

“WHAT IS RIGHT AND REAL – IS THE STORYTELLING”: MASCULINITY, MEDIA AND CREATIVITY

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Abstract. The stereotypical view of creativity as an emblem of youth, and old age as a signifier of decline can hold grave consequences for filmmakers in the second half of life, as this misconception can result in negative attitudes, a decline in media coverage, and less funding for film production. Thus, ageing male film directors might face a collisional intersection, when the gender-based status that provides social privileges, meets with older age-based status, which leads to social weakening. This qualitative study explored the means which male directors in the second half of life use to remain creative and make films in an ageist, vastly changing world. The study is based on a dataset of transcribed semi-structured interviews with 13 well-known Israeli male directors over the age of 55. The findings led to the formation of a model of creativity in older age, which consists of the following six pathways: inspiration, adaptation, innovation, preservation, circumvention and imagination. While some of the interviewed directors emphasized their ability to change and adapt to the new cinematic world, others adhered to their old filmmaking language. The understanding of the cinematic creation as based upon the art of storytelling was common among both “camps”.

Keywords: ageism, cinema, communication, creativity, filmmaking, masculinity.

Introduction

Up to the early decades of the 20th century, the understanding of filmmaking as a form of art was still under question, and its place among other art forms, such as literature, painting, music, photography and dance required an explanation (Arnheim, 1957). However, what was not under question was the attribution of high-level creativity and genius to masculinity (Montuori, 2019). In fact, being an artist was conceptualized around masculinity, and the ability of men to fully dedicate themselves to their creative endeavors (Miller, 2016). Male dominance in the field of filmmaking is therefore not surprising, and neither is the developed auteur theory, which strengthened the equation of film directing with masculinity and artistic creation (Staples, 1966–1967; Aharoni Lir & Ayalon, 2022a).

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Yet, this exact association of filmmaking with masculinity and the road of highly known directors to winning fame and public acclimation (which lead women to claim their place in the field with endeavors such as *The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes. Employment of Women on the Top 250 Films of 2010* (Lauzen, 2011)), enhances the question concerning their ability to remain creative and direct through life. This question might be particularly relevant in light of the intersection of different attributes in later life. Such intersection takes into account not only masculinity as a vantage point associated with creativity, but also of old age, which might be subject to discrimination and social exclusion (Aharoni Lir & Ayalon, 2022b).

This stands true, even regarding the fact that among many acclaimed artists, creativity continues to improve at later stages of life (Cristini & Cesa-Bianchi, 2019). While filmmaking, unlike dancing, does not demand physical strength, associated with youth, it is often dependent upon various variables, such as the ability to recruit people and financial resources obtained through various foundations, as the long lineup at the end of most major films indicates (Becker, 2008; Montuori, 2019). Thus, directors who wish to continue in their moviemaking may not only face stereotypical views towards age, which can result in a decline in their motivation and the sense of self-efficacy (Bodner, 2009) but also other difficulties that can hinder their artistic project.

In the case of the Israeli film industry, a recent study points to an age bias towards acclaimed male filmmakers, who are in the second half of life; these directors who once dominated the industry may face *passive ageism*, reflected in negative attitudes towards them, questioning their ability to create relevant films and being ignored by critics. They may also experience *active ageism*, manifested in receiving less or no funding, and difficulties screening their films in Israeli theatre houses and on television networks. *Self-ageism* manifested in the directors' questioning of their own abilities due their advanced age also served as a possible barrier, which prevents the directors from continuing to create films (Aharoni Lir & Ayalon, 2022b).

Additionally, directors in the second half of life might also have to deal with learning new filming techniques and dealing with a cinematic world that has dramatically changed over time (Mulvey, 2006). This raises questions about the ability of acclaimed male directors, well known for their work in earlier stages of their life, to change their artistic language with age or to continue to retain one's expression despite the changing of times. Our qualitative study sets out to explore creativity in the second half of life, based on a dataset of 13 award-winning acclaimed Israeli directors. Given the ageism they face and various obstacles of a vastly changing world, the study aims to examine how highly successful male directors maintain their creativity and continue to make films in the second half of life?

