circumstances due to both job loss and the inability to get rehired. For all women, their experience with the re-hiring process was extremely difficult and many felt this was due to employers’ beliefs about the work abilities of older women. When asked about her experience trying to re-enter the workforce, Participant C replied: “It has been terrible. In the last 10 years, I have applied to over 500 jobs and I get no responses to my resumes. I feel that because I am recognizable and people know my age they think I am not worth it.” Additionally, Participant A stated that: “It was all closed doors, nobody wanted to hire somebody my age. I felt like people may call me given by experience but once it was done, it was absolutely done.”

For some women, upon the realization that it was unlikely that they would be rehired through traditional means, many of them, such as Participant B, decided their only option was to start their own business:

“I started to put my plan in motion because I needed to find a way to sustain my financial career for the rest of my life. Quite honestly, I needed to survive and use all of the skills I developed to raise my daughter, pay my mortgage and survive because I wasn’t going to get another job in television.”

These findings indicate that gendered ageism often results in women being removed from their careers only to be put in circumstances in which it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find new employment. For obvious reasons, this puts women in precarious economic situations in which they are no longer able to maintain their lifestyle or support their dependents.

Gendered Ageism Results in Social Isolation

While the economic impact of gendered ageism is obvious, the fifth finding of this research shows that women who experience this discrimination also face social hardships.

Participant A stated:

“I certainly felt socially isolated in the sense that, while my truest friends were there, people I worked with for years didn’t know what to say or do. It was pretty bad, it was very isolating. If I ran into people they were happy to see me but I think they were hesitant to reach out.”

Likewise, Participant C and Participant B, respectively, also experienced social isolation:

“Yes, I felt socially isolated. We lived in the countryside so I couldn’t just pop out for coffee with my friends and people feel awkward about it. You want to talk about how things are going for them but then they realize it is hard to talk to you about work so people don’t want to connect with you because they don’t want to throw their success in your face.”

“I did because I had built my entire social life around the industry and that did not come with me out of the industry. I had very little contact with my former colleagues because they are now all so busy just trying to survive so I had to create an entirely new business network which made me feel very socially isolated.”

In addition to their social circles, many participants also felt that their relationship with their families were impacted:

“My children were very concerned about my mental health because I’ve always been a worker and suddenly to have all this time was pretty scary.” (Participant A)

“I felt worthless and was a poor role model for my children because I was weeping all the time but I really felt like I couldn’t change the situation I was forced into.”
(Participant C)

Gendered Ageism is Emotionally Damaging

The sixth finding of this research, which is also related to the social strain these women experienced, is the toll workplace gendered ageism had on their emotional and psychological well-being. Firstly, women felt pressured to appear physically younger which made them feel as though they were being unfairly judged for aging. Participant D noted:

“I think looks plays a big part, they want younger women and assume older women are less attractive or they just can’t wear high heels all the time anymore.”

In some cases, employers made it clear that efforts should be made for women to appear more youthful:

“My station brought in a stylist to talk about hair, makeup, botox, sleeveless dresses and stilettos. I am a very serious journalist and I thought is this really the number one priority right now? How I look rather than the content of my journalism? It was an appalling day for me, them wanting me to wear sleeveless dresses beside the man who was wearing a suit.” (Participant B)

Secondly, all women stated that being unfairly judged on the basis of their age and gender was detrimental to their confidence and self-esteem.

“It was a hit on my self-confidence. I felt that I always did a great job for them and in numbers alone when I took over that position the sales had a big increase and the

number of people coming through our building really increased. I felt I always managed it well and then to be let go like it couldn't be my performance because the numbers speak for themselves so then what was it? Was it something they didn't like about me?"

(Participant D)

"It shattered my confidence and self-esteem. I felt I had the perfect career and then everything was taken away from me and nobody else wanted me." (Participant C)

"It impacted my confidence. I was made to feel not valued and that's a very hard thing to deal with." (Participant A)

Thirdly, for some women, the feeling of being devalued to this extent resulted in feelings of deep sadness and depression:

"A month after I left I was drunk in a park, without my shoes, in the pouring rain, crying my face off and I kept thinking 'what have I done, I have nothing'. My daughter and I had to go through a year of rebuilding our relationship because I was truly broken. When you have kids you try to put on a happy face, but that was really difficult because I was seriously broken. I would have done that job for the rest of my life if I had the respect from society and my employer, but I wasn't valuable to them anymore. Everything I ever loved about my work was gone and I felt useless and thrown away and without respect and I had to rebuild from this really dark place." (Participant B)

“I would get my children out of the door to school and I would basically just go sit in bed all day and cry because I was so depressed. I would try to rally myself for my children but I think the family could tell I was depressed. I was crying all the time, I was very moody, I would lose my temper easily.” (Participant C)

Discussion

The research findings have demonstrated the different elements of women’s lives that are affected when they are subjected to gendered ageism in the workforce. As has been indicated by the findings presented above, older women who have experienced workplace discrimination are deeply impacted in many areas of their life including economic viability, social connectedness and emotional well-being. The first finding that bears further discussion is that many women felt unable to pursue legal recourse due to the time and money it would require to challenge a large corporation. This is problematic for many reasons, one of which being that if companies are able to deter individuals from pursuing discrimination cases because employees are unable to match their resources, then such companies will be able to continue this illegal behaviour for the foreseeable future. Therefore, this finding indicates that policy changes should be made that make it easier for women, and all victims of employment discrimination, to take legal action if they so choose.

