Sheffield Hallam University

The employee voice of older local government workers: a critical perspective

GOODWIN, Jean

Available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

http://shura.shu.ac.uk/28658/

A Sheffield Hallam University thesis

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Please visit http://shura.shu.ac.uk/28658/ and http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html for further details about copyright and re-use permissions.

Sheffield Hallam University

The Employee Voice of Older Local Government Workers: A Critical Perspective

Jean Goodwin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Date of submission

October 2020

Candidate Statement

I, Jean Goodwin, declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.

5. The word count of the thesis is 79,655 words.

Name	Jean Goodwin
Date of submission	October 2020
Award	Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty	Sheffield Business School
Director of Studies	Professor Peter Prowse
Supervisors	Dr Anthony Bennett Dr Claire Taylor

Abstract

This study explores how environmental, organizational and individual factors combine to influence the employee voice of older local government workers in five councils in the North of England. It is built on a multiphase qualitative research design, using 36 semi-structured interviews, an observation and a workshop. Guided by critical theory and a cross-paradigmatic approach, the research draws on the perspectives of a stratified sample of participants to consider whether older workers have a consistently fair and equitable employee voice. Participants include leaders, managers, trade unionists and older workers. The findings are presented according to five key themes established using template analysis, relating firstly to the local government context; secondly human resource management practice; thirdly local government employee voice; fourthly the older worker's perception of voice and fifthly the significance of age to employee voice.

The research finds that older workers are a heterogeneous group, who value direct forms of employee voice as a source of recognition and identity. Factors including role, disability and employment contract type, intersect to disadvantage certain employees, so supporting the legitimacy of the collective voice of the trade unions. Organizational factors restricting employee voice originate in new public management practices, such as the outsourcing that disrupts voice channels, and human resource management that has an increasingly managerial and unitarist outlook. A hierarchy of managerial hegemonies, with central government at the pinnacle and local government below, emphasise performance enhancing employee voice over social justice mechanisms. Organizational factors expediting employee voice in the councils are the traditionally pluralist employment relations, public sector ethos and an embedded respect for equality and diversity.

The research concludes that as a component of an open system, external environmental factors are most significant to the employee voice of older workers. These include austerity, societal ageism, an incoherent central government strategy for older workers, weak equality legislation and unfavourable pension regulations.

Key words: Employee voice, older workers, local government employment relations, human resource management, trade unions, intersectionality

Contents

Candidate Statement....................ii
Abstract....................iii
Contents....................iv
List of tables....................ix
List of figures....................x
List of charts....................xi
List of abbreviations....................xii
Acknowledgements....................xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction....................1
1.1 Rationale....................1
1.2 Background....................2
1.2.1 Local Government context for employee voice....................2
1.2.2 Employee voice....................4
1.2.3 Older workers....................6
1.3 Research questions and objectives....................7
1.4 Overview of methodology....................9
1.5 Structure of the thesis....................9
Chapter 1: Introduction....................9
Chapter 2: The context of the research....................9
Chapter 3: Literature review....................10
Chapter 4: Research methodology....................10
Chapter 5: Findings and analysis....................10
Chapter 6: Discussion....................11
Chapter 7: Conclusions and future directions....................11
Chapter 2: The context of the research....................12
2.1 Local government context....................12
2.1.1 The nature of local government....................12
2.2 The historical context of local government....................17
2.2.1 The early years....................17
2.2.2 The late 1960s to 1970s....................18
2.2.3 The late 1970s and 1980s....................19
2.2.4 The 1990s onwards....................21

2.3 The current context for local government employee voice 23
2.3.1 Public sector ethos 24
Chapter 3: Literature review 26
3.1 Concept of employee voice 27
3.1.1 Origins and definitions of EV 28
3.1.2 Paradigmatic assumptions of EV 29
3.1.3 Voice related concepts 30
3.1.4 Forms of voice 37
3.1.5 Trade unions: the collective voice in local government 39
3.1.6 The regulatory framework for voice. 41
3.2 Human resource management; shaping voice in local government? 43
3.2.1 The resource-based view of human resource management (HRM) 43
3.2.2 Strategic HRM - A place at the table? 44
3.2.3 High-performance work systems (HPWS) 47
3.2.4 Managerialist HRM - a threat to the collective voice? 50
3.2.5 Human resource management and older workers 51
3.3 Age and intersecting individual employee voice determinants 52
3.3.1 Ageing population 53
3.3.2 Ageism 55
3.3.3 Ageism and intersectionality 57
3.3.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as approaches to managing difference 60
3.3.5 Trade Unions and older workers 64
3.3.6 Significance of leaders and managers to older workers 67
3.4 Conclusion to the literature review and research objectives 68
Chapter 4: Research methodology 71
4.1 Theoretical framework 71
4.1.1 Research strategies and assumptions 72
4.2 The position of the researcher 79
4.3 Research design 81
4.4 Sampling strategies 81
4.5 Research Structure 90
4.6 Rationale for the methods 92
4.6.1 Interviews 92
4.6.2 Observation 96

4.6.3 Field notes....96
4.6.4 Workshop....97
4.6.5 Secondary and National Data Sets....98
4.7 Ethical considerations....98
4.8 Validity and other quality concerns....100
4.9 Analysis....104
4.10. Limitations of the research methodology....106
4.11. Summary of research methodology....106
Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis....109
5.1 The sampled organizations.....110
5.2 The sampled participants....111
5.3. Theme 1: Contextual influences on employee voice....113
5.3.1 Central government policy....113
5.3.2 Organizational culture....117
5.3.3 Workforce diversity....120
5.3.4 Legislation and regulation....123
5.3.5 Working with change....124
5.3.6 Summary of theme 1....125
5.4. Theme 2: Evolving EV regimes through human resource management....127
5.4.1 Strategic intent for employee voice....127
5.4.2 HR relationships with other organizational players....133
5.4.3 Influence of the CIPD discourse....136
5.4.4 Legal and moral obligations....137
5.4.5 Summary of theme 2....138
5.5 Theme 3: Local government employee voice....140
5.5.1 Employee voice traditions....140
5.5.2 Forms of employee voice....142
5.5.3 Balance of forms....154
5.5.4 Summary of theme 3....155
5.6 Theme 4: Older worker perceptions of employee voice....156
5.6.1 Value of employee voice....156
5.6.2 Employer motivations for employee voice....161
5.6.3 Employee motivations for voice....162
5.6.4 Barriers and enablers to employee voice....163

5.6.5 Choosing silence as an older employee 169
5.6.6 Theme 4 summary 172
5.7 Theme 5: Significance of age to employee voice 173
5.7.1 Individual variegation and employee voice 173
5.7.2 Ageism and other discrimination 179
5.7.3 Stereotyping and employee voice 185
5.7.4 Summary of theme 5 188
Chapter 6: Discussion 190
6.1 Discussion: Objective 1 190
6.1.1 The significance of the 'local' in local government 192
6.1.2 Cultural traditions of local government 194
6.1.3 Summary of objective 1 198
6.2 Discussion: Objective 2 199
6.2.1 Hegemony, unitarism and the right to manage 200
6.2.2 Using vision and values to build employee compliance 202
6.2.3 The trade union position in the study 204
6.2.4 Human resource management, a support for managerial hegemony? 205
6.2.5 Objective 2 summary 208
6.3 Discussion: Objective 3 209
6.3.1 The effective EV from an older worker perspective 210
6.3.2 Heterogeneity of older workers and voice 211
6.3.3 Individual variegation and employee voice 215
6.3.4 Policy and practice impacting older workers and their EV 217
6.3.5 The collective voice of trade unions and older workers 219
6.3.6 Objective 3 summary 221
6.4 Summary of the discussion 221
Chapter 7: Conclusion 224
7.1 Contribution to knowledge 224
7.1.1 Contribution to knowledge: Determinants of EV in the context 224
7.1.2 Contribution to knowledge: EV in an extending upper age range 230
7.1.3 Contribution to knowledge: An additional tradition 231
7.2 Contribution to synthesis 231
7.3 Contribution to practice 232
7.4 The research questions 234

7.5 Limitations of the research and future directions. 236
7.6 Reflection on research reflexivity 238
References 243
Appendices 1
Appendix 1: Samples of interview documentation 1
Appendix 2: Samples from NVivo database 25
Appendix 3: Steps to analysis 37
Appendix 4: Retired members' workshop 43
Appendix 5: Observation of equality forum 51
Appendix 6: Excerpts from fieldnotes 60

List of tables

Table 1: Summary of interpretive traditions, adapted from Orr and Vince (2009) 14
Table 2: Summary legislation significant to employee voice in this research 42
Table 3: Participants informing the history and context of the research 83
Table 4: Phase 3 participants informing organizational practice 85
Table 5: Phase 5 older worker participants 89
Table 6: Interview guide for older worker participant group 94
Table 7: Application of ethical principles, adapted from Easterby-Smith (2015) 99
Table 8: Size, age and gender of the sampled workforces 110
Table 9: Older worker (phase 5) age category rationale 112
Table 10: Appendix 3 - A priori themes used to analyse data 39
Table 11: Appendix 3 - Initial template (expanded sub theme of collective voice) 41

List of figures

Figure 1: Time line of historical developments significant to local government employee voice ... 16
Figure 2: Structure of the literature review ... 26
Figure 3: Employment relations (ER) model of employee voice determinants (Kaufman, 2015a) ... 27
Figure 4: Conceptual framework of employee involvement/ employee participation (Gennard, Judge, Bennett & Saundry, 2016) ... 32
Figure 5: Silence and the frontier of control (Donaghey, Cullinane, Dundon & Wilkinson, 2011) ... 36
Figure 6: Workplace age stereotyping (Posthuma and Campion, 2009, p. 175) ... 56
Figure 7: The cross-paradigmatic approach of the research ... 72
Figure 8: Ontological and epistemological position of the research (indicated by the blue arrow), adapted from Johnson and Duberley (2000) ... 74
Figure 9: Data gathering process ... 91
Figure 10:Themes emerging from the final interpretation ... 108
Figure 11: Relationship between the research questions and objectives ... 109
Figure 12: Findings from themes 1 and 3 contributing to objective 1 ... 191
Figure 13: The integrative theme of unitarization (from NVivo analysis) ... 199
Figure 14: Determinants of the EV of older participants in the study ... 225
Figure 15: Appendix 3 - Steps in template analysis in this research (adapted from Kings & Brooks, 2017) ... 37
Figure 16: Appendix 3 - Example of data familiarisation and developing early coding 38
Figure 17: Appendix 3 - An example of early theme clustering ... 40

List of charts

Chart 1: Overall participant demographics: Gender by age…..…………..……..112

Chart 2**:** Number of working days lost annually since 1996 ……………………..….142

Chart 3: Participant response to direct voice mechanisms……………………….150

List of abbreviations

BEIS:	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BUIRA:	British Universities Industrial Relations Association
CIPD:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
E&D:	Equality and diversity
ER:	Employment relations
EV:	Employee voice
EWL:	Extending working life
HPWS:	High performance work systems
HRM:	Human resource management
ICE regulations:	Information and Consultation of Employees regulations 2004, as introduced by Employment Relations Act 2004 (section 42)
JCC:	Joint Consultative Committees
NJC:	National Joint Council
NPM:	New public management
NUM:	National Union of Mineworkers
OB:	Organizational behaviour
ONS:	Office for National Statistics
PDR	Performance and development reviews
SPA	State pension age
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006
WERS	Workplace employment relations study
WHO	World Health Organization

Note: The referencing style used for this thesis is APA (6th edition)

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisory team for their guidance, academic support and cheerful encouragement over the last four years. To my Director of Studies, Professor Peter Prowse, thank you for the introductions to so many people at the forefront of our field and for sharing your considerable knowledge of employment relations so generously. To Dr Anthony (Tony) Bennett, thank you for supporting my methodology and philosophical stance, and for developing my capacity to incorporate this into the research. To Dr Claire Taylor, thank you for your guidance on structuring the thesis, for your eagle eye for inconsistencies and your pastoral care. Thank you all for your kindness.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the participants in the research, who gave of both their time and thoughts, and without whom there would be no thesis. Their insight and good humour made data gathering an enlightening and enjoyable experience. In addition, I am indebted to all who assisted with access to participants, to the councils and trade unions who opened their doors to me, and to the local branch of CIPD.

Throughout the research, I attended conferences including the BAM HRM special interest group, BUIRA, the CIPD applied research conferences and various CERIC events, and would like to acknowledge the academics who took an interest in my research and inspired me to reach higher.

I would like to thank my PhD colleagues for their friendship, support, lively discussions and cake, and all the PhD leaders, administrators, librarians and IT staff who make the PhD journey possible.

Finally, to my husband, thank you for sharing our caring duties, for cooking the dinner when you were also busy, and keeping me on track. To my lovely family, thank you for your patience, and for the grandchildren who have kept a smile on my face.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The public sector workforce is ageing (Truss, 2013) and local government is no exception to this trend. An escalating state pension bill has shifted central government rhetoric from older workers as a barrier to youth employment, to the benefits of their retention. Little consideration has been afforded to the older workers affected, or to their heterogeneity (Taylor, Loretto, Marshall, Earl & Phillipson, 2016). Furthermore, those older workers less able to work, with physically demanding jobs and lower levels of education, are 'invisible' to central government policy making (Lain and Phillipson, 2019). This research explores how one aspect of the employment relationship[1], the employee voice (EV), is used and experienced by older local government workers, and how this affects their extended working lives.   The research adopts the definition of EV of Wilkinson, Donaghey, Dundon and Freeman (2014, p. 5):

> the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners.

Three fields of study are incorporated, these being local government, employee voice and older workers.

The research sought to identify if some older workers were disadvantaged more so than others, and how this could potentially restrict or enable their employee voice. The aim was to establish if the employer's intent for EV was more to support organizational justice, job satisfaction and employee wellbeing, or to control employee behaviour and improve organizational performance. Through the lens of critical theory, the perspectives of the older workers were studied within the historical and organizational settings of five local government organizations (councils) in the North of England.

The chapter begins by explaining the research rationale. Subsequently, the background details, research questions, objectives, methods and methodology are introduced before the structure of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Rationale

The purpose of the research is to contribute to the limited literature on the employee voice of older workers, as working later in life becomes more prevalent in the

---

[1] The employment relationship is taken as Michon (1992, p. 224) "the set of conditions determining the exchange, use and reproduction of the labour force".

workforce (Lain & Loretto, 2016; Taylor et al, 2016). Harley (2014) and Kaufman (2015a) observe that wider situational factors are seldom considered in EV research, so these are included in the study. In addition, incorporating organizational influences, including human resource management (HRM), and individual influences on the older worker EV, answers Wilkinson, Gollan, Kalfa and Xu's (2018) call for a multilevel approach. The extant literature on EV assumes that workers are homogeneous, so are given a generic means of expressing their voice (Syed, 2014). The research aims to extend the paucity of knowledge on how EV is affected by the heterogeneity of older workers, including heterogeneity introduced by the intersections of age with other characteristics, such as role and gender.

In terms of Corley and Gioia's (2011) dimensions for theoretical contribution, the originality of the research incrementally extends the body of knowledge on employee voice and working later in life. With regards to the utility of the research, the design is practically useful in illustrating a multilevel and cross-paradigmatic approach to EV research. UK local government councils with ageing workforces, although not identical, may benefit from the rich picture of employee voice generated through the research. Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) refer to this practice as 'accommodation', whereby similarities and differences are assessed to determine the applicability of the findings in other contexts. For local government HR practitioners and trade union representatives in this context, recommendations will be offered in a separate short report.

1.2 Background

This section provides a contextual overview of how the fields of study featured in the research contribute to employee voice as experienced and used by older workers; these fields being local government, employee voice and older workers.

1.2.1 Local Government context for employee voice

Local government is a distinctive context for employment relations, subject to the political, regulatory and economic pressures of central government, and an increasing demand for council services at a local level. It is subject to neo-liberal ideals of free market competition, deregulation and decentralisation, which have guided central government policy for the public sector generally. Barchiesi (2014, p.244) observes the rise of neo-liberalism from the 1980s onwards as a "globally hegemonic paradigm in economic and social policy". In this research central government hegemony materialises as an ideological dominance of neo-liberalism exerted on councils by those

in power. Farnham (2015) reasons that neo-liberalism is viewed by its supporters as key to both political freedom and economic growth, but focuses more on economic efficiency than on social justice. In relations between employer and employee, neo-liberalism emphasises individualism over collectivism (Hanlon, 2018). Neo-liberalism is associated with managerialism, intensified competitiveness and leadership through HRM.

The elected councillors who control councils, are a unique form of employer with whom relations vary according to political affiliation, amongst other factors. Central government's view of local government has been that it is inefficient and poorly managed, with some describing it as 'parasitic', leading to an ongoing struggle to constrain its activities (Gill-McLure, 2018). The pluralist framework for the employment relationship within councils has been as Budd (2020, p.77) describes, "a bargain between stakeholders with a plurality of interests and unequal bargaining power". Taking a critical approach to the research acknowledges the socio-political inequalities within which the employment relationship is situated (Budd, 2020). Power asymmetry is a feature of the research as Weber (1947, p152) defines it, 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance'. It is recognised that power is a multi-dimensional concept, for example Lukes' (2005) cites 'three faces of power' and French and Raven (1959) 'five bases of power'. Weber's (1947) definition is preferred as consistent with the research context where powerful actors can bring about change, despite the resistance of an individual or collective EV, reflecting the asymmetry of the employment relationship.

UK local government pluralism incorporates trade unionism (Marchington, 2015). Councils work with unions at a national level regarding pay and service conditions, with local union branches implementing and augmenting the national strategy (Grimshaw, Johnson, Marino & Rubery, 2017). For example, the national GMB campaign to establish the living wage was built on at council level (Prowse & Fells, 2016). Additionally, unions act for their members on local issues particular to their council. Although there has been some decline in membership, patterns of collective bargaining established through the Whitley Councils have prevailed (Gill-McLure, 2018). Public sector unions were previously sector-specific, but have revised their membership strategy to accommodate the marketization of public services, for example, in outsourced provider organizations (UNISON, 2020). Trade union member density continues to be higher than in the private sector (Beszter, Ackers & Hislop, 2015;

Bryson, Freeman, Gomez & Willman, 2017) with older workers more likely to be in membership than their younger counterparts (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 2019). As in other sectors with collective bargaining agreements, that is the agreements between councils and trade unions that regulate employment terms and conditions, HR managers and their employment relations specialists have a significant role in EV (Dundon & Rollinson, 2011).

The Conservative- Liberal Democrat coalition government of 2010, shifted the blame and burden of debt reduction resulting from the banking crisis, away from the financial sector to the public sector (Bach & Bordogna, 2016). The ensuing period of austerity featured significant workforce reductions and pay restraint. Skills and knowledge were lost, worsened by indiscriminately retiring older workers as an easy option to meet budgetary expectations. Consequently, shortages in roles requiring specialist skills, such as social workers followed (Flynn, 2014). An effective EV may contribute to retaining older employees (Langbein & Stazyk, 2018) together with their skills, organizational knowledge and cultural awareness (Porcellato, Carmichael, Hulme, Ingham & Prashar, 2010).

1.2.2 Employee voice

The two principal forms of employee voice are direct voice, where employees speak directly with their employer with no representative intermediary, and collective voice, where a third party, usually a trade union, represents the employee (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington & Ackers, 2004a). Although lower union memberships may diminish the effectiveness of the collective voice, Richards and Sang's (2016) review of trade union activities advise that unionised workplaces have stronger workforce equality and diversity policies, which are likely to benefit older workers. Benefits range from reducing isolation to achieving better outcomes for employees (Ackers, 2015; Kirton & Greene, 2016). Trade union membership density is higher among those employees protected by the Equality Act 2010 against discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity (Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 2015).

New public management (NPM) policy, driven by central government neo-liberal ideology, has undermined traditionally pluralist local government employment relations and trade union influence (Gill-McLure & Thörnqvist, 2018; Stanton & Manning, 2013). It is anti-union in its positioning (Bach and Bordogna, 2011). According to

Hood (1998), NPM is associated with modernisation, a private sector management style, professional expertise and elite leadership. The objectives of NPM include reducing costs and inefficiency while concurrently raising service quality. NPM as viewed as enabling 'informatisation' or the move to administering public services virtually through information technology, suggesting smaller workforces. It is characterised by competition between public sector organizations for financial grants, and performance ratings (for example, service league tables). These are used as forms of control (Hood, 1998, p.96) that contradict the supposedly non-interventionalist principles of neo-liberalism.

Austerity measures have adversely affected collective bargaining and participation (Bach & Bordogna, 2013), for example, outsourcing and restructuring have compromised the organising activities of unions (Moore & Tailby, 2015), weakening their influence (Van den Broek & Dundon, 2012). Conversely, the rise of direct forms of employee voice, such as employee engagement [2] surveys and task groups, support the performance management agenda but are not always in the employee's interest. Weak forms of employee voice, such as surveys, often emerge where there is a perceived threat to management control (Ramsay, 1977).

Measures such as promoting employee 'buy in' to organizational values to support a corporate culture, promote a passive employee voice, reducing its capacity to be meaningful or challenging of the management prerogative. Spicer and Böhm (2007) argue that a management hegemony arises where management axioms are perceived to represent the issues and concerns of all other organizational actors. Rollinson and Dundon (2011, p.47) explain hegemonic control as "control exercised by an elite whose power is accepted as supreme", distinctive in seeking to capture the 'hearts and minds' of employees. Hegemonic control is associated with reducing employee dissent through promoting passive forms of direct EV, and diminishing trade union resistance, so facilitating unitarism. Among the means of enlarging management influence are flatter organization structures, changes in governance, professional dominance and a discourse of management, evident in the spread of the language, values and universalist practice of managers amongst employees. Corresponding with Spicer & Böhm (2007, p. 1668), relevant to this research is the proliferation of management discourse through "training programmes, corporate strategy and government 'modernisation' policies". Pertinent to

---

[2]Employee engagement at work is defined as a positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural energy (Shuck, Osam & Zigarmi, 2017)

EV is the struggle of employees and trade unionists to be heard where their voice challenges hegemonic beliefs and values.

Conversely, direct forms of voice can improve levels of influence for employees where they are sited within a trusting and supportive employment relationship with managers (Holland, Cooper & Sheehan, 2017). Although proponents of human resource management (HRM) view direct employee voice as a central component of engagement strategies and high-performance work systems (HPWS), outcomes are often more favourable to employers than employees (Francis, Parkes & Reddington, 2014). Trade unionism and healthy employment relations can mitigate this effect (Gill & Meyer, 2013); collective and direct voice can combine to shift the balance of power in the employee's favour. Although not traditionally associated with high performance work systems, trade unions can positively impact on high-involvement work practices due to their broad organizational knowledge, and capacity to communicate the potential benefits of HPWS to employees (Pohler & Luchak, 2014a).