1. Creativity and masculinity in old age

The discipline of masculinity studies has been highly influenced by feminist theories, which it followed. What beforehand was considered and presented as the norm (e.g., a young healthy man), started to be referred to as a distinct category (Connell, 2015). Masculinity, according to current prevailing theories is based on social norms, which assure men privileges, with some men being more privileged than others (Spector-Mersel, 2006). Thus, notwithstanding

theories that note the multiplicity of masculinities, the existence of masculine hegemony is commonly acknowledges (Connell, 2015).

Creativity is defined as the ability to create something new or imaginative, out of the ordinary. It requires openness and originality. A qualitative research has found that creativity is seen as being manifested in people's thinking and/or actions (Flood & Phillips, 2007). Creativity at its highest level is considered to be closely related to gender, as even today many scholars continue to carry the concept of the genius male creator and associate creativity with masculinity (Montuori, 2019). The prevailing stereotype is that creativity occurs in exceptional, out-of-the-ordinary contexts as a result of the actions or thoughts of a sole male (Eisler et al., 2016). The gender bias in creative work of art, which can be dated to ancient Greece, and attributes and evaluates genius qualities and highly artistic abilities to men is still persistent today (Miller, 2016; Aharoni Lir & Ayalon, 2022a).

Male dominance in the film industry, from its starting days, is a well noted fact (Ward Mahar, 2001). In 2019, out of the top 100 movies in the United States (US), 88% directed by men (Lauzen, 2020). This phenomenon is not unique to the US and is prevalent worldwide. Consistently, from its starting days up to the beginning of the 21st century, the Israeli film industry was dominated by male film directors, who mostly knew each other and often associated in groups that shared similar creative endeavors and assisted each other in films (Shaer-Meoded, 2016). Up until the early 2000, men directed 93% of feature films in Israel. Though narrowing, the gap remained persistent over the past two decades, and between 2013 and 2018 men directed 89% of the films (Shaer-Meoded, 2016; Elefant et al., 2021).

Although most of the research into the origins and manifestations of creativity has focused on younger age groups, there has been growing research interest in creativity among older people (Flood & Phillips, 2007; Gallistl, 2018; Goff, 1992; Tsai, 2013). Some researchers have argued for no relationship between creativity and age. These authors have brought as an example multiple artists who have designed and created their work in old and very old age (Hickson & Housley, 1997). Others, on the other hand, have argued that old age might even bring increased creativity or at least the successful maintenance of creativity, in line with the successful aging model (Tsai, 2013).

Lastly, researchers also have argued for a decline in creativity that comes in old age (Cera et al., 2018). Much of this research has focused on cognitive changes and decline as reasons for reduced creativity. Specifically, researchers have argued for a relationship between creativity and executive functioning (Sharma & Babu, 2017), network efficiency (Adnan et al., 2019) and cognitive reserves (Colombo et al., 2018) which are known to decline in old age. Moving away from the focus on cognitive faculties, loss of functioning, financial constraints and social status were suggested as possible reasons for the reduction in creativity in old age (Flood & Phillips, 2007).

To date, ageism, defined as stereotype, prejudice and discrimination based on age (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018), has largely been ignored as a possible barrier to creativity. Nonetheless, past research has shown that ageism prevents older people from fulfilling their potential (Angus & Reeve, 2006). This occurs either because of the negative social construction of old age or because of the internalization of negative age stereotypes by older people and the reaction based on these stereotypes, which results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, that serves as a barrier to self-actualization (Levy, 2009).