Another key finding is that women felt as though their experience with discrimination severely hindered their confidence and self-esteem. This finding must be addressed as it could put older women at risk of experiencing stereotype threat in which they come to internalize the

discriminatory beliefs employers have towards them, which may then hinder their job performance and make them less likely to pursue new employment opportunities. Additionally, it is vital that women's self-esteem remains high as it is often the case that their only opportunity to re-enter the workforce comes from self-employment.³⁰ In this way, women must see themselves as both capable and valuable if they are going to take the risk of creating their own company. However, while the entrepreneurial spirit displayed by many older women is positive, their inability to get re-hired is problematic for the obvious reason that not all older women will be able to create their own employment because of factors such as inadequate access to capital and other necessary resources. Thus, a societal shift is required in which more older women are given equal opportunity to re-enter the workforce.

It is also worth noting that many women felt their older years are a time in which they would be the most driven and focused employee. For example, Participant D stated: "I would think that women my age would be the best employees because we have been so used to juggling our lives and now our kids have grown and we can devote all our time to work." In fact, this belief is not unfounded as the academic literature states that women over fifty have been found to bring many positive attributes to the workplace and that there is a solid business case argument for employing older workers.³¹ Thus, in addition to harmfully impacting lives, companies who engage in gendered ageism are potentially missing out on a highly efficient economic agent.

³⁰ Mühlbauer, Varda, Joan C. Chrisler, and Florence Denmark. 2015. *Women and aging: an international, intersectional power perspective*. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1965320>.

³¹ Handy, J., & Davy, D. (April 01, 2007). Gendered ageism: Older women's experiences of employment agency practices. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 45, 1, 85-99.

Finally, the last and arguably most important finding relates to the social isolation and emotional stress women feel once they have endured workplace discrimination. As is well proven in the academic literature, the well-being of a nation's women is a reflection of the well-being of the country's population as a whole.³² Accordingly, it is vital that policies and programs are implemented for women to fully heal from this experience and move forward in their lives with a sense of purpose, happiness and connectivity.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

On the whole, many of the experiences older women are enduring in the workplace today are a result of stereotyping and discriminatory beliefs about the abilities of older women.³³ As noted by Participant B, "As a society, we do not value the aging women, and that is where this whole concept fits together. There's an entire culture of mocking people for aging which speaks to a fundamental disrespect of your elders." Thus, it is likely that a large societal shift in attitudes will be the only way to completely solve gendered ageism in the workforce.³⁴ While key decision makers are able to start creating this shift now by raising awareness about this issue and implementing programs that enable more older women to remain in the workforce, this change will take time.

Ultimately, the goal of this research was to present a holistic understanding of how gendered ageism impacts women on a personal level, such that people will be compelled to

³² United Nations. 2006. *The core international human rights treaties*. New York: United Nations. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=193264>.

³³ Kurland, N. B. (January 01, 2001). The Impact of Legal Age Discrimination on Women in Professional Occupations. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 11, 2, 331-348.

³⁴ Ibid.

further explore all facets of this issue. In this way, this research aimed to spark conversation about gendered ageism in the workforce that would compel stakeholders, such as the Ministry of the Status of Women and the Ministry of Labour, to undertake large scale, quantitative research that will enable empirical generalizations. From there, this data combined with the qualitative research that has already been done, could be used to urge the federal government to invest in programs aimed to alleviate this discrimination in the Canadian workforce.

The research has found three main areas in which policy changes could mitigate the harmful impacts of gendered ageism in the short term. The first is to provide women who feel as though they have been subjected to gendered ageism in their workplace with greater resources to pursue legal action. This research paper indicated that, even in cases where discrimination was outright, many women did not sue their employer due to time and money constraints. This problem could be alleviated by creating policies that expedite legal processes for discrimination suits or creating a fund that would provide women with greater access to legal assistance. In this way, women would be granted the justice they deserve and have more economic security during their period of unemployment.

Secondly, as all the women interviewed for this report came from the private sector, private actors have a role to play in removing gendered ageism from their workplace culture and practices. A good example of private sector engagement is the Rotman School of Management's "Back to Work" program, which is sponsored by Manulife, Royal Bank of Canada and TD Bank. This program equips women who have been absent from the workforce for an extended period of time with the skills needed to effectively re-integrate into the workforce.

Thirdly, this paper suggests the creation of support groups for older women that enable both networking and emotional support. For all participants interviewed, the ability to connect with other women who were going through similar experiences was integral to their recovery from many of the aforementioned impacts of discrimination. As stated by Participant B: “The number one piece of overcoming this was other women. I can’t say enough about how women in this age group support each other and really make you feel understood. I wouldn’t be here if I had not received the support of incredible women who have been through the same thing.” Likewise, Participant A stated that she was able to move forward with her life “when I got together with somebody else who had been through the same thing and we decided we would build something together.” Therefore, by creating support groups that women can access, individuals will not only be able to create great networking opportunities that could lead to future employment but will also hopefully find the emotional strength and connectivity that is integral to their overall well-being.

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