1.2.3 Older workers

In this study the 'older' worker is taken as being from 52 years of age; however, it is acknowledged that biological, psychosocial, functional, organizational and lifespan ages differ between individuals. The age of 52 years is a mean value calculated from the combination of these aspects, taken from the research of McCarthy, Heraty, Cross, and Cleveland (2014) in resolving the wide range of ages suggested by competing definitions. The International Labour Organization (2017) uses 55 years and upwards as 'older worker', whereas American age discrimination legislation applies from 40 years (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2017). Furthermore, some employers automatically associate age with decline, so regard older workers as 'problem' workers with outdated views (Kirton & Green, 2016).

Taylor et al (2016) submit that the current research on age has tended to view older workers as male and in permanent employment contracts, whereas this study regards older workers as heterogeneous. Micro-level factors, such as the role, history, gender and personality of the individual older worker, are considered. For older employees, providing a meaningful EV can contribute to their wellbeing, perceptions of organizational justice and job satisfaction (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Purcell, 2014b; Wood, 2008). Although employee outcomes are the focus of this research, the knowledge and experience of older workers offer local government the prospect of novel solutions delivered by engaged employees (Schlosser & Zolin, 2012).

1.3 Research questions and objectives

The following research question underpins the aims of the research:

> *In an ageing local government workforce, does employee voice support organizational justice and a better working life for older workers?*

Organizational justice, as it appears in the research question, is interpreted as having three principal conceptualizations, these being distributive, procedural and interactional. They have various significances to EV, for example, Greenberg (1990) differentiates between the content and process aspects of organizational justice. Distributive justice, a content conceptualisation, concerns the fairness of the outcomes of justice. For older employees, this might encompass perceptions of fairness around access to training, pay and organizational resources, as articulated to managers through EV. Alternatively, procedural justice, a process conceptualisation, concerns "the fairness of the means used to achieve those ends" (p.400). Older employees may associate this with grievance procedures and collective EV, but also with the direct processes by which employees make suggestions or express opinion (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016). Interactional justice, on the other hand, concerns the social processes and employee perceptions of fair treatment arising when managers enact a process (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Roch & Shanock, 2006). For example, a line manager's rating of an employee's performance at appraisal may be negatively affected by the employee's age, leading to feelings of mistrust and injustice for the older worker (Snape & Redman, 2003).

Although all three strands of organizational justice have relevance for the older worker EV, this research accepts Heffernan and Dundon's (2016) assertion that EV and participation in decision-making are most closely associated with procedural justice. Significant to the older worker is that procedural justice positively impacts on their perceptions of status within a group at work (Eramo, 2017). To these three strands Purcell (2014b) adds informational justice, which links procedural and interactional justice to consider the justification, and truthful communication of such justification, for adopting processes. It is significant in assessing management decisions regarding EV as a means for employees to contribute their ideas, or to challenge management decision-making. In addition to organizational justice, the research explores how EV supports a better working life in terms of the older worker's wellbeing (Bashshur & Oc, 2015) and job satisfaction (Wood, 2008).

Two subordinate questions support the key research question as follows:

Sq1) Does the local government context support or suppress a fair and equitable employee voice for older workers?

It is acknowledged that fairness, although generally recognised in non-academic use, is an imprecise term. In subordinate question 1, fairness relates to perceptions of organizational justice, consistent unbiased application of organizational process, and moral and ethical good standards in how employees are treated at work (Purcell, 2014b). For this sub-question, it is economic, legal and social-cultural influences on the local government context, as suggested by Kaufman (2015), that are explored as environmental determinants of employee voice (see chapter 3, Figure 3).

Subordinate question two addresses the organizational and individual determinants of employee voice to accommodate a multilevel approach to EV research, as suggested by Wilkinson et al (2018).

Sq2) How do micro-level factors, individual characteristics and organizational factors intersect to influence the employee voice of the heterogeneous older workers of local government?

The following objectives were then developed from the questions to focus on the macro (societal), meso (organizational and departmental) and micro (individual) level factors impacting on EV:

Ob1) How the local government context influences the EV of older employees, as interpreted by its principal stakeholders, considering its history, reorganizations and current position.

Ob2) How management practice in local government affects employee voice, and whether HRM reinforces management hegemony and unitary agendas by shaping channels and opportunities for older workers to participate in EV.

Ob3) How older employees use EV, including the significance of potential barriers, enablers and their intersections to an effective EV. This incorporates how social group membership, current voice mechanisms (both collective and direct) and diversity policy apply.

1.4 Overview of methodology

Taylor et al (2016), advise that qualitative approaches to older worker studies can advance the many quantitative study findings. In this research, the assumption was that older workers are sentient beings with their own perceptions and standpoints, and that interpretivism is useful in understanding the rich complexity of their employee voice.

Taking a phased, stratified approach involved collecting data at contextual, organizational and individual levels, from leaders, managers, trade unionists and older workers. The mix of qualitative methods included 36 semi-structured interviews, an observation and a workshop. Handwritten field notes were taken alongside the principal methods to provide contextual details and points for further investigation.

Consistent with the ethos and inductive nature of the research, the voices of the participants were of primary concern, however a framework based on the research objectives encouraged a focused thematic analysis, using template analysis to develop the themes. The 36 interviews alone produced 196,500 words, so data analysis software in the form of NVivo was used to organise and manipulate the data. The emergent themes were used to frame the presentation of the findings.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This section explains the structure of the thesis and the purpose of each chapter therein.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Commencing with an outline of the research issue and rationale, background information then evidences why the subject of older worker employee voice is of enough significance to warrant research. Thereafter, the research questions and objectives are presented, and to demonstrate operationalisation of these, a summary of the methodology is included. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: The context of the research

Critical theory requires that the creation of knowledge, such as for EV, is set within the historical context in which it has developed (Ramsay, 1977). Chapter 2 is a short literature review written prior to the full review, or any data gathering, so that both were informed by the political and historical development of local government. This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first addresses the meaning of the 'local' in local government, and the heterogeneity of local government organizations. Using Gill-McLure's (2014) framework of central government control and local government resistance, the second section charts the history of local government from the early

years of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 up until 2010. The chapter concludes with a third section considering the current context for local government EV and older workers.

Chapter 3: Literature review

In this chapter, the concepts, frameworks and academic discourse supporting the research are reviewed. Beginning with an exploration of the EV concept, the related concepts of involvement, participation and employee silence are considered. The nature and role of direct and collective forms of voice are appraised, followed by discussion of the regulatory framework within which employee voice operates.

The second section of the chapter reviews meso-level factors affecting voice and older workers, in the form of human resource management strategies and high-performance work systems. The relationships of human resources with trade unions and older workers follow. Lastly, the literature on age-related EV determinants and their intersections, diversity practice and the impact of individual or micro-level factors at the older employee level is considered.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

The methodology chapter explains the philosophical positioning of the research and how this was operationalised through the research design. The chapter commences by explaining the cross-paradigmatic approach, the qualitative research strategy, ontological and epistemological assumptions, and consistent with a critical study, the position of the researcher. Secondly, the multiphase data gathering design, rationale for the methods and the sampling strategies for each phase of data gathering are detailed. The process of template analysis is explained, leading to the emergence of five principal themes. The third section includes the research quality strategy, achieving validity within qualitative research, and the ethical expectations of a critical study.

Chapter 5: Findings and analysis

Following a summary of demographic data relating to the sampled organizations, the five themes are explored in turn based on the environmental, organizational and individual factors arising from the analysis. Representative participant quotes from the perspectives of the parties responding at a contextual, organizational and individual older worker level evidence the line of argument, supported by the extant literature and the views of fellow participants. The section concludes with a summary of the main findings.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The discussion focuses on how the findings elucidate the three research objectives, and how these findings support, add or contrast with the literature. The chapter is structured around Kaufman's (2015a) EV determinants arising from the external environment, organizational culture and practice, and those at the individual worker level. The nature and relative influence of the determinants on the employment relationship and the employee voice of older workers are considered.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and future directions

This chapter considers how the research answers the central question concerning the role of employee voice in supporting organizational justice and a better working life for older workers. The contribution of the research to knowledge includes how existing models can be enlarged, the emergence of a new employment relations framework in the context, and suggestions for improving practice. The contribution to methodology of encompassing what might be regarded as competing paradigms, through utilising an overarching employment relations perspective, is presented alongside the challenges of building coherence within a multilevel study. The chapter closes with the lessons learned and limitations arising in conducting the research, and directions for future research emerging from the findings.

Chapter 2: The context of the research

Critical theorists observe that knowledge, such as that regarding employee voice (EV), emerges from a negotiation with historical and socially constructed power relations (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011: Prasad, 2018). Accordingly, these were considered for local government prior to the second literature review concerning the EV of older workers, and the methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Gill-McLure's (2014, p.381) conceptual framework of a "dialectic of central control and local resistance", as developed from Sartre's (1967) work, were used to consider the unfolding events and reasoning. In addressing subordinate research question one, the often-turbulent environment for EV in local government is charted from its beginnings in the nineteenth century through to the year when the oldest participant in the research entered the workforce (1958), and onward to the present day.

2.1 Local government context

This section discusses the nature and heterogeneity of local government organizations (councils) beginning with an outline of their purpose and character using Cochrane's (2016) perspectives on 'local', and Orr and Vince's (2009) framework for interpreting local government culture. The main body of the review then explores the history of local government along a time line of historical developments (Figure 1) and concludes by considering how environmental factors continue to influence its employment relations and the employee voice of older workers.

2.1.1 The nature of local government

According to the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), there are currently 408 UK councils accounting for 22 per cent of public sector spending (LGIU, 2020). Of these councils, 343 are in England, including 91 unitary councils. Here, unitary signifies no intermediate tier between councils and central government (as opposed to unitarism as a framework for the employment relationship).

The research is set within four councils in the north of England responsible for the full range of local government services. A fifth district council in the east of England is included, which is responsible for fewer services (no children's services or adult care) to facilitate understanding of the distinctiveness of the main setting. Bach and Stroleny (2014, p.345) list council services as covering "environmental services; cultural and leisure services; highways; housing; planning; and a diminishing portfolio of directly managed schools". The greatest expenditure is incurred in providing education, adult

and children's services (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018).

The public sector workforce has fewer employees than at its peak in the nineties, at approximately 16.5 percent or 5.3 million people in paid work, of which approximately 2 million are employed in local government (ONS, 2019a). Approximately two thirds of council employees (England and Wales) are over 40 years of age with 3.5 per cent aged 65 or older (LGA, 2020). Additionally, there are older workers paid from the public purse in outsourced private sector organizations. The diversity of these organizations is such that their inclusion in the research was unfeasible. Coffey and Thornley (2014) estimated that the outsourcing market was worth approximately £82 billion in 2014, indicating a significant transfer of jobs to the private sector. The market now exceeds £292 billion; however, poor performance has led to some services returning 'in house' (Sasse et al, 2019).

Orr and Vince (2009, p. 656) encapsulate the diversity of council governance and activities as "a melange of voices, interests and assumptions about how to organize, prioritize and mobilize action", putting forward 14 classifications of local government traditions. Their traditions form a conceptual lens through which to interpret the complexity of these organizations, Table 1 summarising how these inform the research. Although some are less significant to employee voice, the tradition of 'critique' incorporates themes of crisis, fragmentation, centralisation and modernisation to illustrate how reform is contested, or supported. This resonates with Gill-McLure's (2014) perspective, so is used interpretively throughout the thesis to explore the various discourses.

Cochrane (2016) observes a strategic shift in local government towards local governance, partnership working and participative representative democracy. He advises that 'local' has six loosely framed interpretations, which contribute to understanding the significance of local government culture to employee voice. Historical episodes of external adaption and internal integration have led to patterns of behaviour for employee relations in local government that resonate with Schein's (2004, p. 17) definition of culture:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Traditions of local government		
Interpreting 'Traditions'		**Key issues for research**
Traditions of Politics	Localism	Community identity, civic pride, 'new localism' and community leadership. 'Places within places.'
	Democracy	Representative democracy, community voice, councillor prerogative. Participative democracy, collective action and pluralism.
	Party Politics	Visibility and accountability of party politicians. Effect of party on employment relations
	Governance	Roles and responsibilities, diffusion of power. Coordination of agencies.
	Mayoralty	Chief citizen, elected mayors, multiple mayors. Council leader.
Traditions of Organization	Professionalism	Power through expertise. Conflict with elected members. The professional councillor.
	Regulatory	Regulation of social, commercial and environmental activities. Faceless organization versus protective role.
	Management	New public management, modernization, efficiency and productivity, visionary leadership.
	Consumerism	Resident as customer, marketization.
	Partnership	Pluralist, multi-stakeholders, network of formal and informal partners.
Traditions of Critique	Crisis	Political conflict, economic and resource deficit, skills shortages, threat of central control.
	Fragmentation	Disintegration, internal fragmentation, disempowerment.
	Centralization	Central government power, resistance, key performance indicators.
	Modernization	Change, privatisation, existing context as 'underperforming'.

Table 1: Summary of interpretive traditions, adapted from Orr and Vince (2009)

Cochrane firstly suggests 'local' as "a level of government within a state hierarchy". Here, local actors including councillors and managers are viewed as developing radical

forms of local government by working “in and against the state” (Cochrane, 2016, p. 909) echoing Gill-McLure’s (2014) interpretation of resistance at the local level. Older workers with long tenure have had greater exposure to these adaptations and organizational culture. They are likely to pass on their knowledge and behaviour to new members, even where they are unaware of this. Cochrane's alternative of ‘local’ as a “geographic scale” incorporates the pluralism of social relations, reflecting the influences of other local organizations and individuals, such as local businesses and community groups. This perspective of ‘local’ fits with Kaufman’s (2015a) view that external influences, including economic and social-cultural factors are significant to employers and workers in reaching decisions on the form and level of EV in an organization.

Cochrane’s (2016, p. 910) other interpretations of ‘local’ as a “policy target” and as a “place where people come together more or less naturally”, have relevance in the regeneration policies and the history of heavy industry common to the research setting. The greater burden of austerity cuts endured by Labour councils in less affluent areas, such as the research setting, infers that central government target their financial controls (Lawrence, McIntyre & Butler, 2020). An early American study using Hirschman’s voice framework (Sharp, 1984) concluded that lower social status and education levels negatively impact on employee and community voice. The political wrangling between councils regarding the geographical demarcations for regional devolution, suggests that what constitutes a ‘natural place’, and the best means of distributing resources, is a contestable and emotive issue. Jenkins (2018), for example, raises the prospect of a Catalan style revolt in one devolved council.

Implicit in Cochrane’s (2016) interpretation of local as a ‘competitive space’ and consistent with the competitiveness premises of neo-liberalism, is that local authorities compete to secure economic development, for example, for the high-speed rail link (HS2) with London (Reed, 2017). A further interpretation of ‘local as an anti-bureaucratic metaphor’, incorporates the influence of the local community, for example David Cameron’s concept of the ‘Big Society’ (Cochrane, 2016, p.910). A substantial proportion of council employees have knowledge, concerns and claim on their locality as citizens as well as employees (Newman, 2014). Older council workers are likely to have long residencies, potentially affecting the issues they choose to voice.

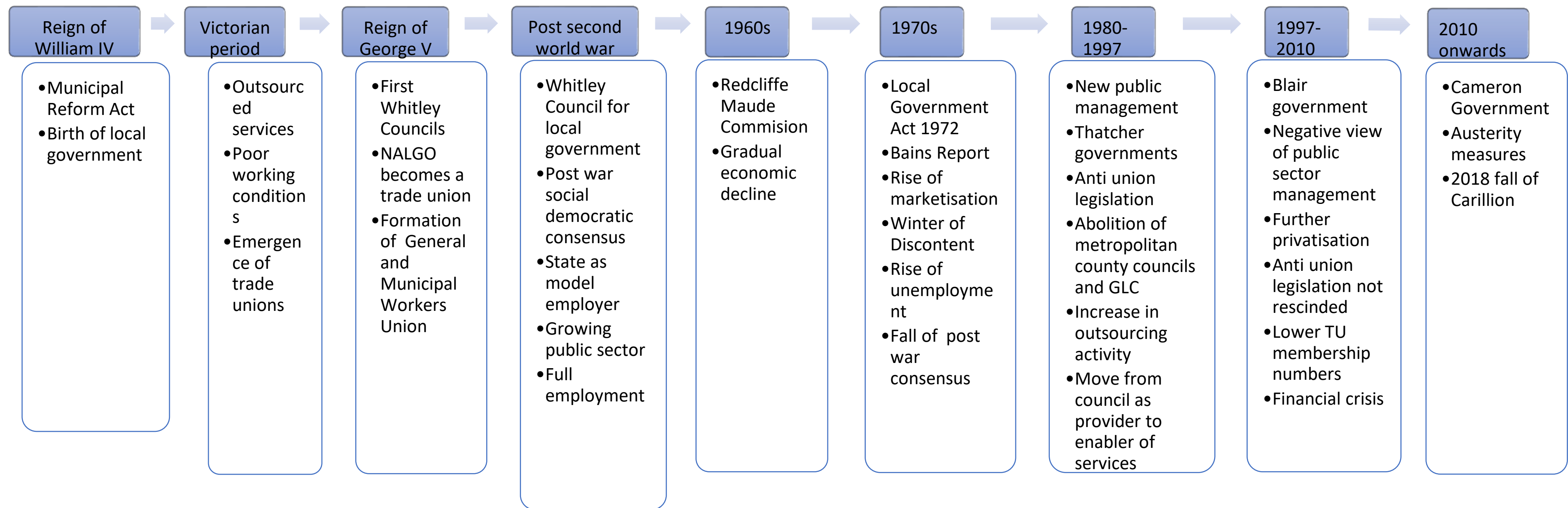


Figure 1: Time line of historical developments significant to local government employee voice

2.2 The historical context of local government

This section considers the principal historical developments affecting local government in delivering, or now more often, enabling local services (Figure 1).

2.2.1 The early years

The context older workers find themselves in originated from a series of largely disconnected statutory bodies predating the seventeenth century. During the reign of William IV, the implementation of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, is described by Wallas (1908, p.276) as an accomplishment of "immense courage and skill, in establishing, against enormous odds, a beneficent revolution in the condition of English urban life". The Act is regarded as the foundation of modern local government, as for the first time, the 178 bodies franchised were large enough to integrate local services (John, 2014). Following Joseph Chamberlain's efforts in Birmingham, early services included utilities, welfare provision and public health (Newman, 2014). Interpreting local government as the local arm of central government does not consider the active negotiation of its role in delivering decentralised services (Gill-McLure, 2014). As Chamberlain recognised, there is a 'local spirit' connected to the identity and pride that citizens have with their locality, reflecting Orr and Vince's (2009) perspective on localism (Table 1).

In Victorian times, and reflecting the current context for older workers, the impoverished legal status of UK local government emerged from central government attempts to control local affairs, without conferring the local organizations with any natural right of existence (Gill-McLure, 2014). The power struggle was manifest by retaining local government revenue (Bach & Stroleny, 2014) and imposing programmes of management reform (Gill-McLure, 2014). Additionally, high labour costs stimulated the relocation of public sector services into the private sector (ONS, 2019a), echoing Orr and Vince's (2009) tradition of organization. Manual workers became politicised by their low pay and difficult working conditions, leading to resistance through trade unionism. Links forged between union representatives and local politicians, to improve pay and working conditions, set the tone of future labour relations and established the connection between pay and service delivery (Gill-McLure, 2014). The largest local government officer's association, the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) formed in 1905 but did not become a trade union until 1920, when a membership revolt at the national conference forced the change of status. At this point the membership was over 36,000 (Spoor, 1967).

The Whitley Councils, introduced in 1917, improved employment relations on an industry-wide basis. Private sector Whitley Councils included employers, union and non-union employee representatives (Kaufman & Taras, 2010). By 1943, the lobbying activities of NALGO successfully prompted the establishment of a council for public sector workers, thus securing a collective bargaining mechanism (Gill-McLure, 2014). In 1948, the Whitley Council for local government was formed, aiming to promote stable employment relations and a consistent level of service delivery (Prowse & Prowse, 2007). The sector was depicted as a model for private sector employment relations (Dibben & James, 2007). The central features of the Whitley Councils remain intact; at the National Joint Council (NJC), employers work with trade unions regarding pay and service conditions, augmented by locally negotiated accommodations to central agreements (Grimshaw et al, 2017).

From the 1960s the public sector expanded, reaching 21 per cent of the national workforce by 1994, prompting a series of central government controls (Farnham & Giles, 1996). A model of professional bureaucracy aiming to utilise local government professionals to control local spending was implemented. When this model proved to be unsuccessful, professional employees were regarded as an unrestrained cost in the same way as manual employees (Gill-McLure, 2014), reflecting Orr and Vince's (2009) analysis of managerialism as a modernising approach based on efficiency and productivity.

2.2.2 The late 1960s to 1970s

In this period, the devolution of power from central government and cooperative style of working (Gill-McLure, 2014) was close to Pendleton and Winterton's (1993) account of the state as a 'model employer'. The hierarchical structures, collective representation, consistent employment procedures and management style were presented as exemplar (Thompson, 2007). This amenable setting was coterminous with the arrival in the workplace of most of the older workers in this research, making for unfavourable comparisons with the more austere context experienced later in their life. Work was a place where loyalty, fairness, honesty, accountability and community amalgamated in the ethos of public service (Hebson, Grimshaw & Marchington, 2003; Pollitt, 1993). Conversely, full employment was disappearing and inflation began to affect the economy (Thompson, 2007). The cross-party post-war consensus supporting welfare and economic planning began to fracture (Farnham & Horton, 1996). Consequently, the 1969 Redcliffe-Maud Commission reviewed the structures and

boundaries of local government to promote efficiency (West, 1973) but the Labour government fell before the recommendations were introduced.

The incoming Conservative government introduced few radical reforms, focusing more on the economies of scale produced by forming larger organizations, but without considering the needs and wishes of local communities (John, 2014). This prompted the introduction of the two-tier local government system, with a lower level of government close to its citizens and a second tier achieving the desired economies of scale (Leach & Barnett, 1997). The corporate style of management was welcomed by central government (Elcock, 1996), Redcliffe-Maud having concluded that councillors were insufficiently competent to make sound management decisions (Orr & Vince, 2009). Introducing the private sector practices largely unfamiliar to council workers, the Bains Report (Bains, 1972) appointed chief executive officers (CEOs) to improve strategic planning and the coordination of senior management teams. An unexpected consequence was that the organizational structures of local authorities became more diverse, "even in neighbouring councils" (Elcock, 1996, p.180).