Although informative, to date, the study of creativity in men has largely neglected the second half of life, whereas the study of creativity in the second half of life has largely neglected its gendered aspects. The fact that male hegemony ranks young heterosexual men at the top and does not allow, and may even prevent, older men from being at the top (Calasanti, 2004), raises the question of how older directors continue to make films and screen them despite the various obstacles they encounter. As such, the present study aims to examine how older male directors, who were already identified as highly successful in their field, thus, their creativity has previously been acknowledged, maintain their creativity in the face of a changing world and changing selves.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study is based on conducting semi-structured interviews with 13 award-winning Israeli directors. The study targeted the participants based on the criteria of being Israeli male directors over the age of 55 and winning major awards; each one of them received a personal email with the request to participate in the study. The willingness to be interviewed surprised us to some extent, as they were some of the founding fathers of the Israeli film industry and major renowned directors. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, our interviews took place via *Zoom Video Communications*. They were recorded and fully transcribed. They all lasted between an hour and an hour and a half.

The choice of a qualitative study enabled the hearing of the directors' personal experiences concerning their work in the context of time from their point of view. The study is based on an inductive, categorical approach, which relates to each interview as an individual marker, while also reaching an overall perception of the participants (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

The analysis process consisted of a few stages; each interview was read a number of times by each of us, and was analysed independently, by focusing on the central themes it raised. This stage was conducted with no *a priori* coding scheme (Burnard, 1991). The interpretive topics that were repeated in the interviews were noted by each of the researchers in this study. The categories were checked together, which made it possible to discern common themes that corresponded with one another. Our analysis moved from the descriptive to the interpretive over time. To account for the rich data, selective coding was employed; this enabled focusing the analysis on relevant themes to create a coherent storyline (Holton, 2007).

Several mechanisms were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The study is composed of a diverse age group of film directors, who differed in their sexual orientation, place of living and ethnic origin (with ethnicity which included European, American, Arab and Middle Eastern countries, and diverse place of living including one director who lives and works in the States). This diversity allows examining commonalities beyond differences in experience. The analysis process was fully documented in order to maintain an audit trail (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). The study provides thick descriptions to allow the readers to appreciate our thematic analysis and interpretation (Ponterotto, 2006). Our study was approved by the university ethics committee. At the beginning of each interview, the directors were asked to give their consent to participate in the study after receiving an explanation that the interview would be transcribed and that their names would be used. Following

substantial deliberation, it was decided not to expose the directors' names in the research. This was done because the presentation of themes, rather than full interviews might place some verbal statement out of context.

2.1. The research sample

The directors targeted in this study were well known and highly acclaimed. The choice of age that is greater than 55 as a criterion was based on the fact that the perception of age is relative and people in different cultures associate different chronological ages with middle-age or old age (Ayalon et al., 2014). While the World Health Organization uses the age of 60 as a marker of old age, others relate to the 50s as such a marker (MacLeod, 2015). Thus, the paper offers a wide range of aging experiences, starting with middle age or young old age up to the old age group, with an average age of 71 (Table 1).

Table 1. Information about the directors: the age of the directors (source: created by authors)

	Age	Representative award
D1	73	<i>Art. Film. Award.</i>
D2	55	Jerusalem Film Festival award
D3	78	<i>Lifetime Award</i>
D4	67	<i>Silver Bear</i>
D5	71	<i>Guggenheim Fellowship</i>
D6	55	Berlin International Film Festival
D7	69	<i>Ophir Award</i>
D8	68	Innovation in Film Award
D9	79	<i>Israel Prize</i>
D10	64	Conrad Wolf Award
D11	84	<i>Israel Prize</i>
D12	78	<i>Ophir Award</i>
D13	83	<i>Golden Bird Award</i>

3. Findings

The analysis process revealed six main pathways related to the ability to continue to create films in the second half of life. All directors related, in one way or another, to filmmaking as an opportunity to tell their story and identified various ways to do so, as they aged:

1. Inspiration – relates to the ability to be inspired by other older yet active directors and to be self-inspired;
2. Adaptation – demonstrates the ability to keep current;
3. Innovation – conveys the ability to adopt new technological forms;
4. Preservation – displays the choice of some of the directors to maintain their familiar cinematic language, or to combine traditional and current forms of moviemaking;

5. Circumvention – refers to the ability to circumvent the gatekeepers and to bypass barriers of low or no funding and refusals to screen one's films;
6. Imagination – described the thoughtful consideration of adopting other creative venues in the future, such as theatre or writing.

3.1. Inspiration – keeping the light on

Drawing upon the cinematic world and on their own experiences, most of the directors talked about their ability to be kept inspired and passionate about their artistic work.

“Eastwood is a director that really close to my heart” – inspiration by others

Whereas one of the dangers of ageism is the internalization of the perception that the ability to create belongs to young people (Simonton, 1990), various directors evaded this harmful bias, by finding inspiration in older figures in the world of cinema or other creative fields, who can serve as role models for their creativity at any age:

“Listen, I look at Clint Eastwood, for example – I hope he lives to 120 – and it seems to me that he's near that. He's still making films [...] Altman also made films to very old age. There are actually older directors, and that's without saying that it's only a profession for a young person. If you're an athlete, if you're a dancer, that is necessarily a profession for a young person. A director [...] I assume that Eastwood doesn't run up hills and all that, like he did when he was young. He most likely sits on a chair facing a monitor. People go to explain what he wants, they do things in his name [...] there are examples of older directors who do very nice things. There is no reason in the world why they shouldn't” (D6, 55).

D6 refers to Clint Eastwood and Robert Altman as directors that inspire the understanding that filmmaking at an older age is natural, accepted, and possible. The name of Eastwood was recurring in many interviews as an example of a world-acclaimed actor and director who keeps making movies. Gender wise, it is possible to see inspiration as a cycle that enhances male creativity. Since there are many more men who direct films, and continue to do it at an older age, it is possible to assume that men can find more inspiration than women to keep the creative flare alive.

The manner in which Eastwood and Robert Redford widen the norms concerning the socially accepted age for engaging in filmmaking was described by D9:

“In *The Mule* [...] Eastwood plays this character, at the age of 88. There are things there, in terms of Hollywood, that are really amazing and beautiful. He is photographed when he's half-naked. You wouldn't see Clark Gable half-naked. You wouldn't even see Redford or Newman like that. And the half of his body that is naked is half a body of a man who is 88. Now, he's the director. He decides the size of the shot, he decides what people will see this [...] he's not wearing an undershirt in situations that once were a big no-no in American cinema – certainly for stars. Eastwood is a director that really close to my heart. By the way, Robert Redford as well [...]. He is an extraordinary director, who also deals, by the way, with his own aging – the aging of the absolute beautiful of American cinema, with great courage (D9, 68).

D9 demonstrates how the inspiring aspect of older directors refers not only to the ability to continue to make films throughout life, but also to tell captivating stories about older

men. D9 describes Eastwood and Redford as inspiring actors who allow themselves to age on screen. His words insinuate that bodily ageing is not only the concern of women (Hurd Clarke, 2018). Viewing Eastwood as a director and as an actor at an older age legitimizes the ageing process – as one of the social concepts of time is the “social clock”, which denotes accepted norms concerning what activities are suitable for what age groups (Neugarten, 1979). Seeing successful directors as Eastwood and Redford direct themselves as older male characters at the heart of their movies signifies that the world does not belong only to the young – that cinematic stories of older men are of interest and can captivate audiences.

“I have many more things to do” – self-inspiration and motivation

Many interviewees emphasized the gained perspective and understanding that comes with age and noted their desire to remake their films, even better than they were before:

“I’m not done. If I were to die today, I would be very happy, because I did what I wanted to do. On the other hand, if I don’t die, I have many more things to do, that I would like to do and take care of. I always have three to five projects in the air [...] the significance is that you can learn all the time [...] every movie is more learning; I still haven’t done this, I didn’t make the perfect film, from my perspective – this perfect thing – I still don’t have it. So, I always have what to aspire to. Of course, age gives you some viewpoint and perspective on all kinds of things, including your movies [...] since I’m so interested in this, I even took two of my films and remade them” (D4, 67).