Enacted under the Conservative Heath government, the Local Government Act 1972 promoted marketization and private sector practice, reflecting Orr and Vince's (2009) tradition of 'consumerism' and early new public management. Policy coordination between the metropolitan district tier and county council administrations improved transport and planning (Elcock, 1996), although conflict between councils was substantial (Clarke, 1987). Orr and Vince's (2009) narrative of crisis, concurs with Clarke's depiction of a war-like context with little consensus between the parties.

2.2.3 The late 1970s and 1980s

During this period, new public management (NPM) gained momentum (Leach & Barnett, 1997) and in line with the "dialectic of control and resistance" the collective voice of the unions resisted (Gill-McLure, 2014, p. 381), for example, through strike action. Council workers encountered the management style, HRM practices, outsourcing, performance management, short-termism and market-oriented governance that characterise NPM, but which were inconsistent with public sector employment relations of the time (Bach & Bordogna, 2011). Evidencing the level of faith in their unions, in the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1979, 1.5 million public sector workers protested the wage cap set by the incumbent Callaghan Labour government (Hay, 2009). Subsequently, marketisation was consolidated by the Thatcher government of 1979 (Bach, 2016), eventually leading to 'Compulsory Competitive Tendering' (CCT)

for direct services and censure for any local government managers or unions resisting the process. Workplace negotiation increased in 1980s due to CCT, but with no accompanying employee voice regarding service improvement. The focus of the negotiations was on avoiding equal pay claims, which led to the National Joint Council agreement of 1997 (see 3.1.6).

The Thatcher Government established five Acts of Parliament reducing individual workers' rights and curtailing the activities of trade unions. Local government fared better than most (Coffey & Thornley, 2014), however, outsourcing continued to fragment and lessen local government union membership. Contemporary academic commentary assumed that the demise of local government was imminent, reflecting a similar commentary in the 1930s (John, 2014). Even so, to regard the Thatcher government as the juncture at which the public sector departed its 'model employer' status is naïve; the battle for fair pay and recognition was already underway due to ethnic, class and gender divisions (Coffey & Thornley, 2014).

The contracting approach continued (Hebson et al, 2003). The new public management (NPM) constraining local political activities conflicted with the service motivations of employees and the distinctive nature of the public sector itself (Pollitt, 1993). Powerful networks of local political elites developed, which improved continuity during governmental change, arguably contributing to local government resilience (John, 2014). Perhaps suggesting an emerging hegemony, professionalism led to an "uneasy dynamic between members and professionals" (Orr & Vince, 2009, p.663), wherein local government officers questioned the competency of councillors regarding their areas of expertise.

During the 1980s, six Labour-held metropolitan county councils established by the 1972 Act were viewed as a threat to central government (Clarke, 1987), and predictably became a target for reform. Additionally, the weakened Redcliffe-Maud Commission recommendations did not deliver their expected efficiencies (Flynn, Leach & Vielba, 1985). The bold socialist policies of one metropolitan council earned them the title of 'the socialist republic'. Central government intervened to rescind their low fares public transport strategy (Clarke, 1987), symbolic of the cycle of resistance and control. Financial pressure became central government's control mechanism of choice, for example, the use of ' rate capping' in 1984 (Elcock, 1996), where a few individuals went to the extent of breaking the law, as in Clay Cross, Derbyshire (John, 2014).

Corroborating Gill-McLure's (2014) cycle of resistance and control, councillors, managers and workers joined ranks and voice in the 'Democracy day' march of spring 1984. Somewhere between 10,000 (police estimate) and 60,000 (TUC estimate) demonstrators, protested the abolition of the metropolitan councils and the Greater London Council (GLC). The resistance was such that a GLC Conservative councillor and the Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, also chose to participate (Ardill, 1984). John (2014) suggests that the concept of larger local authorities was nevertheless seductive to successive governments. Repeated attempts at reform were proposed and subsequently abandoned in 1992, 1996, 2004 and 2006. Financial control in the form of the unpopular community charge, or 'poll tax' was abandoned and replaced by Council Tax in 1993 (Elcock, 1996).

2.2.4 The 1990s onwards

Throughout the Thatcher years and into John Major's Conservative government, the trade union NALGO contested local government reform. In 1993, the merger with the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COSHE) produced UNISON, the largest trade union of the day (Ironside & Seifert, 2002). The new Labour government of 1997 retained Conservative anti-union legislation, and the reform of local government continued, albeit repackaged as a push for service quality (Beszter et al, 2015). Government disdain was such that Chancellor Brown was credited with remarking that effective public services would only be possible with private sector managers (Coffey & Thornley, 2014). Reflecting Orr and Vince's (2009) tradition of 'modernisation', much of New Labour's rhetoric centred on local government as inefficient, over bureaucratic and outdated. Local government responded by rekindling the old alliance of councillors, managers and unions to resist the central government assault (Coffey & Thornley, 2014). As John (2014) reasons, the persistence of local government as an entity relies on political cohesion between senior managers and councillors to endure, yet adapt to change. This was not always beneficial to employees. Some councils outsourced services to rid themselves of adversarial employment relationships, thus reducing the critical voice of employees (Hebson et al, 2003). Outsourced workers largely remained committed to their service users, their public sector ethos of working in the public interest remaining intact.

Outsourcing services effectively reduced trade union membership (Prowse & Prowse, 2007). The modernising agendas of the Conservative and Labour governments of the 1990s, emphasised consumerism and the rights of service users, while simultaneously

creating a harsher climate for workers and unions (Coffey & Thornley, 2014; Prowse & Prowse, 2007). The Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) required by the Local Government Act 1988, removed workforce costs such as for redundancy from contract calculations, so increasing the likelihood of outsourcing services (Bach, 2016), consequently intensifying employee workloads and job insecurity (Gill-McLure, 2014).

New Labour abandoned CCT for a supposedly quality led initiative, in the form of 'Best Value', introduced on 1 April 2000, as part of its managerialist and modernising agenda (Lockwood & Porcelli, 2013). Stringent performance monitoring followed with the ‘Comprehensive Performance Assessment’ (CPA) audits of 2001, purportedly to target resources to areas of need. It had little effect on efficiency. The performance measures were poorly designed, susceptible to gaming, and inconsistent with other government policy (McLean, Haubrich & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2007). For example, local government leaders evidenced year on year improvements by carefully targeting resources on the areas to be measured (John, 2014). Performance management continues to be a dominant instrument of control (Bach, 2016) and the cumulative effect of austerity measures may eventually reduce local government capacity to satisfy performance indicators (Hastings, Bailey, Gannon, Besemer & Bramer, 2015). The Local Government Act 2000 aimed to improve political transparency by providing the enabling framework for directly elected mayors and cabinet systems (John, 2014). Contrary to the intent, the cabinet system tightened the working relationship between local politicians and senior managers.

Bach and Stroleny (2014) point out that local government has 1335 statutory duties to meet, and is subject to revenue-raising controls through council tax restrictions. The organizational forms more responsive to turbulent market conditions and customer demand, have flatter, delayered structures. Moreover, technological innovation has facilitated these forms within local government (Morris & Farrell, 2007). In the private sector, this can lead to delegation of power to employees who subsequently have more say in how their work is organized, through exercising a ‘responsible autonomy’ (Johnson, Wood, Brewster & Brookes, 2009). Such post-bureaucratic forms require a flexible workforce and stable core political management system (John, 2014). Although local government has moved from being a provider of services toward the enabling organizations envisaged by Nicholas Ridley, the stable core remains (Newman, 2014). It is of note that a combination of direct and collective voice forms is regarded as conducive to workforce stability (Bryson, Willman, Gomez, & Kretschmer, 2013).

Neo-liberal government policies, from the Thatcher Government of 1979 onwards, equated a smaller public sector with a positive economic outlook (Farnham & Horton, 1996). Such rhetoric recirculated during the financial crisis of 2008, where blame was shifted from private sector banking and real estate excess, to the large size of the public sector, thus justifying austerity measures (Coffey & Thornley, 2014). Just as the Thatcher government blamed public sector expenditure for Britain's economic woes, the Conservative-led coalition of 2010 created a narrative of crisis to gain public acceptance of austerity policies (Bach, 2016). Public sector organizations have reorganized and restructured in line with business transformation agendas (Conley & Page, 2018), again increasing outsourcing to private and third sector organizations.

2.3 The current context for local government employee voice

Local government traditions of governance (Orr & Vince, 2009) are deeply rooted in bureaucracy, despite current and earlier restructuring in the 1980s (Morris & Farrell, 2007). In a context where there is no political consensus on how services are shaped and delivered, even within councils of the same political party, this could either be presented as disorganization, or alternatively, as adaptation to local needs, depending on the political aims of the incumbent central government. Once more, proposals to combine councils have been raised, on this occasion by the local Government Association (2018), to address local needs through decentralised decision-making.

Delegating power to employees has enjoyed some success in bureaucratic private sector organizations (Johnson et al, 2009) and where the private sector leads, the public sector is generally encouraged to follow. Such initiatives provide fertile ground for employee voice, but given the environmental turbulence and climate of managerialism in local government, it is likely that direct forms of voice will prevail. Extending Gill-McLure's (2014) argument signifies a return to Victorian like conditions for local government workers, alongside inadequate service provision for the public (Gill-McLure, 2014, 2018; Hastings, Bailey & Bramley, 2017). UNISON (2016), finds that in-work benefits are an increasing feature of its members' wages. Once more, older local government workers find themselves in an impoverished, contested and turbulent context.

Local government is nonetheless regarded as fair and equitable (Richards & Sang, 2016). The traditionally pluralist context even now accommodates the interests of different groups, both where they meet or diverge from management views (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017). Despite central government attempts to the contrary, support for collective bargaining remains (Beszter et al, 2015) but as Gill-McLure (2018, p.31)

notes, the shift away from pluralism and Whitleyism is “slow but inexorable”. In response, public sector unions, including UNISON and GMB, have widened their membership to the local community (Holgate, 2015). Returning to the origins of trade unionism may strengthen the union voice and empower the disadvantaged. This is pertinent to a workforce rooted in its own community. The flatter structures and workforce reductions arising from austerity measures are unfavourable to collective bargaining and participation (Bach & Bordogna, 2013), and outsourcing, has proved to be a challenge for trade unions. Nevertheless, the long decline in union membership has recently reversed with an increase of approximately 149,000 members in the public sector during 2018 (BEIS, 2019).

2.3.1 Public sector ethos

Public sector ethos is a recurring theme in the history of local government. Bevir and Rhodes (2003, p. 34) define tradition, as reused by Orr and Vince (2009), as "a set of connected beliefs and habits that are intentionally or unintentionally passed from generation to generation at some point in the past". Accordingly, the public sector ethos (PSE) of ethical behaviour, loyalty and working in the public interest (Hebson et al, 2003), may be regarded as a local government tradition, to which older workers of long tenure have had considerable exposure. However, Newman (2014) observes that the transfer of employees and managers to (or from) private sector providers has weakened PSE (Hebson et al, 2003). The recent fire at Grenfell Tower, where council tax rebates for wealthy residents occurred contemporaneously with the failure to secure high-quality fire-resistant products for council flats, may provide an example of such weakening (Pasha-Robinson, 2017). This conflicts with an ethos that traditionally encompasses integrity, fairness and social justice. Gill-McLure and Thörnquist (2018, p.1) ascribe the tragedy to “the abject failure of the politics of austerity and marketisation”. It could be argued that new public management has reduced the trade union voice, diluting pluralist employment relations and the PSE of local government.

The legitimacy of outsourcing public services has been challenged (Sasse et al, 2019). Plimmer (2018, p.2) reports “about a third of Conservative local authorities and 42 per cent of Labour councils took services back in-house in 2017”. Faith in the public sector market system has waned following the demise of Carillion, a large private sector provider of public services (Andrews, 2018; Sasse et al, 2019). Nevertheless, finance continues as a form of government control, and plans to transfer all revenue gathering to local government by 2020 via business rates and council tax were proposed (LGA,

2017). This was purportedly to encourage local economic growth, concurring with Cochrane's (2016, p.911) interpretation of 'local' "as a competitive space". According to Harris, Hodge and Phillips (2019), the Johnson Government's much heralded increase in funding for local government would leave spending per person, in real terms, 20 percent lower than in 2010, even with a 4 percent increase. Phillips (2020) adds that unless financial support increases, the situation will worsen. Consequently, there may be less time for managers to listen to employees and less room to accommodate the needs of older employees. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to exacerbate the pressures on managers due to the increase in spending required to provide services for vulnerable citizens, while business and households struggle to pay their council tax (Ogden & Phillips, 2020).

For older workers entering the local government workforce from the late 1950s onwards, it is indeed the complex context, with the rich history and shifting mélange of influences presented by Orr and Vince (2009). A central government influenced by powerful business interests and neo-liberal ideology continues to seek ways of reducing the financial 'burden' of local government. It cannot be regarded as a neutral party in the employment relationship, and for EV the legislation constraining trade union activities remains in place. Reflecting on this prior to exploring the literature regarding employee voice and older workers, focused the critical approach. In the next chapter this extends to voice as a concept, the organizational influences and individual factors affecting the older employee's perspective of voice.

Chapter 3: Literature review

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), reviewing the extant literature serves several purposes. These are determining what knowledge is established or missing, exploring theories and concepts associated with the research area, and considering the methodological choices of previous researchers. Furthermore, prior to this chapter, a short review of local government literature (Chapter 2) provided the contextual knowledge to align this second review with the critical approach (Chapter 4).

The structure for the literature review, illustrated in Figure 2, incorporates Wilkinson et al's (2018) view that employee voice (EV) has multiple levels of impacting factors. In this review, levels are regarded as hierarchical and flexible, for example, discrimination is a feature of society, organizational policy and individual behaviour. Consistent with the research question, diversity strategy is considered as it impacts at the individual level. Firstly, the local government context, discussed in chapter two, is augmented by other macro-level discourses on voice and its regulatory framework. The organizational determinants of EV at the meso-level, of which human resource management is a major influence, forms the central part of the review. Lastly, at the micro-level, the effects of ageing and membership of multiple social categories are considered, alongside approaches to managing such diversity.

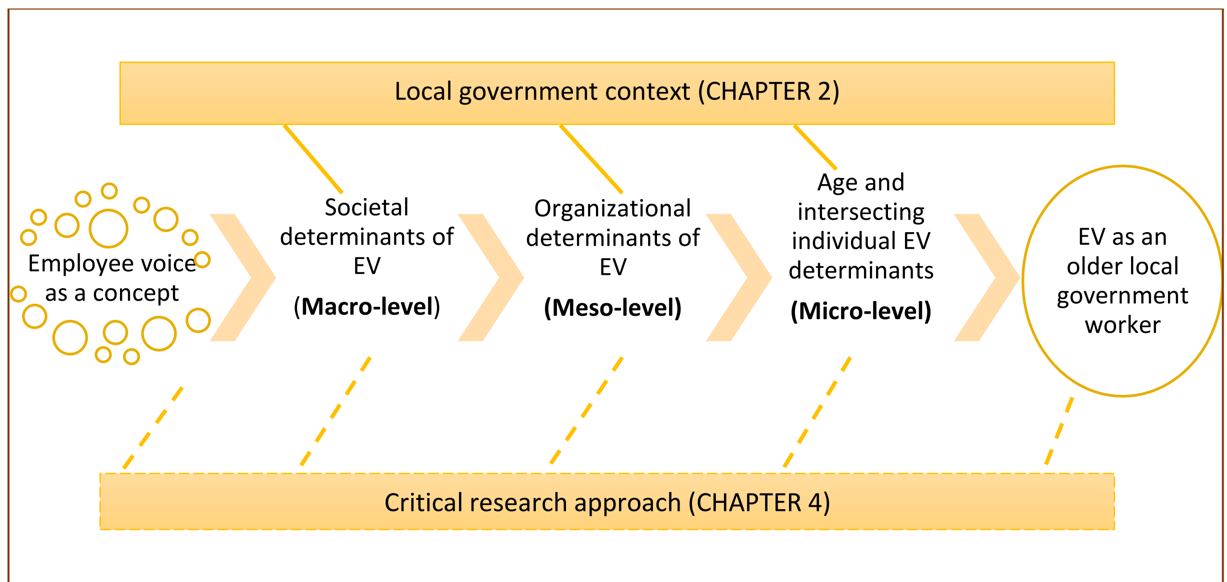


Figure 2: Structure of the literature review

Within this structure, the study builds on Kaufman's (2015a, 2020) interpretation of EV as a multi-level, cross-disciplinary concept. Kaufman's (2015a) model of EV determinants (Figure 3) provides the key theoretical concepts for the research, and the conceptual framework for the review, but is adapted for the council context, for

example, councils are service as opposed to production oriented. The model is rooted in the employment relations perspective, so includes collective topics missing from organizational behaviour (OB), yet includes the EV of the individual, which employment relations, as a field, tends to neglect (Budd, 2014).

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 3: Employment relations (ER) model of employee voice determinants (Kaufman, 2015a)

Figure 3 reproduced with permission from John Wiley and Sons. This image may only be reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder

Using the concepts identified in Figure 3, a database of the literature was developed using the web-based database manager 'RefWorks', to avoid duplication and identify emergent themes by creating a hierarchical arrangement of articles in line with Kaufman's (2015a) determinants. As Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) advise, although a fully systematic approach is unlikely in qualitative research, recording search terms and utilizing a database manager increases the rigour of narrative reviews.

3.1 Concept of employee voice

This section focuses on the definitions and paradigmatic premises on which assumptions regarding EV are built. The EV related concepts of participation, involvement and employee silence are introduced, followed by the voice forms

prevalent in local government organizations. A brief assessment of significant legal and regulatory controls on EV in the UK concludes the section.

3.1.1 Origins and definitions of EV

Employee voice is an imprecise term reflecting the various paradigms within which it is studied (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). Early economists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx acknowledged the divergent interests within the employment relationship and the voice of the worker, but did not name the concept as EV (Kaufman, 2014a). The original concept is largely attributed to Hirschman (1970), who envisaged how work relating to the consumers of goods, could transfer to other contexts. His definition, “any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs … through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change” (p. 30), encompasses employee voice in its basic intent. Freeman and Medoff (1984) later enlarged the definition to incorporate the collective voice of trade unions. Hirschman’s (1970) exit-voice and loyalty framework for EV assumes the worker either escapes the employment relationship, or voices concerns to change an objectionable situation out of loyalty, in the context of this research to colleagues, the council or the locality. Although Hirschman’s (1970) definition implies a complaint mechanism, EV has developed to sustain high-performance working (Budd, Gollan and Wilkinson, 2010) and employee engagement[2] (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Purcell, 2014a). Alternatively, Guest (2015, p.62) cautions that engagement “may distract from and diminish voice and, in particular, representative voice”.

Morrison’s (2011, p.375) OB definition of EV as “a discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions or opinions about work-related issues to improve organizational or unit functioning”, assumes a managerialist position. It does not consider power differentials within the employment relationship, the worth of EV to the employee, or the influence of the wider context. Kaufman (2014b) simply defines EV as “to have a say” to “be heard and make a difference” (p. 319), presenting voice as a form of communication and a means of influence. Kaufman assumes that voice is the natural result of an asymmetrical power relationship, the employer generally having greater bargaining power, but there is also symmetry in that both parties can exit the relationship, as Hirschman’s (1970) definition infers.

The definition of Wilkinson et al (2014, p. 5) implies that in EV it is the employee that attempts to have a say, rather than the employer that demands voice. It considers the

interests of managers and owners, as this research does, so is adopted for the study, where EV is,

> the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners.

There is scope to include employee representation, complaints and grievances, employee silence, involvement (EI) and participation (EP), collective and individual forms of EV. Syed's (2014) inclusion of the voices of diverse employees and diversity management interventions as a strand of EV, are incorporated in considering older workers as a heterogeneous group.

3.1.2 Paradigmatic assumptions of EV

Barry and Wilkinson (2016) observe a trend in EV research away from employment relations (ER) towards unitarist OB and human resource management (HRM) perspectives. A unitarist framework assumes that employee and employer interests coincide, therefore conflict within the employment relationship is irrational, effectively removing a premise for challenging management views (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2018). Additionally, precarious employment contracts and technological advance render the reciprocity and social exchange on which the OB premises of EV are built as less reliable (Kaufman, 2015a). OB is criticised for promoting low threat management led voice mechanisms that retain management power, and HRM for denying human agency (Kaufman, 2020). Barry and Wilkinson (2016) concur that within OB, EV is a managerial device to improve organizational performance, as is implied by Morrison's (2011) definition. OB terms, for example 'promotive or pro-social' voice, where employees offer up positive ideas to management are however, helpful when analysing EV behaviour.

Conversely, pluralist ER traditions of voice consider multiple interests that may diverge or converge to deliver self-determination at work. However, Budd (2014) points out that ER, although acknowledging individual voice, constrains a holistic understanding of EV by focusing too heavily on collective forms, for example on trade unions, a charge repeated for British industrial relations (Ackers, 2010). Concurring with the aims of the research, synthesising HRM, OB and ER conceptualisations of EV within multilevel research facilitates insight to both collective and individual voice (Troth &

Guest, 2020). Essentially, the underdeveloped areas of one field are compensated by the strengths of another.

Kaufman's (2015a) model acknowledges the external environmental influences on EV (Figure 3). Politics and economics are significant to EV at the macro-level (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Pohler & Luchak 2014b) in a context with year-on-year budget reductions (Amin-Smith et al, 2017). Environmental factors, such as labour markets and the political economy, are pertinent to local government in an era of austerity. A strong EV for older local government workers may support their retention, in a labour market with a prospective skills gap (Wang & Seifert, 2018). To consider only one paradigm is to promote a 'silo effect', restricting the opportunities for the findings of one field to inform another (Kaufman, 2015a; Pohler & Luchak, 2014b; Troth & Guest, 2020), thus constraining new thinking on voice (Brinsfield, 2014). Accommodating differing paradigmatic perspectives may be less problematic than is commonly assumed. For example, the fields of HRM and ER are concerned with the employment relationship (Kaufman, 2015a), and OB and ER both use Hirschman (1970) as a seminal definition of EV (Brinsfield, 2014; Wilkinson et al, 2014). This research assumes that to ignore other paradigms constitutes "a disservice to the field" (Townsend & Wilkinson, 2014, p. 204).

Kaufman's (2015a) model is tolerant of the nuances in the relationships between paradigms; all can contribute to a more holistic evaluation of the concept of voice. The model considers organization design and variants of HRM, which OB proponents such as Morrison (2011) and Klaas, Olson-Buchanan and Ward (2012) pay less attention to. For example, Kaufman cites simple organizational structures as conducive to informal forms of EV. Nonetheless, individual antecedents to voice, typically associated with OB, are useful to understanding the voice of older workers. Within the model, determinants interrelate and combine to influence EV and, although these factors are contained, they are part of an open system (Kaufman, 2015a). The inclusion of governance, political structure, rules and legislative framework resonate with EV in a sector where the state can determine how services are delivered

3.1.3 Voice related concepts

This section draws on Pohler and Luchak's (2014b) advice to incorporate wider concepts in EV research. Involvement and participation are discussed, followed by the concept of employee silence, where employees refrain from EV, which can be significant for older employees (Detert & Edmondson, 2011).

3.1.3.1 Involvement and participation

Involvement and participation are related to EV, but negotiation with the malleable nature of the terms is required to establish the conceptual meanings appropriate to a study (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). Employee involvement is associated with unitarist management led information and communication initiatives, typically featuring lower-level decision-making and insignificant shifts of power to the employee. It is associated with Taylorist perspectives, wherein the worker completes tasks based on the principles of scientific management to improve efficiency (Farnham, 2015). Participation is more associated with pluralism and collective EV, implying more significant shifts of power to the employee (Hyman & Mason, 1995)

Ramsay (1977) argues that the popularity of involvement and participation schemes has ebbed and flowed in waves to suit contemporary managerial agendas, emphasising that EV should always be viewed within its historical context, as in this research. Reflecting contemporary practice (e.g., Bryson et al, 2017), early schemes (1860s) aimed to undermine trade unions and promote unitary views of organizations. Later schemes were limited to performance matters, rather than higher level decision making. Where unemployment increases and workers are plentiful, schemes are shelved, trivialised or forgotten, only to be redeveloped in response to threats to the managerial status quo. In the words of Ramsay (1977, p.498), this ebb and flow is fuelled by economics, "Capitalism both engenders and renders impotent such movements for participation".

Ramsay sought political and economic transformation on a wider platform, as a path to industrial democracy, thus viewed management led worker involvement as a matter of circumstantial expediency and exploitation. Marchington and Wilkinson (2009), argue that Ramsay's (1977) cycles of participation become less valid where trade unions are weaker, fail to take account of other shop floor involvement, or assume that labour control is always a primary management objective. More convincingly, they identify that proliferation of voice mechanisms has increased participation even where Ramsay would predict a decline. They opine that participation levels occur more in a wave form propelled by complex micro-level factors, such as the relations between managers.

Marchington and Wilkinson's (2009) 'escalator of employee participation' model illustrates how voice types can co-exist within an organization, each upward step moving EV from operational towards strategic influence. In a further development,

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 4: Conceptual framework of employee involvement/ employee participation (Gennard, Judge, Bennett & Saundry, 2016)

Figure 4 reproduced with permission from Kogan Page. This image may only be reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder.

Gennard et al (2016) progress the escalator model using Fox's (1966) managerial frames of reference for employment relations (see Figure 4).

The degree of asymmetry in power relations reduces along a continuum across the model from left to right, similarly to Marchington and Wilkinson's (2009) model. On the left of Figure 4, unitarist employee involvement initiatives, such as newsletters, afford employees little power and legitimise management power. Although newsletters frequently feature employee contributions, the articles usually reflect issues managers wish to highlight. On the centre steps sit the pluralist works councils and trade unions where difference and conflict are legitimised, and regarded as useful in decision-making as a matter of equity and reason. In terms of Fox's (1966) pluralist perspective, negotiating mechanisms such as collective bargaining institutionalise conflict, reducing power differentials and tension between interest groups. Teetering between the steps, but stopping short of co-determination, is the classic local government position. Such a pluralist position assumes that employees have many valid interests (Hyman, 1989), as this research assumes older workers have. In local government, trade unions represent these naturally occurring interests in an organised manner. On the right of Figure 4, full industrial democracy (ID) where workers hold the balance of power, fits with a radical

perspective, which does not feature in local government. As Dibben, Klerk and Wood (2011) identify, radical positions assume shared interests and intolerance of conflict in the same way as unitarism.

The Gennard et al (2016) model does not incorporate the egoist framework (Budd, 2005) or similar 'individualist' frames of reference (Kaufman, 2014b), where the market and self-interest of the employer form the underlying premise for the employment relationship, (which could be positioned at the extreme left of the escalator model). Egoist and individualist frames are inconsistent with the pluralist traditions of local government and so are not relevant to the research, however, Budd and Bhave (2008, p.107) advise these are generally "the loudest voice in popular discourse". As in other pluralist contexts, local government is subject to union avoidance behaviours (Gollan & Xu, 2015), triggering pockets of unitarism. Pluralism too is relocating from the former era of male bread winners, conflict and over reliance on collective bargaining to neo-pluralism (Ackers, 2014, 2015). Viewed as a more sustainable and realistic approach to modern employment relations, it is less pluralism as conflict, and more pluralism as co-operation and partnership between good employers and unions. Greenwood and Van Buren (2017, p.699) use the term 'new pluralism', sharing with Ackers their concern of sustaining divergent interests and constraining the effects of managerial power on employees. They imply that the shared values of new pluralism may suppress employee interests, however, partnership with unions implies some degree of shared control and codetermination.

Marchington, Wilkinson, Ackers and Goodman (1993), suggest that inter-managerial relations affect the dynamics of employee involvement, which, they posit, have largely been assumed as homogeneous and constructive. The coexistence of schemes for EI may confuse employees, and raise doubts concerning the coherence of management practice. Using Gennard et al's (2016) framework to map EI and EP can identify such conflicting initiatives. Concurring with Kaufman (2015a), the degree of embeddedness of EI and EP is influenced by external factors, including legislation (Cox, Zagelmeyer, and Marchington, 2006), and internal factors, including managerial politics and the trust between the manager and employee (Marchington et al, 1993).

A further consideration, not fully explained by the escalator model, is the idea of the depth of influence of EI and EP in an organization. Cox, Marchington and Suter (2009) explain depth in terms of the frequency of the voice mechanism, and Kaufman (2014b) in terms of the degree of influence on management decision-making. Wilkinson et al

(2014) effectively combine the two, for example, depth of EV in a monthly team briefing would be indicated by the proportion of the workforce attending, the time given up to hearing employee concerns and the influence these concerns have over management decision making. Finally, the degree of management involvement in the election of representatives and the collective agreements in place indicate the depth of collective EV (Dundon et al, 2017).

3.1.3.2 Employee silence

In this study, taking an employee relations perspective of 'silence' recognises that employers and employees have differing and contested priorities. An employer contracts with the employee to pay for their labour, and so has the power to impose structures and processes to silence employees (Donaghey et al, 2011). In return, the employee adds value to a product or service and has perspectives on work, which they may choose to voice or not, thus achieving some control. Morrison's definition of silence as a "conscious withholding of potentially important information, suggestions or concerns, from those who might be able to act on that information" (Morrison, 2014, p. 548) is situated in the managerialist OB camp. It does not account for unconscious silence, such as may be caused by ageism, or for asymmetry in power (Donaghey et al, 2011), or for divergent interests (Dibben et al, 2011). Unitarism is reinforced where difference is tolerated solely when it leads to performance improvement.

Cullinane and Donaghey (2014) advise that silence can be advantageous or disadvantageous to either side. It may be, amongst the possibilities, that the employee remains silent to maintain control, or alternatively, as Prouska and Psychogios (2018) find, that employees acquiesce in a form of pro-social silence at times of economic crisis, resonating with trade union cooperation during the First and Second World Wars (Ramsay, 1977). If silence is the converse of voice, this behaviour is an example of Hirschman's (1970) 'loyalty' to the firm, with the purpose of concealing a concern to support the organization. Not all employer constructed silences are detrimental to employees. Remaining silent at a time where the organization is vulnerable, may secure its long-term survival, thereby securing jobs. For an older employee, the risk of job loss due to deteriorating health (Detert & Edmondson, 2011), or perceptions of low psychological safety, may induce employee silence (Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003). Alternatively, an employer may construct silence to maintain the smooth running of operations, or to supress issues at odds with their chosen agenda. Like EV, silence is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept (Donaghey et al, 2011).

Morrison (2014) suggests that silence sits at the opposite end of a continuum to full participation in EV, rather than being a distinct concept. As Brinsfield (2014, p.115) states, "voice and silence may indeed be two sides of the same coin". This is an interesting conceptualisation for praxis, inferring that where EV is introduced, the effects of employee silence should be considered contemporaneously. For example, an OB supposition is that EV can result in managerial overload (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Knoll and Redman (2014) comment how Morrison mistakenly supposes that EV and silence are mutually exclusive, rather than coexistent. In fairness, coexistence is not explicitly excluded by Morrison, it could be that the employee decides to use voice in one circumstance yet remain silent in another. Conversely, Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) argue that voice and silence are distinct dimensions because voice relates to the availability of mechanisms, whereas silence is an employee choice even where procedural opportunities exist. As with Morrison (2014), this argument is unsatisfactory in assuming silence is the unrestrained choice of the employee. In contrast, the employment relations view is of a more complex dynamic, where silences can be triggered by managerial oppression.

Morrison, See and Pan (2015) conclude that low self-power perceptions reduce EV behaviour and are affected by situational factors. Although authentic openness to voice is expected, the manager's part in bestowing the employee with low power is de-emphasised. Unsurprisingly, where the individual feels their influence is low, they may be silent, dwelling disproportionately on the risks of EV rather than on the benefits. Low educational attainment in people over 50 years (Porcellato et al, 2010; Sharp, 1984) in a region where educational attainment is amongst the lowest in the UK (Long, Foster & Adcock, 2016), can affect an older worker's propensity to use their EV. Similarly, prior experience of trade unions in other industries (Bryson, 2008), health (Phillipson, Vickerstaff & Lain, 2016) and disposition are influential.

Within OB, silence is subdivided into typologies, each encompassing a facet of the phenomenon. For example, Brinsfield (2014) identifies 14 variants, and Prouska and Psychogios (2018) 20 variants of silence. These vary from succumbing to the pressure to conform, to exhibiting deviant behaviour to achieve power or control, that may constitute worker resistance (Van den Broek & Dundon, 2012). Furthermore, Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) point out that silence occurs where an employee just has nothing to say.

Donaghey et al's (2011) ER 'silence and frontier of control' model incorporates the complex power dynamics of one party's concerns over another's (Figure 5). The four quadrants represent how employee silence addresses or subverts employee concerns and management agendas. The trend towards individualised forms of EV has been interpreted as a management endeavour to silence the collective voice (Gall, 2004), fitting with quadrant one of Donaghey et al's (2011) conceptualisation. Hickland, Cullinane, Dobbins, Dundon and Donaghey (2020) refer to the silence acting for management as employer silencing, fitting with quadrants one and two, and indicating the inadequate provision of EV through avoidance, suppression or neglect.

Figure 5: Silence and the frontier of control (Donaghey, Cullinane, Dundon & Wilkinson, 2011)

Figure 5 reproduced with permission from Sage Publications. This image may only be reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder.

Wilkinson et al (2018) categorise the most extreme position of this, of no voice, as a black hole, for example, as can occur in organizations with fragmented boundaries and atypical or precarious work. Silence in quadrant three may be the result of a previous experience of EV. Employees may assess 'voice efficacy' (Morrison, 2011) and remain silent regarding a weak work process because they are disengaged with their work, untrusting, or cynical about the management response (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008), fitting neatly within the south-east quadrant three. In quadrant four, silence may be the outcome of precarious work or risk averse employees (Robinson & Shuck, 2019)

Obstructing EV may instigate innovative resistance and subversive employee action, for example, Cullinane and Donaghey (2014) cite the appearance of a giant poster featuring an HR director as Arnold Schwarzenegger's 'terminator' during one dispute. Crowdsourced websites, such as Glassdoor, allow employees to disclose the reality of their employment situation, free from discriminatory consequences, to other potential employees outside of the workspace, thus providing a degree of redress for the employee. As Dabirian, Kietzmann and Diba (2017, p. 197) postulate, "because employees can now remain anonymous, they have no reason anymore to hold their tongues". Other online platforms are used for cyber dissent (Thompson, 2011), where disgruntled employees who are silent within the workplace are actively disparaging of their employer online.

Whereas the OB perspective of silence may not account for ageism, ER places less emphasis on the individual employee factors that produce low power perceptions, such as poor health, indicating the value of a cross paradigmatic approach.

3.1.4 Forms of voice

In their discussion of EV, Dundon et al (2004a) clearly delineate between direct and indirect voice forms. Direct EV has no intermediary between the employee and management, as in a team meeting. Indirect (or collective) EV features intermediaries such as a trade union, acting as the representative of the employee (see Figure 4). EV forms can be mutually supportive, for example, an employee may raise an issue through a direct mechanism, which the union later takes up (Dundon et al, 2004a). A mix of voice mechanisms can increase the opportunities for participation, but may marginalise trade unions, which some employers regard as a nuisance (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011).

The 2004 to 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS) charts the rise of direct voice in the public sector, which the trade union, UNISON, regard as threatening their negotiating effectiveness and credibility (Bach & Stroleny, 2014). Hall and Purcell (2012) agree that direct forms of voice can diminish the collective voice, but Bennett (2010) does not see it as substituting for representative consultation and negotiation in local government. Dundon et al (2017) report that although the trend towards direct EV continues, direct mechanisms are less powerful and have less depth than collective EV. Conversely, focus groups, road shows and internet pages, as used by most councils, are clearly visible to employees (Bach & Stroleny, 2014), and freeloading non-members who benefit from trade union negotiations contribute to union decline (Bryson, 2008).

Direct EV is valuable in addressing unethical practices (Cumberland, Alagaraja, Shuck & Kerrik, 2018; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008), although the negative connotations of mechanisms such as whistleblowing and grievance procedures are often unwelcomed by managers (Klaas et al, 2012; Marsden, 2013). Employees may avoid whistleblowing for fear of retribution or perceived futility, which can be mitigated by the protection of the collective voice (Lewis & Vandekerckhove, 2016). Lewin (2014), finds that employees choosing not to progress grievance processes can experience 'neglect' in Hirschman's (1970) terms, which again can be resolved by collective representation. As Hyman (1997) cautions, direct voice assumes that employees are equipped to communicate their issue effectively.

Dundon et al (2017) suggest that the issues covered by direct mechanisms are likely to be set by managers. In OB literature, direct voice is linked to a unitarist managerial agenda of innovation and process improvement (Klaas et al, 2012). This unequal representation of interests substantiates the requirement for collective EV (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004); as Farnham (2015) reminds us, management itself is a collective. Direct EV does not equate to relinquishing managerial power, some mechanisms are clearly visible but have little influence on decision-making, referred to by Kaufman and Taras (2010) as 'voice without muscle'. Dundon et al (2017) state that the influence of the party tabling the agenda for negotiation determines the 'muscle' of the voice. In local government, agenda setting is supported by negotiated agreements such as the collective bargaining established by the Whitley Councils (Gill-McLure, 2018). Barry and Wilkinson (2016) recognise that "actors have different levels of power when asserting their interests", however the influence of older employees on agenda setting is not widely discussed and may be impacted by the perceptions of low power that Morrison et al (2015) discuss. Possessing a scarce skill, specialist knowledge or potential to damage the organization may be sources of power, as is a strong collective voice (Kaufman, 2014b).

The collective mechanisms of UK local government do not include the works councils of the ICE regulations 2004, which are disregarded in favour of Joint Consultative Committees (JCC). JCCs feature at higher-levels and in the work-place (Dundon et al, 2017). At work-place JCCs, employers, trade union representatives and elected members address those issues not covered by collective bargaining (Bach & Stroleny, 2014). Direct voice mechanisms include team working, problem solving groups, quality circles, surveys and self-set objectives. Additionally, appraisals increasingly

include involvement mechanisms (Marsden, 2013) and town hall meetings' where senior managers present some aspect of strategy to the workforce and invite questions, are ascendant (Heery & Noon, 2017).

Technological advances provide new mechanisms for direct EV, such as snap surveys to mobile phones. Holland, Cooper and Hecker (2016) submit that social media is less vulnerable to management control and restrictive HR policy, perhaps offering the "potential paradigm shift" in worker participation that Ramsay (1977) predicted would rebalance employment relations. However, older workers are viewed as less attracted to social media indicating that it should be an adjunct to other channels for EV (Holland et al, 2016). Alternatively, Sonderegger et al (2016) advise that making technology usable to older workers is a matter of taking a tailored approach, so as not to disadvantage such employees.

Balnave, Barnes, MacMillan and Thornthwaite (2014) point out the low cost of social media to unions for organising their members. Social media extends the union reach to homeworkers, working carers and other geographically remote workers (Greene, 2015), and could support the stable voice mechanisms that such workers lack (Dundon et al, 2017). The full impact of social media on employment relations is unclear, and it does not yet substitute for direct action, but as Bryson et al (2017) identify, online organising has considerable potential for unions. "Workers of the world, log on" (2018), advise unions to harness digital information as a means of predicting and resisting management action, citing the co-founder of Coworker.org as saying "bad publicity is the digital equivalent of the picket line" (p.26). Likewise, Thompson (2011) conveys the value of 'e-activism' during the 2009 British Airways dispute.

Bryson et al (2013) use 'regime' to articulate the balance and value of direct and indirect voice within an organization. For example, a trade union voice, or a mix of direct and representative voice, leads to lower turnover concurring with Hirschman's (1970) 'exit' option. Direct mechanisms are becoming cheaper to implement, and collective mechanisms easier to dismantle as union density declines. Curiously, both employers and employees resist alternatives to established voice mechanisms, in the same way that individuals resist changing mobile phone contracts (Bryson et al, 2017).

3.1.5 Trade unions: the collective voice in local government

Employment relations in the UK stem from a background of pluralism, where trade unions are a legitimate party in the employment relationship (Marchington, 2015), and are the prevailing form of collective voice in local government. Webb and Webb (1894,

p.1) define unions as "a continuous association of wage-earners, for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of working lives", which academic contributors contest, either agreeing (Kaine, 2014) or critiquing it (Ackers, 2015). Trade Unions have inverted hierarchies, with control emanating from the democratic activities of their members (Farnham, 2015), but are secondary organizations whose operations are contingent on the circumstances of the employer (Hyman, 1997). For the representative, establishing the essence of EV amongst many contrasting interests and perspectives may require different skills from the rank-and-file member. Freeman and Medoff (1984) propose that unions have two 'faces', these being their monopoly face and their collective voice face. The monopoly face concerns the union's ability to increase wages due to control of labour resources, whereas the collective voice face concerns the resolution of issues between managers and workers. Kaine (2014) views union membership whereby in preference to leaving difficult conditions, the union endeavours to improve the situation as echoing Hirschman's (1970) 'voice' or 'exit' options.

Freeman (2005) acknowledges that a distinctive feature of public sector unions is that they have many social aims in common with their employers. Unions actively campaign, sometimes jointly, for better public services and increased funding. For example, UNISON have raised awareness of shortcomings in social care provision (UNISON, 2017). Union membership is at higher levels than in the private sector and collective bargaining endures, as established by the Whitley Councils. Union recognition is 87 percent and membership density 51.8 percent in the public sector. Union membership is highest amongst older (50 years and above) and female, employees, reflecting the demography of the research sample (BEIS, 2019). Whether higher membership levels equate to greater influence in decision making, remains a point of contention and an area for investigation (see also section 2.2.2.)

Other indirect voice mechanisms include employee fora and partnership committees (Boxall & Purcell, 2010), however, interaction between these mechanisms can generate confusion and tension (Hall & Purcell, 2012; Marchington et al, 1993). Works councils enabled by the UK ICE regulations (2004), are viewed as a missed opportunity to provide an effective mechanism for EV outside of organizational interventions (Purcell, 2014a). Union support for the regulations has been inconsistent (Hall & Purcell, 2012) and central government failed to strengthen the regulations to raise their import.

3.1.6 The regulatory framework for voice.

Patmore (2010) describes the regulation for EV as falling into three categories, these being, market-based, industry level negotiated collective agreements, and state level regulation, such as Acts of Parliament. Market-based regulation is the result of local agreement between an organization and its employees, either collectively or directly, for example, the frequency of regularly time-tabled team meetings. Industry level agreements usually concern employment terms and conditions, such as the harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment agreed at the National Joint Council for local government, enshrined in the document known as the 'Green Book'. Collective agreements include substantive arrangements, such as for terms and conditions, and procedural arrangements, such as identifying the bargaining parties and the mechanisms for employment relations (Farnham, 2015)

Hall and Purcell (2012) observe the voluntarist tradition of regulation for employee consultation and participation in the UK. Employers are largely able to determine the means of interacting with trade unions, with only a basic framework of legislation constraining their strategy. Schmelzer (2011) attributes low levels of employment protection in the UK to the uncoordinated market economy; the coordination between unions, employers, employment sectors and state is minimal in comparison to countries such as Sweden or Germany. UK employers are required in law to inform employees of events that concern them, and to hear their ideas and concerns, but are not compelled to act on these; in effect the management prerogative is retained (Lewis & Sargeant, 2017). The legislation relevant to this research is summarised in Table 2. For more detail concerning trade union legislation see Jeffries, Morretta and Just (2017). The effects on employee rights of Brexit may be further deregulation, for example, Burt (2017) reports rumours of senior Conservative ministers lobbying to repeal the Working Time Regulations 1998. The Conservative party is not known as a supporter of trade unionism, and leaving the European Union may open the door to further trade union reform, and review of employee voice

Period	Legislation	Significance for employee voice
1970s	Industrial Relations Act 1971 Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 Employment Protection Act 1978	Trade union recognition Health & safety representatives Formation of Advisory conciliation and Arbitration service (ACAS) Time off for trade union representatives
1980-1997	Employment Act 1982 Trade Union & Labour Relations Consolidation Act 1992 European Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers 1989 (UK signed 1997) National Minimum Wage Act 1998.	Reduced scope for a legal dispute to pay & conditions with employer Introduced consultation on collective redundancies Right to negotiate collective agreements Low pay Commission advises on National Minimum Wage (1997) and National Living Wage (2016)
1998-2006	Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 Employment Relations Act 1999 Pensions Act 2004 & Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006	Protection of employees disclosing illegal behaviour or health & safety infringements Right to be accompanied at a disciplinary or grievance hearing Right of trade unions to organise Blacklisting of employees prohibited Consultation rights for employees
2007-2016	Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011 Deregulation Act 2015 Trade Union Act 2016	Protection from age discrimination (except where it can be objectively justified) Organizations must pay 'due regard' rather than comply with preventing discrimination, providing equality opportunity and fostering good relations. Removal of default retirement age Employment tribunals no longer to make wider recommendations (fees introduced then repealed) Tighter rules on trade union ballots

Table 2: Summary legislation significant to employee voice in this research

3.2 Human resource management; shaping voice in local government?

This section explores the literature pertaining to the second objective of the research regarding voice and HRM in local government. HRM and the strategic aspirations of HR are considered since HRM practices affect EV and working later in life (Appannah & Biggs, 2015). The contested relationship between voice, high-performance work systems (HPWS) and local government is considered, together with how trade unions can mitigate negative outcomes for employees. The discussion concludes with a review of the relationship between HR and older workers.