Most of the directors that were interviewed highly identified with their role as filmmakers. This was an essential part of their sense of identity, and making films was often described with a tremendous passion:

“It’s like you always say, I wish they would burn all my movies and I would start all over again. I want to make a new movie. I say, this thirst that when you have a story, still remains [...]. I read a short story that someone wrote – an Israeli writer – and there is something about it that is so interesting, and I said: Wow! I can do it, and make people cry! I say: I can do that [...]. I was with my wife in India – we were in New Delhi [...]. I said to her: Wow! I have a great idea for a three-minute movie! One shot! [...] So, I say, this thing still exists, and it’s nice [...]. I hope it will be actualized” (D12, 78).

As it is possible to see from D12’s words, inspiration can also be gathered by wanting to remake old films and by drawing ideas from one’s personal life, books and journeys. Thus, alongside being inspired by others, the directors demonstrated strong passion and self-motivation. This finding strengthens the conception that acclaimed artists’ creativity continues to be vital at later stages of life (Cristini & Cesa-Bianchi, 2019); and stands in opposition to the general population, which as research indicates, experiences declines in motivation and self-efficacy with age (Bodner, 2009).

3.2. Adaptation – adopting a new cinematic language

The concept of adaptation in a changing world was a key element, as not only the cinematic conventions have changed with time, but also the actual filming techniques.

“You are constantly observing” – remaining current

To keep with the changing times, various of the directors mentioned that they remain relevant by constantly viewing new films and television series:

“You are constantly observing [...] what’s happening. You understand, you see a series from there and another series from there. It’s a kind of dialogue that you have with yourself all the time. It inspires you. It’s like you’re constantly getting more and more and more information” (D4, 67).

It appears that D4’s watching of new series and films does not only enables him to keep in touch with what is happening in his creative field, but at the same time also reinforces his sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1999) via modeling. In terms of gender, the modeling process is often inspired by the work of other men who dominate the field.

“Mediate the younger world for me” – bridging the gaps

Alongside discussion of activities that produce a sense of self-efficacy, the directors also talked about the different activities they undertake so they could continue to make movies. One example was to investigate the younger world by asking young adults about today’s reality:

“I made [name of the movie] which also goes back to representing a young adult in Israel, who hosts an older man, but, again, it’s an attempt to capture the spirit of young Tel-Aviv, Israel, in the year 2020, in this case, and then all of a sudden, I felt that there could be a problem here. I’m no longer 20, I’m not 40, perhaps I’m disconnected from this experience of young people in Israel” (D6, 55);

“I think that I’m cool and young, and on top of what’s going on. I say, I’m this Israeli director, who is more fashionable, more colorful, cooler, as it were. I find that I’m no longer like that; I’m not there. I’m an older man, I’m less connected to the scene, I’m less acquainted with its components, I may not know how to faithfully represent it [...] so I was forced [...] to recruit younger people who could explain to me or mediate the younger world for me [...] all of a sudden, I said: ‘I’m not there! I need to do some work, to investigate, to check it out, to get help from people’” (D6, 55).

D6 willingness to learn and develop is manifested in his readiness to investigate the younger world by employing young adults to help him understand today’s reality. The plot of the film, that centers around the dialogue between a younger man and an older man is mirrored in life, as he hires younger men to articulate lifestyles of men in their twenties, to accurately represent current youth language.

3.3. Innovation – finding refuge in technology

Alongside of dealing with experiences of ageism and the ways of reflecting the current life of youth, the new digital technology set a challenge to directors who were in their sixties, seventies and eighties:

“I have to admit that I can’t complain, because from my generation, I am one of the only ones – if not the only one – who made the transition to commercial television, for example, who made the transition to video, to 2K, and then to 3K, and now to 5.7K. That is, I have been up to date in this new world for many years [...] and it’s not an easy transition [...]. I knew that I had to shift to a different world, to a completely different medium, and to put together a completely different kind of team, because it’s

a completely different way of working. I was happy when I did it, I made the shift. So, I don't feel [...] I didn't stop creating" (D1, 73).