3.2.1 The resource-based view of human resource management (HRM)

HRM evolved in the mid-1980s from its forerunner, the more reactive and employee welfare-oriented personnel management (Marchington, Wilkinson, Donnelly & Kynighou, 2016). HRM is concerned with aligning people management to higher level organizational strategies and the pursuit of employee commitment (Storey, 1987). Employees are viewed as a resource and source of strategic advantage (Marchington, 2015). However, resources are something that employees possess, rather than being an entity in themselves (Boxall, 2014).

Kaufman (2015b) regards the goals of HRM as emerging from a resource-based view (RBV) of organizations. As such, competitive advantage is achieved through the people aspects of 'Value, Rareness, Imitability and Organization' (VIRO) (Farnham, 2015). As in OB, the value of EV is to the firm, a perspective that features strongly in HRM literature (Barry and Wilkinson, 2016). Employee cost reduction, or alternatively revenue creation through employee development (Value), and providing employees with rare or enhanced skills (Rareness) are the measure of a high performing HR function. HR is expected to enable a culture that is difficult to copy, for example through excellent customer service (Imitability) and to create HR practices, including EV, that work together to create synergy (Organization). In contrast, Barney and Wright (1998) present employees as a source of capital that the organization seeks to ‘exploit’. However, in the context of this thesis, to make use of the tacit skills and intangible knowledge of employees, some form of employee participation is required (Marsden & Canibano, 2010). Despite the inimitability and rarity that should empower employees, Kaufman’s (2015b) view is that RBV can still be detrimental to employment relations. Value may be secured through immobilising the workforce, such as where there is high unemployment external to the firm, or a cumulative benefit such as a pension binding the worker to the firm, thus enabling wage reductions or caps.

Nonetheless, Budd (2005) regards EV as a democratising force, rather than solely a means of creating value. This is based on the pluralist premise that workers are entitled to a voice to redress the asymmetry of power relations between employer and employee. Where EV is not a component of a genuine employee participation, Kaufman (2015b) advises that the superior bargaining power of managers creates value for shareholders. In the context of this research, this could relate to creating economies for central government over employee benefits.

Storey (1987) captures this contrast in distinguishing 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to HRM. Hard HRM is a managerial device that commodifies and controls the employee and EV, consistent with creating value through cost reduction or performance targets. There are few benefits for the employee other than performance related pay, which in local government is limited. Marchington (2015) views 'hard' HRM as typified by anti-union strategies and active performance management. Guest (1999) suggests 'soft' HRM variants develop employee commitment and a supportive organizational culture to improve performance. Marchington (2015) adds employee wellbeing and recognition as 'soft' practices. Value created in this way is more consistent with an organization that is difficult to imitate in RBV terms. Neo-liberalist directed funding reductions in local government make 'soft' HRM practices easy targets for cost savings (Cook, Mackenzie & Forde, 2016). Although both HRM approaches belong to the unitary frame (Heery, 2015), innovative, people-oriented organizations tend to concern themselves more with employee commitment than with cost reduction (Jackson Schuler & Jiang et al, 2014). Such organizations have superior organizational outcomes to those with hard control-based systems, irrespective of context (Hauff, Alewell & Hansen, 2014).

Schuler (1986), advises that HR practices should vary according to what is expected of employees. HR practices are frequently applied based on their financial value to the firm (Boxall & Macky, 2014), yet acknowledging employee needs can also improve performance (Guest, 2011). For example, older workers may require flexible working to facilitate their engagement and performance (Bal & de Lange, 2015).

3.2.2 Strategic HRM - A place at the table?

According to Jackson et al (2014), HR managers use the term 'strategic HRM' to promote their contribution through people to business performance at a strategic level. Central government's preference for neo-liberal private sector managerialism may promote harder forms of strategic HRM in councils, but equally, HR in the public sector

is expected to incorporate values of "openness, transparency, equity and equality" (Truss, 2013, p.28). Additionally, council HR functions have a distinctive relationship with trade unions, the principal and resilient collective voice that may conflict with private sector style managerialism.

Marchington (2015) views the business focus of HRM as counterproductive, and likely to lessen its influence on four counts. Firstly, Marchington perceives such strategic HRM practices are associated with short-termism, financial targets and other performance indicators. These correspond with the central government controls on local government outlined in Chapter 2 (e.g., 2.2.3). Concurring with Kaufman (2015b), Marchington (2015) asserts that in its preoccupation with performance, HR has neglected wider objectives of social legitimacy, which in a council setting, is at odds with improving the lot of the communities they serve. Failure to understand this, by paying insufficient attention to the EV of front-line employees, can contribute to ethical failure, for example, the recent child grooming scandals associated with several local authorities. As Harris (2007) observed during the reorganization period of the Gershon review of 2004, HR became distanced from employees, with negative consequences for EV.

Marchington's second point is that HR has over-focused on the business partner role of Ulrich and Brockbank (2005). The employee champion or advocate role, more closely associated with EV, has been de-emphasised (Pritchard & Fear, 2015). Moreover, HR advisers are eschewing employee champion roles to avoid perceptions of siding against management, diminishing HR's role as an intermediary between employees and management (Marchington, 2015). The restructuring of HR functions to Ulrich's three-legged stool model has been pervasive (Francis et al, 2014). The three 'legs' comprise business partners working with senior managers on strategic issues, frequently at the business unit level, and a second leg of centres of expertise such as for employment relations. Shared services dealing with the administrative and transactional elements of HR make up the third leg. Shared services frequently imply the use of self-service employee portals, further distancing HR from employees (Marchington, 2015).

Francis et al (2014) explain that e-HR enables outsourcing and removes a promotion route for talented HR administrators. It can function between two or more local authorities so requires less staff (Harris, 2007). Shared services are typically physically separate from corporate HR functions, and involve devolution of operational HR activities to line managers (Francis et al, 2014). Although private sector shared services

are generally more technically advanced, outsourcing can be unsatisfactory due to unrealistic cost saving expectations, lower quality of provision and inequality of access for employees (Sasse et al, 2019, Warner, 2010). HR service levels are often specified by line managers without the HR knowledge to understand the implications of their demands (Harris, 2007). This approach has furthered short-termism, moving HR away from employees and their issues (Harris, 2007; Marchington, 2015) and reflects the provision of public services through e-government portals in accommodating NPM systems of governance.

The third element of Marchington's (2015) critique, asserts that HR's veneration and preferential treatment of visionary leaders, and workers with scarce or vital skills, demotivates those lower-level workers who deliver the business strategy. This may affect how the front-line worker's voice is valued, leading to cynicism, feelings of powerlessness and alienation, which Donaghey et al (2011) present as a cause of employee silence. Attributing high performance to visionary leadership weakens the justification for pluralist HRM frameworks. Dundon and Rafferty (2018) view such 'valorising' of leaders as affecting equality in UK society, with HRM being complicit through its rhetoric around talent, performance and individualised employment contracts. HRM's gravitation towards unitarism (Dundon et al, 2017, Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017) and preference for leaders who embody the vision and values of the organization, may silence those voices that challenge these espoused values. For the collective voice, Cullinane and Dundon (2014, p. 2575) conclude that "unitarism has little sympathy with trade unionism". Stakeholders, for example trade unions, are labelled as troublemakers where they challenge the supposedly shared ideals of the firm (Fox, 1966).

The fourth component of Marchington's (2015) reservations regarding the upward focus of HRM, is that outsourcers may not share the organization's concern for employees. Outsourcing can reduce EV opportunities, including by the non-recognition of trade unions (Rubery and Unwin, 2011), and services subsequently brought back in-house may be fractured or fragmented. Marchington (2015) considers that union representation for agency staff is limited by unfamiliar concerns that may differ from their permanent counterparts, stating that "agency workers are invisible to all concerned" (p.183) as Dundon et al (2017) later find. More positively, some councils have procurement strategies that include labour clauses to reduce precarious and poor

working conditions. For example, Jaehrling et al (2018) report that Leeds City Council restrict the use of sub-contractors by outsourcers.

3.2.3 High-performance work systems (HPWS)

Stanton & Manning (2013, p.256), define HPWS as "a broad set of human resource management practices that work together to play a key role in the achievement of organizational goals and improved organizational effectiveness". Alternatively, Boxall (2012) view HPWS as a vague phenomenon, with a bewildering number of definitions (Boxall & Macky, 2014). However, the basic premise is that a coherent bundle of practices is more synergistic than practices developed in isolation. Of the HR practices included in the bundle, EV is a central component (Harley, 2014). Dundon et al (2017) add that for the greater part, it is the direct forms of voice, such as team meetings and one-to-one meetings, that management consider as performance enhancing. Central government has promoted high performance working in local government (Gill & Meyer, 2013) yet questioned whether public sector HR professionals were sufficiently competent to deliver such systems (Truss, 2013).

3.2.3.1 Characteristics of HPWS

Key components of HPWS include autonomous team working and discretion in task level decision-making, more akin to employee involvement than employee participation (Heery, 2015). Tailored recruitment, selection and training ensure the workforce has the required aptitude, values and reward to achieve organizational objectives (Harley, 2014). Moreover, employees may be culturally indoctrinated through training so that organizational values are accepted as their own (Ogbor, 2001). From a critical perspective, Alvesson and Deetz (2011) regard management's advocacy of such values as facilitating a managerial hegemony by presenting their values as common sense and self-evident. Moreover, Islam (2012) regards HPWS practices as objectifying and reifying employees into their component knowledge, skills and abilities, without consideration of their agency as sentient beings. Furthermore, Legge (1995) advises that high involvement forms of HRM may be exploitative of workers, financial performance having eclipsed all else to stifle research on the benefits of HRM to employees (Legge, 2001). Marketisation and modernisation have increased this tendency in local government (see chapter 2).

Boxall and Macky (2014) distil the multiple variants of HPWS into two streams bifurcated by contrasting assumptions regarding motivation theory. The first, high-commitment HRM, enhances employee commitment to the organization through

fairness, trust and reward, although control remains firmly with management. The second variant, high-involvement HRM, features empowering job design and employee upskilling; this is associated with worker involvement in decision making and EV. Better employee outcomes and higher levels of employee engagement occur where both direct and collective voice mechanisms are available (Polhar & Luchak, 2014a). The direct voice mechanisms associated with HPWS are frequently management sponsored and may be disingenuous in their intent, leading to the fear of reprisal where the issue raised is contentious (Gill & Meyer, 2013). Harley (2014) cautions that although the extant research appears to indicate causation between HPWS and performance, the link is a tenuous one; the pathways are complex and too few longitudinal studies have been undertaken to be conclusive.

Where a culture of participation and supportive management is in place, HPWS practice reflects more Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton and Swart's (2003) model, whereby performance is attributed to the Ability, Motivation and Opportunities employees have at work. To achieve better employee outcomes, bundles of HR practice encourage commitment rather than compliance, through fair reward and good employment relations (Farnham, 2015). An ethical approach to HR practice respects the implicit aspects of the employment relationship, of the employee as a human being (Islam, 2012), and reflect Schein's (1965, p.106) notion that practices "stimulate rather than demean people".

Guest (1999) suggests that a high involvement organizational climate is positively correlated with the strong, positive psychological contract conducive to EV. Schein's (1965, p.11) definition of the psychological contract as "the unwritten set of expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization", has been translated in various ways. It has relevance in a sector where employment security and pension entitlements have lessened, which employees may interpret as breaching the psychological contract. Cullinane and Dundon (2006) contest that the psychological contract has largely been interpreted within a unitarist HRM framework and generally concerns unvoiced expectations. Conversely, returning to Hirschman's (1970) framework in respect of EV, a breach or violation of the psychological contract may result in voicing dissatisfaction, or alternatively using EV for problem solving (Tomprou, Rousseau & Hansen, 2015). Building understanding of the goals and needs of the employer and employee prior to a potential breach, such as through an EV mechanism, increases the

likelihood of rebuilding trust. Rousseau's (2003) emphasis on employee empowerment and the reciprocity of obligation between the parties, fits with a meaningful EV for the employee rather than a management sponsored EV within HPWS.

Whichever position is adopted, high involvement practices may favour the employer (Francis et al, 2013; Wood, 2008) and intensify expectations of employee performance. Gill and Meyer (2013) and Jackson et al (2014) highlight the strain and anxiety employees can experience within such HPWS, and recent work by Lv and Zu (2018) finds that HPWS do not mitigate negative employee perceptions of psychological contract breach. Workers, however, can recognise those measures that truly enhance their involvement from the more exploitative measures, and so improve their wellbeing (Boxall & Macky, 2014), which Heffernan and Dundon (2016) regard as a matter of organizational justice.

Persistent cost cutting in the public sector has reduced the resources HR has to meet its obligations to employees in respect of high involvement work systems (Francis et al, 2013, Truss, 2013), reinforcing the trade unions contribution to good outcomes for employees (Gill & Meyer, 2013). It is insufficient for HR managers to produce a bundle of strategically aligned practices and policies, their implementation must be consistent and unbiased (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016). Employee cooperation is required for HPWS to be effective (Boxall, 2012) and acceptance depends on perceptions of the practices as fair, useful and consistent with employee values (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). A fair EV can stimulate trust and provide a redress for the power imbalance in the employment relationship (Wong et al, 2009).

3.2.3.2 Trade unions and HPWS

As discussed, HRM is ideologically consistent with unitarism (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017), wherein conflict is regarded as resolvable through HR practice (Cullinane & Dundon, 2014). Corresponding with Heery (2015), in terms of Gennard et al's (2016) conceptual framework (Figure 4), employee involvement within HPWS is positioned on the unitarist steps. Collectivist elements of voice are de-emphasised, despite the recognised benefit of trade unions in institutionalising conflict (Van den Broek & Dundon, 2012) and the positive outcomes for both employer and employee of a partnership approach (Gill & Meyer, 2013; Johnstone, 2015). Trade unions can instil acceptance of fair high-performance work practices through communicating long-term benefits, such as job security, to the workforce, so building the trust and cooperation necessary for implementation (Gill & Meyer, 2013; Harley, 2014). Attempts to

substitute trade unionism with HPWS are not unknown, yet the collective voice can provide the stable workforce necessary to high performance for the employer (Pohler & Luchak, 2014a).

Unions have a 'whole organization' perspective of change, rather than the narrow view of a specific function, so can identify problems caused by individual and department level interests. In a unitarist framework, HR policies are designed to legitimise managerial authority, rather than afford the employee any influence (Cullinane & Dundon, 2014), and trade unions can challenge those practices that subdue the employee. Additionally, public sector partnerships with unions tend to be more successful than their private sector counterparts (Simms, 2015), being indicative of "a plurality of institutions of worker voice", that are a feature of contemporary pluralism (Heery, 2015, p.28). HR choices are conflicted by the neo-liberalism associated with central government ideology, and the tradition of pluralist employment relations associated with local government (Orr & Vince, 2009).

3.2.4 Managerialist HRM - a threat to the collective voice?

Dibben et al (2011) suggest that minimal levels of UK market regulation have reduced the collective identity, and produced self-seeking employees. The recent improvement in union membership density however suggests that there is still an appetite for trade unionism in councils (Beszter et al, 2015). Union recognition levels are high in the public sector (Dundon et al, 2017; Truss, 2013,) but the factors weakening trade union influence are stacking up, including fragmented organizational boundaries, flexible contracts and structural delayering (Guillaume & Kirton, 2020; Van den Broek & Dundon, 2012). Other anti-union strategies include deliberate outsourcing to avoid adversarial employment relationships (Hebson et al, 2003). Unitarist new public management principles have undermined pluralist local government employment relations (Stanton & Manning, 2013).

Van den Broek and Dundon (2012) reveal a variety of strategies to reduce trade union influence. Of these, creating a discourse of employee engagement through commitment directed policy, is the most consistent with local government. Ramsay's (1977) 'cycles of control' argument, suggests that weak voice mechanisms, like HR engagement surveys and management-controlled involvement mechanisms, emerge because of a perceived threat to management control. Purcell (201b) regards employer attempts to embed organizational values through employee engagement as particularly insidious, as it reduces voice to a form of brand management, as opposed to an employee focused

model where equity and fairness are valued. He adds that promoting 'values' engenders a passive form of EV, thus reducing its capacity to be meaningful. The use of 'values' is associated with softer forms of power, substituting values for divergent interests to appeal more to employees (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2016). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) counsel that employees may be wise to such tactics and become cynical. Soft power is associated with voluntary compliance, as opposed the more coercive hard power, but is a unitarist concept in that power resides with managers.

Müller (2018) offers that internal branding is a device by which employees become living ambassadors for the organization to both internal and external stakeholders. This may be presented as empowering for employees, whereas it is more a form of normative control consistent with a unitary agenda. Ogbor (2001) adds that by absorbing the organization's values, employees self-regulate their behaviour and reinforce hegemonic cultures, in effect disempowering themselves. Thompson (2011) submits that HRM is presented as an alternative to trade unions, but that employees view HR as privileging employer branding over support for fair employment practices, including for EV. This is unwittingly substantiated by Ulrich (2016, p.154) in his assertion to utilise behavioural agendas to ensure employees "behave consistently with the desired culture", in the interest of creating market value.

3.2.5 Human resource management and older workers

In recent years, HR functions have reduced in size (CIPD, 2015) leaving fewer resources to champion minority group causes (Bell, Ozbilgin, Beauregard & Surgevil, 2011), and as discussed in 3.2.2, the HR employee champion role has diminished. In times of financial constraint, prioritising legal compliance and a 'harder' HRM approach may compromise HR's role in managing diversity. Although age prejudice and discrimination originate in society (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013), it can permeate HR practice, resulting in less favourable treatment for older workers (Aaltio, Salminen & Koponen, 2014; Döbrich, Wollersheim & Welpe, 2014). Additionally, both direct and collective EV mechanisms may be discriminatory in emerging from exclusive organizational cultures for example, from a middle-aged, white, male, heterosexual perspective (Greene, 2015). Snape and Redman (2003) find that negative stereotyping unjustly affects the performance rating of older employees, and their access to training and recruitment. Consequently, older employees can feel undervalued, triggering lower affective commitment, reduced EV and 'riding it out' until retirement.

Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers and De Lange (2014) recommend that HR moves from universalist principles towards those more focused on individual characteristics when managing older workers, including practices for involvement and participation. Reflecting Schein (1965), they conclude that the goals of workers change over time, and advocate that HR practice should accommodate the gains and losses associated with age. Similarly, Korff, Beimann and Voelpel (2017) surmise that affective commitment, motivation and task behaviours alter with age and require differentiated bundles of HR practices. Growth-enhancing practices such as grievance procedures, participation programmes and appraisal, are relevant to enhancing the performance of older employees and should be ongoing through working life to maintain employability (Leisink & Knies, 2011). From a resource-based perspective, White and Smeaton (2016) add that older senior managers may have a major impact on the organization should they exit, but are as likely as older workers in manual roles to experience a decline in organizational commitment. These high value older employees are predicted to experience more innovative HRM practices (White & Smeaton, 2016; Wainwright et al, 2018). From an equality and diversity (E&D) perspective, such differentiation could be unjust and potentially discriminatory and as Guest (1999) reminds us, it is the perceptions of employees regarding the employer's motivations that will engage or alienate this group.

OB academics, such as Kooij et al (2014) view personal characteristics and work context to affect the older worker's intention to continue working, with chronological age being less important than life stage. As Zacher, Kooij and Beier (2017, p.38) acknowledge "Some 65-year-olds may have the memory ability of an average 40-year-old and remain open, extraverted and achievement oriented", adding that individual difference becomes more pronounced with age. In agreement with Kaufman (2015a), White and Smeaton (2016) identify a lack of attention to wider environmental factors, such as government strategy for older workers in OB research. The final section of the literature review explores this omission and considers how being older affects access to an equitable and inclusive EV, and influence at work.

3.3 Age and intersecting individual employee voice determinants

The literature on the older worker typically emerges from OB and psychology, employment relations focusing more on collective representation than on individuals or social identity groups (Ackers, 2015). This section considers the relationship between ageing and voice, and the factors causing discrimination and disadvantage to older

workers. Societal, organizational and individual aspects are reviewed separately, and as they come together to either facilitate or create a barrier to the voice of this heterogeneous group. Previous research on age has tended to assume that older workers are male and in permanent employment (Taylor et al, 2016). Moreover, age categories have become reified and ageing so associated with decline and loss that older workers are regarded as a 'problem'. This manipulative perspective is used to reinforce existing power structures, rather than challenging the socio-political barriers that older workers encounter. Such challenges shape the approach to this final section of the review.

The section commences with the literature on ageing, ageism and the intersection of age with other social groupings. Secondly, the equality, diversity and inclusion approaches to managing diversity are discussed with regards to their capacity to accommodate age. An assessment of collective representation for older workers, primarily through trade unionism follows and lastly, the significance of leaders and managers in supporting the EV of an ageing workforce is considered.

3.3.1 Ageing population

The UK population is ageing due to falling mortality and fertility rates, with the public sector workforce ageing more so than its private sector counterpart (Truss, 2013). Males born today can expect to live an average of 79.2 years and females 82.9 years with the average fertility rate being 1.9 children per female. By 2066, a half of baby girls are expected to reach 100 years of age. The impact of ageing on the public purse is chiefly the cost of pensions (Lain & Loretto, 2016). With good health predicted for more than 50 percent of life beyond 65 years, it is likely that employees will work beyond the current state pension age (ONS, 2018a). The Cridland report (2017) accelerated the state pension age (SPA) to 68 years by 2037 to 2039, but may be a conservative estimate of the qualification age. Finance dominates the debate on the ageing population, leaving little space for the human rights aspects of working later into life (Sargeant, 2011).

The extended working life (EWL) agenda has replaced ‘early exit’ as a priority in public policy (Phillipson, 2014). Early exit now involves reliance on the benefit system (Phillipson, Shepherd, Robinson & Vickerstaff, 2018), which may inhibit EV for fear of unemployment (Morrison et al, 2015). Previously, in prioritising employment for younger workers, many public sector organizations took the road of least resistance by retiring older employees (Flynn, 2014), which was financially unsustainable (Taylor et

al, 2016). Some older workers require support to stay in employment, even before reaching SPA (Kirton and Greene, 2016), yet employers have responded inconsistently, creating uncertainty and anxiety (Phillipson et al, 2018). As Porcellato et al (2010, p.98) find, "Giving older people a voice helps to give a clearer understanding of the factors that hinder them in employment and re-employment".

Perceptions of an optimal retirement age will change, as pension age changes and flexible working practices become the norm (Wainwright et al, 2018). Retirement choices are affected by alternative employment availability (Phillipson, 2014), social mobility (Social mobility & Child Poverty Commission, 2016) and decisions made jointly with family members (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2011). Additionally, married women with children tend to have fewer pension contributions, so require an independent income (Fasang, Aisenbrey, & Schömann, 2013). In the research region, around 70 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds are working. In the 65 years plus age group, employment stands at 11 percent for men and around 8 percent for women (ONS, 2018b). Structural forms of inequality associated with health, social class and role apply, for example, 20 per cent of male manual workers die before reaching the state pension age (SPA) (Phillipson, 2014). Improving occupational health provision, training and flexible working would enable a 'fuller', rather than an extended working life.

Blackham (2017) identifies that there is no overall UK strategy for older workers and no coherent vision or pattern of regulation. A review of the fortunes of older workers is pressing for the UK. Percentage-wise there are twice as many over 65s in the workplace than in Germany (Flynn et al, 2013). Of the 1.2 million people working beyond SPA, more than half do so because they are not ready to stop work (ONS, 2018a). The pay and conditions of service for older employees have been worsened by performance-based systems, influenced by global trends and marketisation (White, 2018). For EV, White correlates union membership with better pay outcomes, but recommends further research on age, gender and trade union membership.

As this research covers both Baby Boomers (born pre1964) and early Generation X (those born pre1968), the traits attributed to age cohort are a further consideration. Such differences are impacted by personal experience and, for example, social class, race and gender (Macky, Gardner and Forsyth, 2008). Baby Boomers are credited with optimism, a strong work ethic, high commitment to their work and being cooperative, which may affect their use of EV. On the other hand, Generation X is viewed as

individualistic, and more likely to be loyal to their profession than to their organization (Lub, Bal, Blomme & Schalk, 2016). Employee voice is important to these two generational cohorts as evidence of managerial respect for their experience (Eramo, 2017), concurring with Islam's (2012) evaluation of the value of recognition to employees.

3.3.2 Ageism

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018, p. 1) defines ageism as "the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age". Ageism is all-pervading, affecting employment opportunities, access to public services and the media portrayal of age. Ageism is detrimental to the economy, unjust and deleterious to the wellbeing of older people, and stems from prejudiced attitudes and anxiety associated with decline and dependency (Sargeant, 2011; Vasconcelos, 2015). Terms around ageism are used loosely, but in fact are quite distinct; that is stereotyping differs from prejudice and prejudice from discrimination (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). For example, a manager may regard older workers as less able to learn IT skills (stereotyping), therefore may think they are unsuitable candidates for online training (prejudice), so may choose to exclude older workers from a training scheme (discrimination). The prejudice of others can lead to negative self-prejudice and diminished self-belief for the older worker (Carmichael, Hulme, Porcellato, Ingham & Prashar, 2011), and where this becomes internalised, the older worker may resist training and new challenges. Kulik, Perera and Cregan (2016) advise older workers not to reinforce stereotypical expectations through their own actions, or live up to the 'grumpy older worker' stereotype.

Ageism is the least challenged and most socially normalized form of prejudice (WHO, 2018, p.1). It has become so culturally embedded that it is not discernible as an issue, and is manifest in more subtle and unconscious ways than are racism or sexism (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Organizations tend to normalize ageism because ageing affects everyone. Managers may perceive older employees as less flexible, less effective and harder to train than their younger counterparts (Kirton & Green, 2016), whereas performance can be more to do with skill and health than with chronological age (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Posthuma and Campion's meta-review on ageing refutes every negative assumption on age they encounter, for example, assumptions that training older workers is financially inefficient are countered by arguments that they are

generally less likely to quit. It is noted that older managers and workers are also capable of discrimination against their older colleagues.

Posthuma and Campion (2009) provide a useful model of workplace age stereotyping (see Figure 6) showing upstream moderators of stereotyping, or barriers, for the older worker, including assumptions that certain jobs are suited to older workers and downstream moderators including equal opportunities training. Although not directly relating to EV, the model illustrates the interrelatedness of the elements and outcomes of stereotyping at work, which may be a subject of EV.

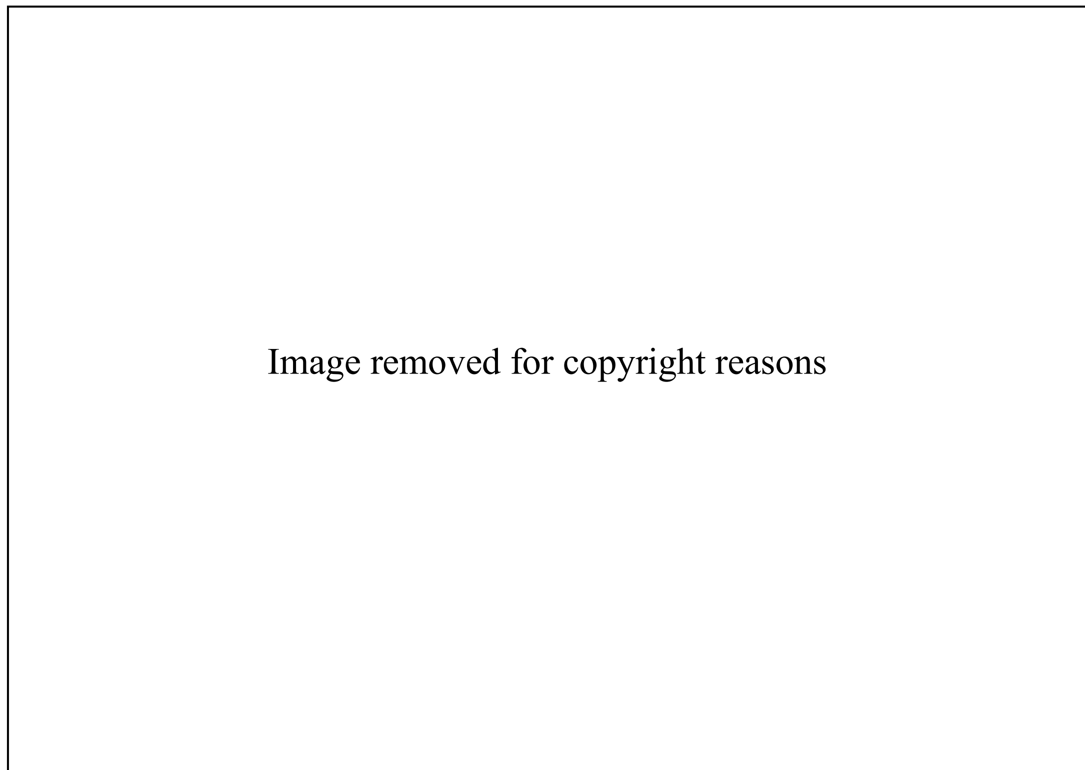


Figure 6: Workplace age stereotyping (Posthuma and Campion, 2009, p. 175)

Figure 6 reproduced with permission from Sage Publications. This image may only be reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder.

In local government, equality and diversity are perceived as embedded in the organizational culture and policy (Phillipson et al, 2018). Older workers judge organizations by their policies for age, and importantly, their implementation in practice (Kulik et al, 2016). Reflecting Posthuma and Campion's (2009) model, Boehm, Kunze and Bruch (2014, p. 671) define an age positive climate as below:

> The organizational members' shared perceptions of the fair and non-discriminatory treatment of employees of all age groups with regard to all relevant organizational practices, policies, procedures, and rewards.

They add that active promotion of employee participation is relevant to supporting older workers. From the OB perspective, Kulik et al (2016) connect an effective EV for diverse workers with improving organizational effectiveness.

3.3.3 Ageism and intersectionality

Marcus and Fritzsche (2015) question the legitimacy of managing older workers as a homogeneous group when they also belong to other social categories. Organizational and societal policies tend to regard older workers as a 'target group' with specific membership characteristics (Kulik et al, 2016). Two theories used to explain the consequences of belonging to multiple groups are intersectionality and double jeopardy. Cole (2009) explains that intersectionality has traditionally been associated with race, class and gender. It is concerned with process; firstly, of identifying social group membership and the implications of belonging to that group, for example, what it means to be a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) person. Subsequently hierarchies of power and influence operating between these groups are explored for each relevant characteristic, such as in being a BAME person and a female person. Where intersectionality theory is applied to research, establishing the similarities between the groups is crucial, even where initially they may appear divergent.

Intersectionality theory specifies that multiple identity group membership cannot be understood by adding the effects of one form of social identity to the effects of another. The effects are likely to be greater than the sum, and may even be multiplicative (McBride, Hebson & Holgate, 2015). Double jeopardy on the other hand is more associated with the doubling effect of the disadvantages (or advantages) of membership of more than one social group sub-category (Marcus & Fritzsche, 2015). For example, being older and disabled may incur the negative perceptions of both groups, which may cause the individual to maintain silence to 'stay under the radar'. Marcus and Fritzsche (2015) regard intersectionality theory as applicable to ageism. They advise that multiple memberships of disadvantaged groups lead to 'invisibility', or becoming a marginalised member within a marginalised group. From their perspective, gaining influence is easier where you are an archetypal member of a single disadvantaged group, however, social grouping is rarely bounded in such a way.

In addition, there is individual difference, for example, personality traits are associated with certain types of EV (Kakkar, Tangirala, Srivastava, Kamdar & Chen, 2016). Nikolaou, Vakola and Bourantas (2008) identify emotional stability as an antecedent to EV, and LePine, Van Dyne and Murphy (2001) view conscientiousness and extraversion as positive indicators of voice behaviour. Conversely neuroticism and agreeableness are negatively related to EV. Establishing the salience of multiple difference is more difficult for policy makers than for single group difference because as Marcus and Fritzsche (2015) acknowledge, "multiple group membership is a variable that creates different stereotypical characterisations or archetypes" (p.181). As Bell et al (2011) highlight, the EV of identity groups is also influenced by the degree of oppression they have suffered in the past. Furthermore, not all disadvantaged employees wish to join a network that identifies them as such. Also, some older employees constitute invisible minorities due to disabilities that become more likely with age, such as deafness and diabetes (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018). Within the older worker range of this research, from 52 to 75 years, is an entire generation in biological terms, that is, a 75-year-old can have a 52-year-old child. As discussed in (3.3.1), age cohort experiences may have shaped their values and attitude to work (see Urick, Hollensbe & Fairhurst, 2017). In presenting a social justice orientation, Bell et al include the apposite quote from Creed (2003, p. 1507) “It matters whose voices and silence we consider”.

3.3.3.1 Gender

Ageism rarely stands alone as a basis for prejudice, for example, Loretto and Vickerstaff (2011) regard gendered ageism as a significant aspect of the older person’s experience at work. Perceptions of difference extend beyond the ‘protected characteristics’ of the Equality Act 2010, for example regional accent, height and hair colour; the possibilities appear endless (Guillaume et al, 2013). In addition to these 'surface' characteristics, are differences at a deeper level, in attitudes, beliefs and values (Oswick & Noon, 2014). According to Kulik et al (2016), the perception of ‘older worker’ is getting younger, for example, Krings et al (2011) use from aged 45 years. Older women experience more age discrimination, and are subjectively viewed as older at an earlier age than men, in part associated with unrealistic expectations around appearance (ONS, 2018a; Sargeant, 2011). In 2008 the BBC dropped four female presenters in their forties from their schedules, and was subsequently defeated at an employment tribunal. In *O’Reilly v British Broadcasting Corporation* (ET

20102200423/2010, 19 November 2010) derogatory comments aimed at O'Reilly, such as the need for Botox because of high-definition screen technology, were considered as evidence of age discrimination (Bintliff, 2011). The BBC subsequently apologised and re-employed the presenters involved.

Although beginning on average between 50 and 51 years, for around 25 per cent of women, the menopause reduces their quality of life for some four to eight years (Hardy, Griffiths & Hunter, 2017). Organizational theory and practice fail to acknowledge "embodied gendered reality" of the menopause, so that the voices of menopausal women at work are silent in the literature (Jack, Riach & Bariola, 2019, p. 123). Social class, culture and financial autonomy impact on the symptoms, which range from mildly inconvenient to significantly debilitating (see Delanoë et al, 2012). In the UK, menopausal women may endure ageism, stigmatisation, stereotyping or derision in the workplace, so often suffer their symptoms in silence (Beck, Brewis & Davies, 2019; Griffiths, MacLennan & Hassard, 2013). Hot flushes can be embarrassing, but memory lapses (50.5 per cent) and poor concentration (50.9 percent) can affect work performance, which is often mitigated by working harder and longer. A concern for EV, is that around 63 per cent of the women in Griffiths et al's sample were uncomfortable in formal meetings, and approximately 45 per cent avoided high visibility work. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires a risk assessment for symptomatic menopausal women, and under the Equality Act 2010, accommodation of performance management is indicated, as for disability, where the symptoms are protracted (Wales TUC, 2017). Other commentators advise organizations to pay attention to their voice,

> Menopausal women can be capable women, wise, experienced, and relationally oriented by virtue of (rather than despite) their situated identities – leaders for tomorrow, not employees from the past (Jack et al, 2019, p.139)

Beck et al (2019) recommend involving men in menopausal policy to normalise the condition. Self-groups are a sustainable support mechanism that provide the involvement that Kooij et al (2014) suggest is beneficial to older workers. Conversely, formal governance systems and fora based on a business case uphold the neoliberal status quo.

For (mostly) women of the so called 'sandwich generation', that is those caring for generations of family above and below their own, the significance of EV is intensified

(ONS, 2018a), but worsened by declining access to formal social care for dependants. Austin and Heyes (2020) identify that working carers rarely voice their issues with HR, preferring the support of their line managers or colleagues. There are 3.7 million working carers in the UK, and of these 24 percent are considering leaving their job. For men, the intersection of age and gender can generate negative self-perceptions, such as feeling less deserving of a job than their younger colleagues (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2011; Porcellato et al, 2010). Internalising such perceptions can result in older workers discriminating against themselves and their older colleagues. Additionally, for some men conditions such as prostate cancer can cause hot flushes and other symptoms affecting their EV similarly to menopausal women (Prostate Cancer UK, 2018).

3.3.3.2 Other intersecting factors

Disability frequently overlaps with age (Kirton & Greene, 2016), as Phillipson (2014, p. 238) reports "half of people aged 50 to state pension age (SPA) have a long-term health problem and around one quarter are disabled". Older workers may hide their disability (Bacon and Hoque, 2015), and suppress their EV in a bid to avoid unwanted attention. As regards age and ethnicity, gaining employment is a persistent issue, particularly for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community, so that once employed they do not want to 'rock the boat'. Concerning sexuality, prior life experience may affect the EV of the LGBT community. Homosexuality was an offence until 1967, which continues to affect those growing up during this period (Sargeant, 2011). The effect may lessen as younger gay workers enter the older worker range, however, as Greene (2015) discloses, about a third of this community are uncomfortable with divulging their sexuality, which can affect their decisions regarding EV (Bell et al, 2011). Intersectionality theory provides a framework to establish what combinations matter most in the context, and can alert those with influence to avoid the barriers of overly generic voice regimes.

3.3.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as approaches to managing difference

Oswick and Noon's (2014) review reveals a shift in the prominence of the three concepts over time. Prior to 1987, the emphasis was on equality and affirmative action, for example, recruiting from under-represented groups where two candidates perform equally at interview, however, affirmative action had negative associations with quotas and blocking recruitment on merit.

From the 1990s, the business case emphasised the competitive advantage of diversity, whilst down playing the social justice aspects of the equality discourse. Supporters of

diversity portrayed equality as old, tired, fettered by regulation and disadvantageous to vulnerable groups, who are less equipped to access the law (Conley & Page, 2018). Oswick and Noon (2014) observe a later but similar distancing from diversity by the exponents of the inclusion approach, which emphasises distinctiveness over difference, incorporating individual and social group identity through an identity-blind approach. Conversely, Roberson (2006) criticises identity blindness as the repost of privileged groups to their anxieties regarding social group-based benefits. Distancing is an unfortunate outcome of management faddism that misinterprets the three approaches as mutually exclusive; rather they are "complementary or even synergistic" (Oswick and Noon, 2014, p.36). A brief review of the approaches follows.

3.3.4.1 The equality approach

The equality case addresses the negative imbalances in power associated with membership of a minority or disadvantaged group, including imbalances in wider society, because it is morally right to do so (CIPD, 2018; Hocking, 2017). Equality discourses are associated with rules, laws such as the Equality Act 2010 and deontological assumptions based on the intention to 'do good'.

Blackham (2016, 2017) regards policies based on the Equality Act 2010, as being of limited practical use. Discrimination for age under the Act follows the categorisations of the other protected characteristics, that is, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Age is the one characteristic where direct discrimination is permissible, if it is objectively justifiable. Seeking a remedy through the Equality Act 2010 (section 14) is possible where there is an additive effect of two grounds such as race or age, but not where discrimination is the outcome of the intersection of two characteristics, i.e., when discrimination cannot be broken down into individual characteristics. An illustrative example of intersectional discrimination might be refusing an applicant for bar work because they are old and Scottish, that is assuming they are a heavy drinker not because they are old or because they are Scottish, but because of the intersection of their age and race. Limitations of the Equality Act 2010 are highlighted by cases such as *Bahl v The Law Society & Anor* ([2004] EWCA Civ 1070]), where the appellant brought a case on the grounds of both race and gender. Although her claim was well-founded if the intersection of race and gender were considered, discrimination was not proven because the weight of evidence attributable to a single characteristic was insufficient (Hudson, 2012). Kirton and Green (2016)

suggest the emphasis on compliance has at least raised awareness of the social justice implications arising from membership of disadvantaged social groups.

3.3.4.2 The business case for diversity

Consistent with new public management assumptions (Greene & Kirton, 2011), the business case is dominated by the competitive advantage gained from the diverse skills, experiences and perspectives of employees (Van Dijk, van Engen & Paauwe, 2012). When the diverse workforce does not deliver the anticipated performance advantage, or where one group does not contribute, it could therefore be justifiably abandoned. Van Dijk et al (2012) associate the approach with utilitarianism, that is supporting interventions that provide the greatest advantage for the most people, which Marchington (2015) advises can lead to inequality and unfairness. Furthermore, where organizations are perceived to favour disadvantaged groups, other employees can become resentful, leading to an increase in stereotyping behaviours (Nishii, 2013). The neo-liberalist economic justification for diversity has stymied all other legitimate challenges to age discrimination, and has "been fundamental in shaping the older worker agenda in the UK" (Riach, 2011, p. 52). The government's 'Age Positive' campaign against age discrimination in employment is built on such a business case (Blackham, 2017). The diversity approach is viewed as less compatible with collective negotiation, and more situated within HRM than the equality approach (Kirton & Greene, 2016).

3.3.4.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is presented in the literature as the next stage of organizational evolution, yet as Oswick and Noon (2014) point out, diversity and inclusion are interdependent, for example, workforce diversity policies are required to encourage inclusivity. Austerity-led workforce reductions in the public sector have hindered recruitment and slowed turnover, so that workforces do not reflect their local population, thus limiting diversity and inclusivity (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015). The movement from equality to diversity, and ultimately to inclusion, is typical of other management fads, although the outcomes of discrimination are potentially very serious. Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez (2018) advise that 'inclusion' is often confused with 'diversity' and differentiate inclusion as below:

> Equal opportunities for members of socially marginalised groups to participate and contribute while concurrently providing opportunities for members of non-marginalised groups, and to support employees in their efforts to be fully

engaged at all levels of the organization, and to be authentically themselves (p.177).

Unlike diversity, inclusion removes the identity aspect from the context, so that discrimination and conflict between social groups is reduced. Fair access to resources, decision-making and promotion are fundamental to inclusivity. The approach reflects Liff's (1997) notion that policies can apply to all employees, yet carefully support difference. Embedding inclusion within the organizational culture engenders a respectful framework regarding difference, however, a diverse workforce is easier to achieve than an inclusive one (Shore et al, 2018). Participation in decision-making to encourage connectedness is central to achieving inclusion (Mor Barak, 2000; Nishii, 2013) implying a significant role for EV. Including older workers in this way could support their recognition, wellbeing and retention in the workplace.

Mor Barak's (2000) perspective of the inclusive workplace, emerging as it does from a social work context, has a special relevance for local government. She looks beyond organizational boundaries to encourage collaboration with others outside of the organization. Pluralism from her perspective, is significant to developing organizational culture and values. These are seen as exclusive where they relate to conformity or predefined norms, and inclusive where the norms evolve in ongoing two-way communication with employees. Among the obstacles to inclusivity, are discrimination, prejudice and powerlessness; where organizations decide who is included, some disadvantaged workers will miss out (Conley & Page, 2018).

3.3.4.4 Representatives of diverse employees

The expertise of union disability champions offers benefits to both sides of the employment relationship, although employer resistance to requests for reasonable adjustments persists (Bacon and Hoque, 2015). For organizations, union representatives can improve perceptions of objectivity regarding equality impact assessments and equality audits (Bennett, 2010). Bell et al (2011) found the champion role to have advantages for EV in assuring diverse employees that they are valued. In effect, the champion becomes the physical embodiment of the value diverse workers have to the organization. Greene (2015) is less optimistic in concluding that diversity group agendas and champions are bounded to diversity matters and so do not address wider issues, so do not resolve the general level of underrepresentation. Additionally, workplace equality committees are only effective where champions are given time to attend meetings.

In common with disability representatives, trade union equality representatives do not enjoy the statutory right to time off to carry out their duties. They are sometimes faced with very complex and time-consuming cases involving multiple forms of discrimination, where employment tribunal evidence must be provided separately for each form (Wright, Conley and Moore, 2011). The Equality Act 2010 may remedy the individual's experience of discrimination, but does little to support the collective voice or diverse employees as a group. The Public Sector Equality Duty presents a potential means of framing collective issues; however, the relevant duties to expedite this process are not yet enacted.

3.3.5 Trade Unions and older workers

Older workers make up the largest proportion of union memberships, so are significant to the continued existence of trade unions (Flynn, 2014). Discipline and grievances, pay disputes and health and safety form their main workload (Greene, 2015). In future, there will be new challenges, such as for health and wellbeing, in representing and organising an older workforce (Flynn, 2014).

In the public sector, national collective bargaining is common (Flynn et al, 2013). Trade unions campaign for decent jobs for older workers until they retire, a significant problem where members work in physically demanding manual roles (Flynn, 2014). Muscular skeletal health, aerobic and cardiovascular capacity tend to decline with age, however a fit 65-year-old may be better able to work than an unfit younger worker. Better job design can mitigate early changes in capacity, and advances in technology can extend the age range to 60 years for much physical work for most healthy individuals (Harper, 2011). Developments in artificial intelligence and robotics should also assist older employees, however the ageist assumptions held by humans may prove more difficult to dispel. Unions in private sector organizations have led the way on initiatives such as job rotation, flexible hours and tailored training to improve skills and conditions for older workers. Consequently, during the last recession the private sector held on to their older workers in greater numbers than did the public sector (Flynn, 2014).