D1 describe various changes he had to make since he started filming in the 70s; his description includes first the shift to video and to 2K resolution – also known as Quad HD and then to increased resolution and then to 5.7K, which broaden the shooting spectrum. His account of the changes echoes Mulvey (2006) in the sense that he describes the world of filming today as completely different from the past. This sense of division between the old and the new creative worlds is emphasized when he acknowledges that he is one of the few directors of his time that acquired the new technological skills as well as by his use of words and terms such as: "transition", "shift", "different world" and "different medium".

3.4. Preservation – adhering to the familiar

In contrast to directors who aimed to make movies that speak the current language, about a third of the directors interviewed found strength in their ability to remain loyal to their cinematic language: "I won't make a modern movie just to be part of this modern thing [...]. When I make a film every number of years, I make a film that I like" (D7, 69);

"Look, I'm strict about *not* using the language of the time. That is, the spirit of the times is strange for me. It even riles me. You can also call the spirit of the times: fashion. And I prefer that fashions will sink and become the real thing [...] because the basis of the events, from my perspective concerning what is right and real – *is the storytelling* [...] even when there are ideas about characters that don't express the spirit of the times, the fashion, but instead express themselves, what distresses them as people, without a need to interest, to lead an intellectual fashion of one sort or another" (D8, 68).

Some of the directors drew strengths from keeping in touch with the world as they saw it, understood it and loved it. This was true also for directors who adopted the new more current cinematic language and were engaged with production companies such as *Netflix*. For example, D1, who side by side with commercialized filmmaking has also returned to making a documentary, while focusing on older figures of the Israeli poetic and theatrical world: "During the last decade, much of what I made is documentary films, it's like I returned to my roots. And, that's the cinema that fascinated me [...]" (D1, 73);

"A movie like [...] [name of the film] nobody wanted to invest in this movie – no one, no franchise [...] and we made it against all odds [...] but it's hard to promote content like this, there's no doubt, but I never gave up" (D1, 73).

Despite the difficulties in funding, D1 made what can be considered important documentaries. Talking to him it was obvious that he was extremely engaged and proud of these productions. In this manner, he was able to transport between old notions of the cinematic word, and tell the story, that was of tremendous importance to him, about the life of a Yiddish poet who died at the age of 98.

3.5. Ingenuity – circumventing the gatekeepers

Another way to connect filmmaking to the audience without changing one's work was finding original ways of circumventing the gatekeepers, who were perceived as ignoring the directors' movies:

“My films were always supported in Israel by a foundation and by a television station. In [name of movie] I was rejected by all the foundations and all the television channels, and it was really at the last moment, when the movie was completed, that I managed to get through a crack in the Makor Hebrew Foundation and get money from them, but I didn’t find a screening; and from there the idea began to put my movies on *YouTube* and to try to make them accessible [...]. I didn’t only put the film on *YouTube*, but I also hired a company to promote [the films], to do digital marketing for money – for a lot of money, you can say – it brought the movie to viewers [...] relative to television, it’s a small number, but relative to what *YouTube* gets, without some kind of promotion or without going viral, to not such a small number of viewers” (D10, 64).

An additional innovative way to continue making films, despite the lack of financial backing, described by D13 was to make movies with a microbudget: “In recent years I made [...] a lot of movies without money. I also taught a film workshop at the [name of college] [...] I taught students how to make movies with no budget. I also did that in the US and Israel” (D13, 83).

Remarkably, D13 succeeded, as can be seen by his recent film (2018), which he directed at the age of 81, with a minimal budget, of about 2000\$. He shot the movie in his own apartment and relied on his network of connections to cast the volunteer work of the entire production team, including the well-known actors that played in the film.

Another way to circumvent gatekeepers and the lack of budget, mainly among the directors who were not interested in making the transition to the new cinematic language, was by focusing on documentary films, which require lower budgets:

“You return to the history or very personal things, like my next to last movie, [name of movie] [...] and then you actually say: *But I don’t stop making films*, because I have the anchor, which is always relevant and I can always go back to it, that’s the documentary and history. Yes, again, that’s also the result of necessity. Or, it’s partially due to necessity, part of it is choice. There are a few feature films that I wrote anyway over the last 10 years, but I didn’t manage to finance them. Therefore, I made documentaries, that, more or less, are cheaper and can be financed” (D3, 78).