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) supported the removal of the default retirement age (DRA) on the grounds of social justice (Sargeant, 2011). Conversely, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), envisioned the removal as eroding the employer’s right to retire older workers as they saw fit. Early access to public sector pension schemes reduced during the last labour government, and less favourable measures were

introduced by the coalition government of 2010 (Flynn et al, 2013). In 2011, public sector unions took strike action to protest the pension reforms, which were viewed by the TUC as an attempt to remedy the financial losses of the banking crisis of 2008 (Bridgen and Meyer, 2013). Despite the protestations, in addition to raising the pension age, a career averaged scheme linked to the consumer price index rather than the faster growing retail price index, replaced the final salary pension scheme. This occurred against a backdrop of the UK having the lowest level of pension expenditure in Europe (Schmelzer, 2011).

Richards and Sang's (2016) review of trade union activities ascertains how their ability to represent disadvantaged groups varies. The close relationship between trade unions and employers is open to criticism, indeed as regards this research, local government trade union convenors are often on the council payroll; however, they also identify that unionised workplaces are more likely to have strong E&D policies. The more radical view of Hyman (2015) is that unions have become too comfortable in their insider position and should resume their campaigning identity to overcome oppression and discrimination.

3.3.5.1 Trade unions and gender

Trade unions have raised awareness of the issues of older females, including for disabled, menopausal women (UNISON, 2019) with specific guidance available to Health and Safety representatives (TUC, 2013; UNISON, 2012). GMB (n.d.) add that health and safety standards are based on the archetypal male employee, which the union sought to address. Representatives receive guidance on broader age-related issues, such as for working carers (TUC, 2014). On receiving around 4000 replies to a survey on the menopause at work, Wales Trade Union Congress (2017, p.3) concluded that their research offered a voice and "a powerful call for change" for those affected.

Older working women are disproportionately negatively affected by austerity measures, thus intensifying their need for representation (Kirton and Green, 2016). However, aaccording to Greene (2015, p.77), trade union structures are "infused with patriarchal ideology" because they were created by men. An inquiry covering the period of 2010 to 2020, reports a culture of sexism, misogyny and barriers to the participation of women at branch level within GMB (Syal, 2020). Similarly. Prowse, Prowse and Perret (2020) report low numbers of female lay representatives and leaders in a civil service setting where women make up the majority of the workforce, as in local government. They allude to the significance of the failure to promote or value the leadership attributes

more associated with women, such as good listening and people skills, and the impact of family commitments to developing in a union role. Despite numerous initiatives to combat the trend, representatives are in the main white, male, full time workers. Although not a trade union itself, the TUC (2019) fares better; 20 of the 55 TUC General Council members are female and Frances O'Grady, a woman, is General Secretary. Ackers (2015) argues that whilst trade unions should remove barriers to diverse membership, the focus should be on common causes and shared identity, rather than on differences, paralleling the identity-blind inclusive approach to diversity management (Nishii, 2013). To be inclusive, union voice mechanisms should support the diverse needs of their members (Greene, 2015).

In the past unions were charged with embedding inequality for women and other groups, but as their work on the menopause implies, they are well placed to promote equality and inclusion (Bennett, 2010: Hoque and Bacon, 2014). E&D policies are more likely to be enacted and utilised where they are prioritised by negotiating officers within a collective bargaining agenda. Consultation mechanisms are as least as effective in promoting equality as negotiating mechanisms, prompting recommendations to formalise joint regulation between employers and trade unions (Hoque and Bacon, 2014).

3.3.5.2 Including older union members through social media

Women and part-time workers experience greater difficulty in physically participating in trade union meetings because of family responsibilities (Greene, 2015). Thornthwaite, Balnave and Barnes (2018) envisage social media as an inclusive and accessible mechanism for trade union communication, but find that to date the uptake is poor. They identify that women and men use social media equally but differently, reflecting general trends such as women's greater participation on Facebook. Trade unions, and organizations in general, fail to realise the potential of social media, offering facsimiles of manual processes rather than novel solutions (see section 3.1.4.). As Martin, Parry and Flowers (2013) advise, social media enhances EV when other support is in place. Clarity of leadership and past levels of connectedness are significant to the uptake of EV on social media, which trade unions could exploit to support older workers. Internet use is rising steadily, with almost 80 per cent of 65- to 74-year-olds able to use the internet (ONS, 2018a). Older workers could use social media for trade union communication, provided it was designed with their use in mind (Sonderegger et al, 2016). Using Hirschman's (1970) thinking, voice is a desirable

alternative to quitting, and effective trade union social media platforms could potentially support older workers working later in life.

3.3.5.3 Trade union retired member groups

According to their websites, UNISON, UNITE and GMB all have active memberships for retired trade union members, with UNISON having the most established group (Flynn, 2014). These are often situated in the locality of the former employer, offering opportunities for retired members in community organising. Holgate et al (2015) observe the nineteenth century activities of trade unions extending into the community and perceive a 'turn', or return, in union thinking to a social justice orientation outside of worker self-interest. As Hastings et al (2017) found, austerity has impacted more on the poor and disadvantaged in society, and retired members campaign on behalf of such groups. Holgate et al (2015) recognises that council employees are frequently members of place-based communities (see 2.1.1) so are ideally situated to make an effective contribution to community organising, reflecting Orr and Vince's (2009) traditions of community for local government (see Table 1).

The three main local government unions (UNISON, UNITE and GMB) have associated with community groups with the aim of building their memberships (Holgate et al, 2015). From their websites, UNITE and GMB describe retired members' activities centring on issues principally affecting older workers, whereas UNISON also promotes working on more general campaigns with other member groups. Flynn (2014) reports that retired members can feel underutilised, signifying the potential capacity to support older working colleagues.

3.3.6 Significance of leaders and managers to older workers

Leaders who encourage open and inclusive organizational cultures build the psychological safety and reassurance to employees that EV is valued, and likely to be acted upon (Burris, Rockman & Kimmons, 2017; Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison et al, 2015). Jin, Lee and Lee (2017, p. 315) likewise emphasise that "strong inclusive leadership should be the centrepiece of managing diversity", and championed by visible and powerful leaders (Boehm et al, 2014; Shore et al, 2018).

Whilst the significance to EV of the older worker's relationship with line managers is contended, there is general agreement that it is important. Trust between manager and employee is vital to EV (Holland, 2014), not least because of the devolvement of the HR function to line managers (Francis et al, 2014, Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). Leisink and Knies (2011) offer that effective line managers provide older workers with

social encouragement, assistance with tasks, praise and information sharing. Equally, a lack of training, insufficient HR expertise and negative stereotyping can result in managers preferring younger workers. Competing priorities are pertinent to EV in local government, where doing more with less is the everyday experience of most line managers. Townsend (2014) acknowledges the work intensification, but agrees with Storey (1987), that line managers are better placed than HR to look after day-to-day people management and promote EV. However, the mechanisms and policies for EV usually fall within the HR remit (Townsend, 2014).

Kirton and Greene (2016) suggest that line managers may misunderstand the very concepts of equality and diversity. Workers of 65 years and above may be viewed as 'disrupting' the manager's succession planning process (Lain & Loretto, 2016), although a rigorous and fair appraisal system can facilitate fair access to the employee's intent. Kirton and Greene (2016) advise that the limited involvement of line managers in policy making can produce a lack of accountability. Kulik et al (2016) conclude that although diversity training is useful, a busy manager may deprioritise voice. They add that the manner and extent to which equality practice is implemented is affected by the manager's overall attitude to age. Additionally, organizational delayering and wider spans of control may cause a well-intentioned manager to communicate or interpret policy differently to others, which can adversely affect EV (Townsend, 2014).

Managers also experience barriers to their voice. Organizational restructuring can remove or disrupt formal and informal avenues for EV (Mowbray, 2018) and consequently, older managers may experience isolation and loneliness (Mor Barak, 2000). They may also be older employees who face power differentials with more senior managers and leaders. A HPWS which is considerate of age, strong diversity policies and the backing of powerful leaders improve the likelihood of EV for both managers and employees.

3.4 Conclusion to the literature review and research objectives

The literature on EV emerges from several paradigms. OB literature offers insights to individual worker voice behaviour, but the emphasis is on unitarist pro-social EV for innovation, improvement and avoiding defensive silence (Schlosser & Zolin, 2012). These are important to facilitating change but have little to offer social justice. There are various approaches to EV within HPWS, for example Boxall and Macky (2014), discuss how HPWS can empower older workers, or suppress and manipulate their voice. Employees are more diverse than the categorisations of the Equality Act 2010,

and policy and practice must respect the intersectionality of these characteristics if a truly equal workplace is to be achieved. In contrast, in aspiring to be a strategic player, HR have become more managerialist. Conversely, E&D features extensively in the HR literature and is portrayed as an embedded aspect of local government culture (Richards & Sang, 2016).

Resonating with the tenets of inclusion, and despite the many factors that contribute to an employee as an individual, Kirton and Green (2016) ultimately agree with Ackers (2015), that collective representation is important to marginalised groups. Unions can prevent isolation and create the impetus for action for diverse employees through their weight of numbers. Although union density is lower than in the 1990s, collective bargaining and recognition agreements maintain their powerful position. Unitarist attempts to marginalise the unions by supplanting collective mechanisms with direct EV are common (Bryson et al, 2017), but have not replaced the influence of the unions in the public sector (Dundon et al, 2017). Older workers make up a significant portion of union memberships, but in common with councils, union voice mechanisms have yet to keep pace with their changing needs.

With resources permanently under pressure, cuts to 'non-essential' or longer pay-back diversity initiatives in local government seem inevitable (Greene and Kirton, 2011). As well as being a matter of social justice, a fair EV for older workers in what is an undoubtedly ageing workforce, offers local government the prospect of novel solutions delivered by engaged employees. Using competitive advantage as the justification for age policy (Riach, 2011), should be replaced with a broader agenda encompassing social responsibility and justice for diverse older workers (Kirton and Greene, 2016). Professional associations such as CIPD (2018) espouse that social justice and fairness are the essence of diversity and inclusion, but use the business case as a selling point in persuading leaders to embrace the benefits

The path to retirement has become unclear as the SPA increases and older workers are retained, yet financial readiness for retirement is unequal, for example, due to differences in class, health and gender (Phillipson et al, 2018). For public sector employees, altruism and intrinsic factors can be significant to their decisions to remain or return to work, and a meaningful EV is significant to this (Langbein and Stazyk, 2018). For trade unions, retired workers offer a rich seam of knowledge, potentially as mentors for new representatives (Flynn, 2014). In turn unions can protect the rights of semi-retirees, whose employment contracts may be precarious. It is for all these reasons

that older employees require a voice, if they are to realise the benefits of working for longer, or securing a fair and dignified exit where this is not possible.

The points arising from the literature review directed the empirical investigation detailed in the next chapter. The chapter explains the methodological underpinnings of the research as employed in addressing the research questions (1.3) and objectives.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter sets out the rationale, philosophical positioning and operationalisation of the research design. Firstly, the theoretical framework is explained, including a brief explanation of alternatives considered, but rejected. Secondly, the influence of the researcher's experience of local government on neutrality or objectivity is considered. Thirdly, the research design is detailed, including the sampling strategy, research structure and the methods of data gathering. The quality strategy, in respect of ethics and validity in a qualitative study feature thereafter. Finally, the approach to analysis is followed by discussion of the limitations of the research.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the main features of the methodology.

4.1 Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical framework and its relevance to addressing the key research question:

> *In an ageing local government workforce, does employee voice support organizational justice and a better working life for older workers?*

Two further questions are posed to support the key research question as follows:

> *Sq1) Does the local government context support or suppress a fair and equitable employee voice for older workers?*
>
> *Sq2) How do micro-level factors, individual characteristics and organizational factors intersect to influence the employee voice of the heterogeneous older workers of local government?*

Employee voice (EV) research emerges in isolation from several paradigms, which can hinder a holistic understanding of the concept (Kaufman, 2015; Wilkinson, Barry & Morrison, 2020). The advice of Wilkinson et al (2018) is to consider EV at the societal (macro), organizational (meso) and employee (micro) level, inferring that cross-paradigmatic influences will apply. For example, the determinants of EV encountered at the micro-level, are often, but not exclusively, associated with the organizational behaviour or organizational psychology paradigm. Collective voice is associated more with the organizational level (meso), and the employment relations or human resource management (HRM) paradigms, whereas at the macro-level, political studies explore the motivations of those who have power over industrial relations, and who can include, or exclude, certain voices through their control of policy (Wilkinson et al, 2018).

Taking a cross-paradigmatic approach enabled the insights and models of one paradigm to build upon those of others. This is proposed as fertile ground for new research (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016; Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Budd, 2014; Kaufman, 2015; Pohler & Luchak, 2014b), however, inter-paradigmatic conflicts and incommensurabilities are possible. Using an overarching alignment to the employment relations (ER) paradigm (Figure 7) largely resolved such tensions, and developed coherence within the study.

The account of the theoretical framework begins with ontological and epistemic choices, before moving on to the qualitative/ quantitative and positivist/ interpretivist possibilities. The research positioning within the broad church of critical theory (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2009) concludes the section.

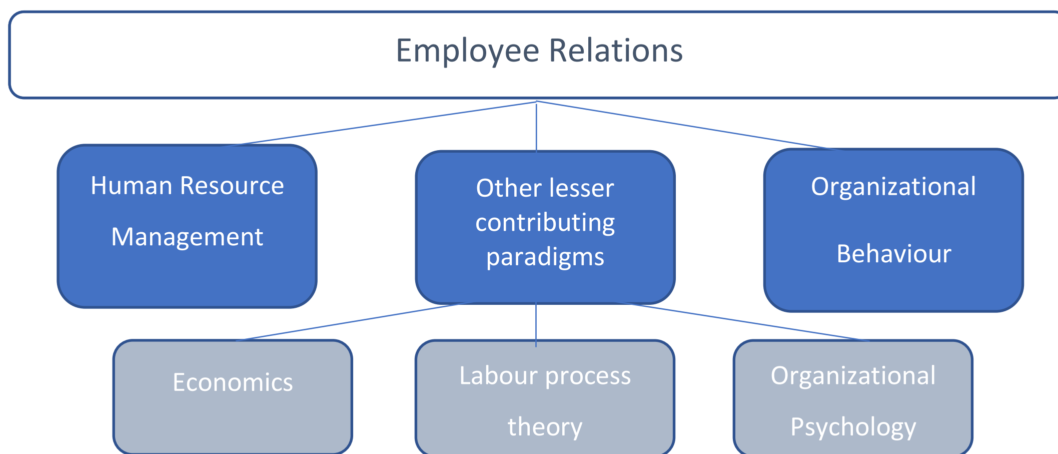


Figure 7: The cross-paradigmatic approach of the research

4.1.1 Research strategies and assumptions

This section critically discusses the methodological underpinnings for the cross-paradigmatic approach. Gill & Johnson (2010, p.241) define methodology as "the study of methods or procedures used in a discipline so as to gain warranted knowledge". Methodological choice is affected by the researcher's ontological positioning, that is their philosophical view of reality, or what constitutes "the fundamental nature of existence" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.366). In establishing what knowledge is valid, or 'warranted', in learning about a reality, epistemological decisions are made, which in turn determine the methods used. As defined by Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.3), "Epistemology is the study of the criteria by which we can know what does and does not constitute warranted, or scientific knowledge." These criteria will vary according to the methodology adopted (Johnson, Buehring, Cassell & Symon, 2006) as discussed in section 4.8.

4.1.1.1 A qualitative approach

According to Bryman (2016, p.694) "quantitative research usually emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data". Assuming a quantitative approach to EV research from the employee perspective is problematic; quantitative measures are likely to remove the participants' intersubjective views of EV from the data. This research sought to achieve *verstehen* using a qualitative, interpretivist approach. Here, the participants subjective interpretation of a phenomena explains their behaviour as opposed to the measurable, observable, *erklaren* (Duberley, Johnson & Cassell, 2012). Interpretive research is indicated where an issue requires a complex, detailed understanding, including that of the context, as this research did. Additionally, a qualitative approach supports critical theory in seeking to empower individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The literature arising from the various paradigms contributing to EV research commend a qualitative approach. For example, Harley (2014) and Guest (2011), advocate that qualitative research strategies should counteract the pervasive positivist, quantitative studies threatening to displace all else in HRM. Kaufman (2015a) advises that positivistic OB research findings add little to explain EV in its real-life context, supporting Harley's (2014, p. 403) view that in organizational behaviour (OB) "the human experience of work has become incidental". Significantly, Taylor et al (2016) identify the relevance of qualitative research for older worker studies.

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) observe an emerging flexibility between the quantitative and qualitative camps, and Taylor et al (2016) identify that qualitative research can elucidate quantitative research findings, and vice versa. Government statistical data used in this study thus informed the interpretation of qualitative empirical findings, although Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p.9) counsel that quantitative data classifications can be based on questionable social norms. As they espouse, "it is not methods but ontology and epistemology which are the determinants of good social science."

4.1.1.2 Ontology, epistemology and reflexivity

Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 392) view epistemic factors in qualitative research as more than just "an absence of numbers"; as Morgan & Smircich (1980) identify, the researcher's assumptions are important. Consistent with *verstehen,* the assumption herein is that the objectification of humans, as in the positivist scientific model, is inadequate in understanding the rich complexity of EV perceptions. Hesse (1978) explains Habermas' objections to positivism, as based on its failure to consider the

value of knowledge built within a community (of scientists), and that positivism does not accommodate social-interaction, self-critique and reflexivity. This research assumes that contributions to EV emerge from several paradigms, whilst reflexively questioning why each paradigmatic interpretation of voice is valid for this research. Reflecting on one's own "interpretation of interpretation" can add quality and value to empirical research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.11).

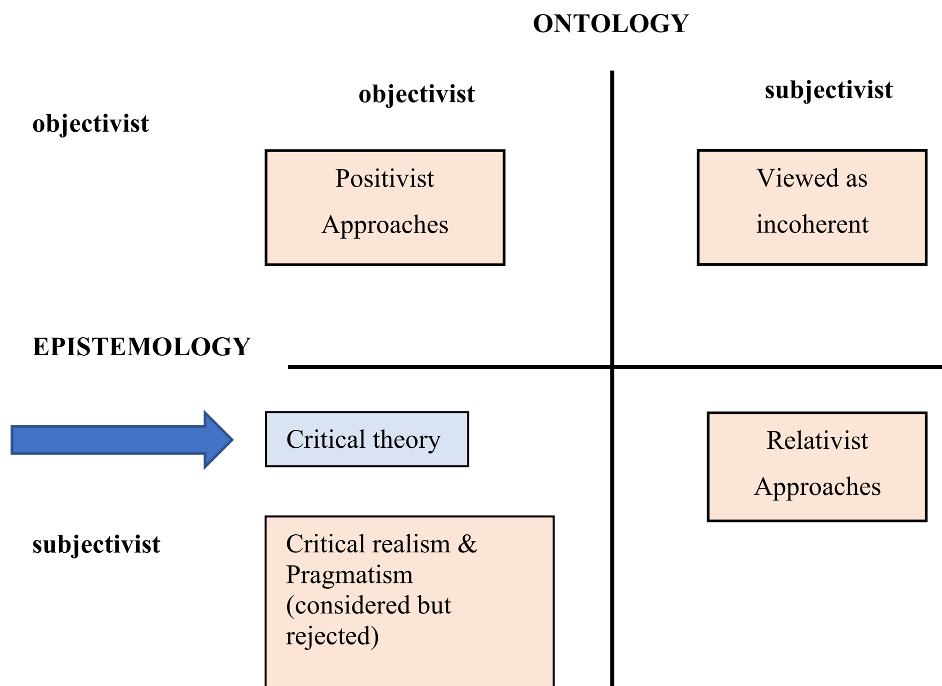


Figure 8: Ontological and epistemological position of the research (indicated by the blue arrow), adapted from Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.162)

Employee voice is associated with asymmetrical employment relationships (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016), indicating critical theory to be more suitable than general interpretivism, which is less questioning of the structures and values of society (Gray, 2017). As a researcher who has previously worked in the sampled organizations, a reflexive approach was essential (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). It was acknowledged that "no data …. are viewed as unaffected by the construction of the researcher" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 113). The likelihood of a theory-neutral observational language, and the subject-object separation associated with objective epistemologies, was constrained by my 20 years of working in local government.

Definitions of ontology revolve around, and expand on, Hart's (1998, p.51) succinct designation of "what reality is", varying with the definer's perspective of the world and existence. Gill and Johnson's (2010, p.241) definition of ontology as "the study of the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence", fits with the assumptions of

this research. Here, consistent with a realist or objective ontology, the structures and processes of EV are regarded as external to the actors. The interpretation and enactment of voice mechanisms, however, are social constructions between employer, trade unions, managers and employees, suggesting a subjective epistemology, which is consistent with critical theory (see Figure 8).

4.1.1.3 Critical theory

The epistemological position of critical theory is that knowledge is valid only where a democratic agreement is reached regarding its legitimacy, "without coercion, distortion or duplicity" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p. 208). The potential for older employees to contribute to a consensus through EV may be distorted by the more powerful employer side. Exploring whether the voice of older workers is heard or suppressed aligns with critical theory, in that inequality and oppression are considered worthy of critique (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). EV may be constrained for example, by regulation or by management agendas. Additionally, Lukes (1982) suggests that distortion occurs through 'truths' established by ideology, such as HRM, supporting critical theory as an approach. Critical theory is concerned with the interests of those who have little power. In this research, those with little power are the older workers who are least heard (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Jasperson, 2018).

Adler, Forbes and Wilmott (2007) regard a standpoint epistemology, such as that of the employee, as having the potential to generate insightful knowledge. Johnson and Clark (2006, p. xxxviii) describe such positioning as phenomenalist, in that an external reality is regarded as being shaped "through the action of culturally specific interpretive processes". Phenomenology is useful for studying social phenomena as felt by participants, from their perspective (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Gill & Johnson, 2010, p.241). Furthermore, commentary on organizational practice and societal factors, in combination with a phenomenological stance, is typical of critical theory research (Prasad, 2018). The approach was closer to Heidegger's interpretation of phenomenalism as the "person in context" than Husserl's position of the phenomenon as a freestanding entity (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.17). As phenomenology is concerned with exploring the essence of a phenomenon, rather than answering a 'how and why' question, as this research did, it was used to guide the critical approach, rather than define it.