D3 describes how returning to another type of filmmaking, which is less expensive, was a combination of necessity and choice. His perspective reflects research, which has shown that most of the filmmakers who make documentaries and historical films are older directors (Stephen Follows: *Film Data and Education*, 2015). Thus, D3 made films that were close to his world. These films meant a lot to him and it was easier for him to distribute them to television stations.

3.6. Imagination – contemplating additional forms of creativity

Many of the directors entrained the notion of creating in additional artistic forms or considering other form of creativity in an older age:

“Making films is very, very difficult, especially in Israel, with very limited money, with a very small industry. Yes, I am one of the people who make movies on a regular basis. I cannot complain. But still, it is very, very difficult. And I have thoughts like that: it’s too hard for me, maybe I should do something else, maybe do some theatre

[...]. One of the reasons is that it's a place to express yourself, to tell stories, to engage in dramaturgy, to engage with characters, stories, colors – all kinds of expressions that are important to us in cinema, and do it small: less noise, less money, smaller. So, for example, I can imagine myself deciding: let's do some theatre instead of the film, or *let's write more*, let's [...] but I find it hard to believe. I think I'm going to make movies until the last minute" (D6, 55);

"And as soon as I was free, I said to myself I will start writing, I remembered that I have told two stories in my life – to my sons and to my grandchildren. [...] Then I started, without thinking and without planning, to tell the story, and it is told in a very fluent way – without stopping, without thinking, and it was always wonderfully planned. How did it happen? I do not know, but that's the only thing I can say I had a talent for" (D13, 83).

While D6 still makes films and gets funding, he entertains the idea of replacing movie-making with theatre – which demands less funding and energy, but he feels that filmmaking is going to be his art throughout his life. On the other hand, D13, one of the fathers of Israeli cinema, who stated again and again that he is no longer able to raise funding for his movies, has started working on his book, and noted that it keeps him fulfilled until finding the funding for his next movie. In both cases the directors stressed storytelling as a continuous thread between different art forms.

Discussion

This study examines creativity and its outlets among Israeli male directors in the second half of life. The findings indicate that while many of the directors in the research group lamented the old lost cinematic world on which they grew up, their creativity did not cease as time went by. The serious obstacles they encountered, including *passive-ageism*, *active-ageism* and *self-ageism* (Aharoni Lir & Ayalon, 2022b) did not hinder their creativity. Instead, they found various tactics and strategies and demonstrated resourcefulness and flexibility that enabled them to keep making movies and gather audiences. This finding adds to our knowledge of creativity in old age, while highlighting and possibly challenging common misconceptions about creativity as a characteristic of youth, but not of old age. The findings also highlight intersectionality by pointing to the intersection between the identity of a men creator and that of an older creator.

In his historical book on film as art, Arnheim (1957) talks about movies as a new medium that serves as a comfortable technique for popular storytelling. While the directors differed in their attitude towards the changing conventions of the cinematic world, all agreed that at the heart of moviemaking stands storytelling and that a good story can capture the heart of the audiences regardless of time. In fact, one of them made his most acclaimed film at the age of 68, more than 40 years after he started making films.

The portrayal of filmmaking as storytelling encouraged the directors to continue creating in the second half of life. Conceptualizing their comprehension of moviemaking as storytelling can be viewed as the antidote to ageism – whether it is ageism that stems from external sources or internal ones. Understanding moviemaking as storytelling enabled the directors to see themselves as valuable and relevant despite the vast changes in the world, the different

cinematic language and the younger audiences surrounding them. Some of them started telling new stories, some reshot and retold their previously filmed stories in new ways, other shifted from centering on young characters to older ones, and some kept to the familiar. Nevertheless, they all felt that they had a story to tell and an eagerness to tell it.

In view of the fact that the discontinuity arising out of identity change can be perceived as a threat and lead to negative feelings (Oleś, 2019), the ability of the directors to bypass obstacles related to the changing of times, and for some to change their artistic language while adapting new filming techniques, can be viewed as an indicator of their creativity and strength. However, while accepting the individual talent factor, and the place of storytelling as a creativity anchor, the question remains whether the ability to keep creating at an older age is also related to gendered social-positioning?

The analysis of the findings suggests that even in the second part of life, the directors' masculinity was still a driving force that enhanced their capabilities to keep creating. While the cinematic world had changed (Mulvey, 2006) to a vast degree, male dominance remained the same; and with it the masculine dominance in the film industry, where, for example, men directed 88% of the 100 biggest movies in the US in 2019 (Lauzen, 2020). The directors interviewed were able to draw inspiration from other male directors including highly-celebrated older directors, that created incredibly famous films at an older age. They were all sharing a habitat in which world-famous male directors continued to make films at older ages, and older male characters continued to appear on screen. Hence, even though they were lower on the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), they still enjoyed some of the privileges usually kept for male creators, including their network of ties.

In this sense, it is possible to say that gender-based privileges do not diminish completely with age. The basic sense of agency and the network of close ties with other prominent figures in the field do not evaporate. Many of the directors interviewed developed as filmmakers as part of a masculine group of creators (Shaer-Meoded, 2016). These directors, who were highly connected among themselves and who had a network of ties with others their age, were thus able to utilize their network of friends and acquaintances to obtain assistance in a manner that helped them bridge the gap between the old cinematic world and the new world and to engage in large projects. In this sense, it is possible to say that they themselves were all part of an ongoing interconnected story.

As Montuori (2019) notes, focusing on the individual as the sole genius behind the creative work gives us an incomplete understanding of creativity. At the end of each major film, there is a long list of credits that points to the involvement of various people and factors in the creative act (Becker, 2008). But the line of credits at the end of the film can also be viewed as a line of ties. This, in the sense that the ability to make a movie depends upon connections with many people and institutions.

Understanding why man as a social category is associated with creativity must be interpreted in relation to the understanding of the network of ties that exist over boundaries of time and place. In the film world, this network is communicated through major films created by old and famous male directors. In this sense, the incredible ability to keep creating despite very real obstacles can be understood not only in terms of admirable talent, but also through the understanding that what can smooth the change is being part of the same story, in which

men are both the directors and the main characters; having an elaborated and extensive network of close, far and imaginable gender-based ties, that can provide support and a sense of shared values. These shared values are noted for allowing the change to be perceived as a continuum rather than a chasm (Oleś, 2019).

Future research will benefit from examining the place of storytelling and creativity in people as they grow older, rather than focusing only on creativity among acclaimed professionals. The role that gender plays in the development and establishment of creativity throughout the life course also should be examined. Nonetheless, our findings point to the fact that creativity does not end in old age but might change its course. The directors we interviewed continue to have a story that must be told and identify various ways to tell such a story.

Conclusions

Understanding why man as a social category is associated with creativity must be interpreted in relation to the understanding of the network of ties that exist over boundaries of time and place. In the film world, this network is communicated through major films created by old and famous male directors. In this sense, the incredible ability to keep creating despite very real obstacles can be understood not only in terms of admirable talent, but also through the understanding that what can smooth the change is being part of what seems to be a never ending story, in which men are oftentimes not only the directors, but also the plot-writers and the protagonists. Even at an older age, men do not necessarily lose their symbolic capital, manifested in having an elaborated and extensive network of close, far and imaginable gender-based ties, that can provide support and a sense of shared values. These shared values are noted for allowing the change to be perceived as a continuum rather than a chasm (Oleś, 2019).

Future research will benefit from examining the place of storytelling and creativity in people as they grow older, rather than focusing only on creativity among acclaimed professionals. The role that gender plays in the development and establishment of creativity throughout the life course also should be examined. Nonetheless, our findings point to the fact that creativity does not end in old age but might change its course. The directors we interviewed continue to feel that they have a story that must be told and identify various ways of keeping their creative flame burning by finding innovative ways of maintaining their artistic world alive.

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