Cunliffe (2011, p. 655) submits that "critical theorists identify the historical shaping and impact of mechanisms of power and resistance", concurring with Alvesson and Deetz

(2000), and echoing Gill-McLure's (2014) 'resistance and control' perspective, supporting the epistemological position taken. Critical theory emerged as the natural option to challenge views of older workers as 'problematic', by studying wider effects on their EV (Taylor et al, 2016), for example, the societal ageism that infiltrates the workplace. This supports Wilkinson et al's (2018) and Kaufman's (2020) advice to consider macro-level factors in EV research. The intention was to critique the ideology and practice of those who have power, and pertinent to this research, "to engender democratic social relations and thereby shift the balance of power to currently marginalised groups" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p. 209). A further justification is that in being an approach that 'gives voice', critical theory could be employed to give voice to older employees. This premise underpinned the inductive aspect of the data analysis, supporting the emergence of the participant voice from the data (Bryman, 2016).

4.1.1.4 Critical theory and Habermas

Habermas is viewed as a key contributor to critical theory and a constructive commentator on society (Easterby-Smith; Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). His more optimistic variant of critical theory was adopted in preference to the fault-finding, pessimistic teachings of Horkheimer and Adorno (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018; Eyerman & Shipway, 1981). Nonetheless, critical theory assumes that visible and invisible forms of domination arise from organizational policies and interpersonal relationships (Eyerman & Shipway, 1981), and as Habermas (1984) elaborates, the oppressed may be unaware of their oppression. The proliferation of unitarist views of truth by those in power exacerbates this failure (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015), justifying a strong representative EV to challenge such oppression. Lukes (1982) position is such that where those in power legitimise their ideology as a social norm and followers accept this position, as they repeatedly do, the position of the powerful becomes hegemonic. Essentially as Habermas maintains, it is the powerful who decide and proliferate what is taken as the truth (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018), and as Ogbor (2001) adds, the status quo then becomes the only rational alternative. The implication is that asymmetry of employment relations become the accepted norm in a unitarist context. The increasingly unitarist perspective of HRM (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017) from whence EV mechanisms frequently materialise, reinforces critical theory as valid in exploring how hegemonic regimes impact on the older worker and their voice.

Habermas (1971, 2001) contends that for consensus to exist there must be an 'ideal speech' setting, where members can freely contribute. Power structures, vested

interests, oppressive and repressive forces control the capacity to contribute so individuals must endeavour to free themselves, at least temporarily, if a meaningful, rational consensus is to be attained. Concurring with Lukes (1982), Habermas opines that social hierarchies and asymmetrical power structures encourage the distortion of voice, and stifle emancipation of the oppressed. Johnson and Duberley (2000) suggest critical theory's egalitarian stance conflicts with the traditional goals of management. It requires managers to think beyond agendas that are exploitative of workers, for example, where workforce involvement is presented as improving motivation, whereas the underlying intention is to increase workloads.

As Prasad (2018) concludes, achieving a rational consensus is a consistent feature of all Habermas's commentaries on social processes. The communicative rationality of Habermas (1984) fits with the ethos of the research; decision-making should be based on a strong valid argument "provided in an open forum rather than authority, tradition, ideology or exclusion of participants" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.90). In discussing Habermas's communicative action, Alvesson and Deetz (2011, p.90) reflect the affirmative aspiration of this research in “hope of how we might reform institutions along the lines of morally driven discourse in situations approximating an ideal speech situation”.

4.1.1.5 Alternative approaches to critical theory

Prior to adopting critical theory, critical realism as interpreted by Bhaskar (2008) was considered. Similar positions on ontology and epistemology are indicated, as illustrated by their neighbouring occupancy in Figure 8. Achieving a nuanced, in-depth understanding of EV required an alternative to positivism, such as is offered by Bhaskar. The critical realist's view is that positivists do not sufficiently consider the underlying reasons why their measurements occur as they do. To the critical realist, positivists are "too superficial and non-theoretical in their way of doing research" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p.48). The departure from critical realism occurred because of its lower regard for social constructivism, and lesser emphasis on historical context, than is the case with critical theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). These factors were significant to a holistic understanding of EV in the complex context of local government.

Alvesson and Deetz (2000) present an alternative reading of Habermas' communicative rationale, wherein critical theory is applied to practice, through Forester's (1993) critical pragmatism. The premise for Forester's (2013, p. 8) inclination to critical pragmatism

is "a concern with consequences (and what is consequential, what has value and significance) rather than a concern with any actor's intentions (hopes or promises)". Although Forester's consequences and advice to avoid naïveté and cynicism for its own sake are valid, the intentions of the actors were of interest, thus critical pragmatism was not deemed a suitable philosophical stance.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) interpret critical theory as a form of triple hermeneutics, resonating with Cunliffe's (2011) 'blurred lines' between paradigms. In this research, the single hermeneutic concerns the older participant's interpretation of EV, as gathered as empirical data. The double variant is then the researcher's interpretation of the participant's interpretation of EV in the context. Triple hermeneutics encompasses socio-political awareness in the interpretation of EV, in this research this means through considering the effects of wider and organizational socio-political structures on EV. This perspective of critical theory was closest to the research philosophy, suggesting the validity of employing some hermeneutical methods to support the overall critical approach. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 304) commend 'evolving hybridity', with the caveat that hybridity is "not an excuse to be wantonly eclectic in our treatment of the critical tradition". This was accepted as both good advice and a significant challenge.

4.1.1.6 Addressing the limitations of a Habermasian approach

Taking into account all the above, a qualitative, inductive approach through the lens of critical theory with a Habermasian turn was applied. However, Habermas is not without his detractors. In addressing criticism of Habermas' work as over-intellectualised and removed from practical application, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p.190) advocate that more communicatively grounded compromises, based on rationale, rather than on only position or power, are more useful to management research. Additionally, Honneth (1982) asserts that Habermas fails to account for the intrinsic moral tension existing in employment relations. However, a basic premise of communicative rationality is that the actors care, or have a stake in reaching a consensus (Habermas, 1984). In this research it is assumed that shared interests of managers and employees arise from public service, providing an ethical basis for consensus. Habermas's view is of human emancipation through rational, structured, reasoned public dialogue (Prasad, 2018). For EV, this research assumes a later interpretation of Habermas' position as "approximating an ideal speech situation", Alvesson and Deetz (2005, p. 79). In practice ideal speech is difficult to achieve in its entirety, but incremental progression is possible. Consequently, Alvesson and Deetz's (2000, p. 191) pragmatic approach to

make “critical research less anti-management and more relevant for organizational practitioners”, informed the philosophy of this research.

As a research strategy, concern for the ideal speech situation involved, for example, participant anonymity, a private setting for interviews and careful undistorted, interpretation of data. An unforced dialogue encouraged the participants to reflect on their responses, and fieldnotes were taken to identify corrupting influences (see 4.6.1 & 4.6.3). Alvesson and Ashcraft’s (2009, p.64) view that improving work life is part of the researcher’s “accountability to context”, will be realised through sharing findings with those in position to facilitate positive change, via a non-academic report. The enduring pluralistic traditions of the public sector also imply that good practice regarding older employees may be in place. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.176), advocate research should incorporate the “more positive aspects of social institutions”.

Critical theory is charged with paying insufficient attention to the diversity of oppressed groups, and intergroup tensions, particularly those which are gender-based (Prasad, 2018). This was addressed as a natural element of the research, and as reflexive practice as an older female researcher. The older worker participants were recognised as heterogeneous individuals, as well as social category members, and the intersections of their heterogeneities were considered both at social group and individual levels. Also included were older managers who might not be considered as marginalised, but who experienced austerity, job enlargement and downsizing similarly to their peers (Mowbray, 2018).

4.2 The position of the researcher

A central assumption of critical theory is that knowledge production is subject to an “absence of neutrality”, and that those taking up the tradition must lay bare their values and ethical positioning, or ‘axiology’ (Prasad, 2018, p.175). Borrowed from critical hermeneutics, recognising one’s 'hermeneutic horizon', formed from personal prejudices and pre-understandings, was viewed as important to achieving meaningful interpretation. Where they add insight to research, prejudices are viewed positively rather than as bias, consistent with the subjective epistemology of critical theory (Gadamer, 1975). Rescher (2004) advises reflecting on personal standards, the standards of our social context, and the research setting. As a local government employee of 20 years, such a reflection was essential to defending the critical validity of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The advice of Spence (2017) to be aware of

personal motivations, and tendencies to privilege certain interpretations or groups, sensitised the researcher from the onset.

The researcher worked in two local government organizations over the periods of 1977-1986, and 1997-2008, during episodes such as the ‘Winter of Discontent’, the Thatcher government and too many restructuring cycles to recall individually. This was an intensive period of new public management (Gill McLure, 2014), where the failures of one initiative, such as Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) were replaced by the challenges of another (Lockwood & Porcelli, 2013), with little employee involvement. Habermas (1990) contends that Gadamer's (1975) 'prejudices' are vulnerable to distortion by the forces of domination (Prasad & Prasad, 2002). The ‘Democracy Day’ march of 1984 was a personally observed example of the political distortion of EV. The difference in the estimated number of protesters between the police (10,000) and the TUC (60,000) implies that at least one party was not wholly accurate (Ardill, 1984). It occurred that the truth of that day would be interpreted according to the vested interests of parties other than the marchers.

Becoming a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) required active engagement with HRM discourse. This was as Kuhn (1970) explains, consistent with socialising newcomers into the consensus of what is acceptable and true, through training in the HR discipline. The standards of competency and behaviours of the “HR profession map” (CIPD, 2018), embody and perpetuate the cycle of HRM (Grey & Mitev, 1995). As an HR adviser you are expected to learn and reproduce the discourse to secure and retain recognition. On the other hand, as an active trade union member, exposure to alternative views encouraged a critical perspective.

A reflexive understanding of ‘truth’ developed through collecting evidence to support disciplinary and grievance investigations. This involved hearing differing versions of ‘the truth’, and inconsistent constructions of the same event. As Smith et al (2009, p.18) explain, “our being in the world is always perspectival, always temporal and always in relation to something”. Reflecting on axiology, was a prompt to be mindful of the influence of values on the interpretation of the research data. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p.421) caution, clarity regarding researcher positionality is "crucial in social justice research".

4.3 Research design

This section presents the approach to data collection and analysis, beginning with an introduction to the methodological rationale. The sampling strategy, methods and ethos for gathering empirical data follow, closing with the approach to analysis.

Research design is “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms, first to strategies of inquiry, and second to methods for collecting empirical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 25). As a critical theorist, reflexivity regarding how and what is collected was built into the design (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). In critical theory, empirical material is less significant than its interpretation against theoretical frames, in exploring, beyond the surface, the reasons why certain ideas are taken for granted (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Using the research to promote change addresses the supposed theoretical excess and practical insufficiency of critical theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Here, praxis implies using theory in a practical way within a profession by using critical theory to construct practical measures to encourage social justice (Comstock, 1982).

4.4 Sampling strategies

Saunders (2012) identifies that the purpose of research data is to answer the research question. The sample of participants should provide relevant data, be consistent with the aims of the research, and be sufficiently numerous to facilitate understanding. However, what is sufficient varies with the research approach. In this research, consistent with the qualitative approach and subjective epistemology of critical theory (Gill & Johnson, 2010), a rich data set of multiple perspectives was sought and gathered using a purposive or non-random sampling technique.

There were practical reasons for choosing the organizations of the research setting, not least the likelihood of access and the geographical reach of the researcher. Access was assisted by the research subject; the ageing workforce is of interest to councils who have few resources available for research. Additionally, having worked in the region, and as a chartered member of the CIPD, a network of local contacts was in place. In this respect there was an element of convenience in the sampling (Bryman, 2016). The rationale for the location was that the organizations were governed by the same political party (Labour), had a similar industrial past, and were geographically close so shared elements of a common heritage. As unitary authorities, there was no other tier of government between themselves and central government, so all were responsible for the full range of council services. The councils varied in size and strategic choices (such as

for outsourcing services), which facilitated comparison of the contextual influences on voice (Miller & Glassner, 2011). To understand how politics and governance might impact the findings, a Conservative-led council (Council E), a two-tier authority serving four town councils was added to the sample.

The rationale for selecting organizational participants was guided by Kaufman's (2015a) employment relations model (see Figure 3). The stratified purposive sample incorporated the organizational hierarchy and the perspectives of the principal actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015), to provide the environmental and organizational data required within the multilevel research design (Wilkinson et al, 2018). At the individual level, the sample of older workers was assembled using a heterogeneous non-probability technique (Saunders, 2012). Participants were screened to encompass the diversity of older employees by considering characteristics such as role, gender, age cohort, employment contract type and disability (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018). According to Saunders (2012, p.42) "Heterogeneous purposive sampling uses our judgement (*as researchers)* to choose participants with sufficiently diverse characteristics to provide the maximum variation possible in the data collected". This is consistent with exploring which older voices are heard and which are silenced. It is associated with revealing key themes in the data, but is not generalisable in the same way as a larger, quantitative study (see 4.8). Additionally, as frequently occurs in qualitative research, opportunistic sampling occurred where a valuable participant became available, for example, a senior TUC official who provided an overarching trade union perspective of EV in the research region.

Refining the sample was an ongoing process during data gathering, as is the case with more theoretical sampling strategies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, a trade union convenor was identified late in the research to confirm a significant response from another source. The purposive sample (Bryman & Bell, 2015) corresponded with the phased data collection (Figure 9), so that one phase of data honed the selection of the next sub-sample, but it was not an iterative process as in grounded theory. Correspondingly, the number of participants to be included in the research was an estimate at the onset, only finalised when data saturation was perceived to have occurred. Bryman and Bell's (2015) assessment of a suitable sample size for data saturation in qualitative research suggests that what is crucial is that the sample should convincingly support the conclusions of the research. As Saunders (2012) discusses,

opinion regarding the minimum number of participants in heterogeneous research varies from between 5 and 30 individuals.

Code	Role	Age range	Gender	*Access method/* contribution
A1	HR Director Council A (semi retiring)	56-60	F	*Own network of local government contacts/* Long tenure working in senior role through major change and austerity.
B2	HR Director Council B (retiring)	56-60	F	*Director of Studies recommendation/* Long tenure working in senior role through major change and austerity.
E3	Regional TUC Official	56-60	M	*Supervisor 2 recommendation/* Overarching perspective of local government unions over time.
A4	Councillor Council A	61-66	M	*Own network/* Labour councillor who has also worked in local government since 1970s
E5	CEO - comparator Council E	40-51	M	*Own network/* Wide experience of research setting as manager, councillor as well as current leader role
E6	CIPD senior branch volunteer	40-51	F	*Attending branch meetings as a chartered CIPD member/* Recently professionally qualified and has held several positions in public sector HR including several years in the setting.
B35	HR Director Council B	40-51	M	*Director of Studies recommendation/* Recent incumbent of Council B. Knowledge of organizational strategy for E&D and comparative employment relations experiences at a neighbouring authority where previously employed.

Table 3: Participants informing the history and context of the research

Bryman and Bell (2015) identify that a broader scope, such as occurs here in addressing multiple levels of influence on EV, may require more participants. In this research there were 36 interview participants, 50 attendees at the observed equality forum and 22 individuals attending the retired TUC members forum. Although some participants were accessed through their employing organizations, others were contacted independently, to minimise the sample reflecting only the management position on EV. All the participants were volunteers. Good fortune played a part, as Saunders's (2012) suggests occurs frequently in qualitative research. One participant, sampled to inform organizational practice, provided access to 10 older worker participants selected purposively on the required characteristics, out of a common concern for older employees. Unfortunately, the anonymous nature of the research prevents the naming of participant D17, but this participant's efforts greatly added to the diversity of the sample of older employees. Participants were interviewed across the four main organizations, where this was relevant to a meaningful analysis. For example, equality and diversity specialists were interviewed in all four organizations whereas gardeners were not, as sampling a variety of roles was more important.

Seven stakeholders with macro-level perspectives of the history and context of EV and older workers in local government were sampled (see Table 3 for access and contribution detail). Participants were anonymised using a simple coding system whereby the first letter represented the council, followed by a number denoting the sequence in the data collection. For example, A23 was an employee of Council A and the twenty-third contributor to the data collection. The second group of participants were selected to explore the meso-level factors of the current internal organizational context. This consisted of ten interview participants and the members of an observed equality forum (see Table 4). The sample included the HR advisers and equality and diversity (E&D) managers across the four organizations who were working with EV, and were in a practical position to influence organizational justice. The roles sampled had special significance to EV and older workers. The HR advisers were employee relations specialists, as opposed to HR generalists, and trade union representatives provided their contrasting collective perspective of EV. Initially, a focus group of HR advisers was envisaged, but was not feasible because of their work patterns. The observation of the equality forum of 50 members provided first-hand experience of an equality voice mechanism in action.

Code	Role	Age range	Gender	*Access method*/ contribution
D7	HR Adviser	25-30	M	*CIPD HR network/* Employment relations role in Council D and younger persons perspective.
A8	E & D Director	41-51	M	*Own HR network/* Knowledge of E&D policy in Council A and long tenure.
A9	HR Adviser	56-60	F	*Own HR network/* Employment relations role in Council A and long tenure.
C10	HR Adviser	31-40	M	*CIPD HR network/* Employment relations role in Council C.
B11	E&D Consultant	41-51	F	*Recommendation from attendee of citizen equality forum/* Knowledge of E&D policy and its implementation in Council B. View of policy as a disabled person.
B16	Equality event (50 participants)	20-65	M F O	*Participant B11/* Observation of voice mechanism and commitment to E&D in Council B.
D17	E&D Adviser	52-55	F	*Contact with assistant director provided through delegate encountered at CIPD branch event/* Knowledge of E&D policy and its implementation in Council C
C19	Equality Adviser	41-51	F	*Participant C13/* Knowledge of E&D policy and its implementation in Council C
B36	HR Adviser	41-51	F	*Requested to participate/* Employment relations role in Council B. Previous employment relations role in neighbouring council.
E37	GMB regional representative	41-51	M	*Own local government network/* Worked as a union convenor in two of the councils in the research setting before a taking up a regional role encompassing the four councils. Contributed to the data on local government history and context.
A39	UNISON trade union convenor	31-40	M	*Approached demonstration against austerity/* Works in the context and has knowledge of issues raised by older workers.

Table 4: Phase 3 participants informing organizational practice

The third group of participants sampled were the 19 heterogeneous older employees required before saturation of the common data was achieved. These participants were aged from 52 years upwards, including four employees of 65 years or older (see Table 5). Two participants had strong links with trade unions, one as a current representative (GMB) and one as a former representative (UNISON), four were also line managers and two were senior managers. Additional to the 19 participants selected as older, three of the participants from the other groups sampled were also older workers, and responses relating to their age, occurring as a natural element of their interview, were curated with data relating to age.

A central tenet of this research is that older workers are not homogeneous. Diversity in terms of age, gender, role, tenure, employment contract type, and having a protected characteristic secondary to age were present in the sample (Syed, 2014; Taylor et al, 2016). Some data, however, was idiosyncratic to individual participants and of little significance to the research question, so was disregarded. Additionally, including the numerous combinations of the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 would have created too great a workload to permit a meaningful analysis. Conversely, other characteristics were indicated by the literature as relevant to EV, for example, extraversion (LePine, Van Dyne & Murphy, 2001) and education (Porcellato et al, 2010). Moreover, the exclusion of some voices was necessary "to avoid getting entangled in established categories and distinctions" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 216). Although some older participants in the sample were not white and British, there were insufficient older employees generally to consider race in combination with other characteristics. According to the Council B Workforce Employee Report 2016-2017, older BAME employees account for less than 3 percent of the workforce, with less than 1 percent in Councils C and D. The E&D manager in Council A could recall only one older employee in this category. This is supported by their equality scheme report of 2016 which found BAME employee numbers were at significantly lower levels than the resident population (see also 5.3.3).

The workshop, held to explore the veracity of the initial findings, included 22 older, and retired trade union member participants. The unions represented were UNISON, UNITE, UCU, PCS, the NUT (albeit with just one member).

Code	Role	Age range	M/ F	Chosen by	Disability	*Access method*/ **Contribution**
B12	Admin/ clerical	56-60	F	N	Y	*Approached as an attendee at a citizen equality forum/* Experience of using EV as a person with an invisible disability with experience of outsourcing/insourcing.
C13	Professional (and line manager)	56-60	F	N	Y	*Own HR network/* Experience of using EV as a person with an invisible disability, experience of HR and trade unions. Long tenure in a variety of roles within the Council.
A14	Admin/ clerical	56-60	F	N		*Own LG network/* Experience of EV within a school as a council employee. Voice at two levels i.e. within a school and within a council. An IT worker and an introverted person.
B15	Professional	56-60	M	N		*Own LG network/* Returning retiree in a technical role. Experience of working in three councils
D18	Admin/ clerical	61-66	F	Y	Y	*Participant17/* Former UNISON TU representative of long tenure. Worked across the functions of the employing organization so has a broad perspective of council life.
E20	Senior manager	61-66	M	Y		*Participant 5/* Working beyond 65 in Council E in a multisite role. Not looking to retire.
B21	Admin/ clerical	67-75	F	Y	Y	*Secretary to participant 2/* Global experience outside of councils and visible disability. Voice whilst away from work receiving cancer treatment.
A23	Professional	56-60	M	N		*Own LG network/* Experience of required voice (health and safety) to comply with legislation as well as own EV.
D24	Supervisor (Admin)	56-60	F	Y		*Participant17/* Voice in a service and role strongly affected by austerity and restructuring

Code	Role	Age range	M/ F	Chosen by	Disability	*Access method*/ Contribution
D25	Manager	52-55	F	Y		*Participant 17/* Voice in a service strongly affected by austerity and restructuring.
D26	Manual	61-66	M	N		*Participant 17/* Voice in a service strongly affected by austerity and restructuring. Previous experience of working in a strongly unionised environment. Due to retire.
D27	Senior manager	56-60	F	N		*Requested to participate/* Own voice as an older female senior manager and Senior Management Team (SMT) view of EV.
D28	Admin/ clerical	67-75	F	Y	Y	*Participant 17/* Voice as an employee working beyond age 65.
D29	TU Rep/ Manual	61-66	M	Y		*Participant 17/* Experience of collective voice as a GMB representative and older worker.
D30	Manual	67-75	F	Y		*Participant 17/* Oldest participant view of EV/ working across departments. Returning retiree.
D31	Manual	52-55	M	Y		*Participant 17/* View of voice as a longstanding seasonal temporary employee. Youngest older participant. Experience of working in a strongly unionised environment.
D32	Manual	61-66	F	Y		*Participant 17/* Voice as a front line female manual worker
D33	Manual	61-66	F	Y		*Participant 17/* Voice as a front line female manual worker. Experience of working at two councils in the setting.

Code	Role	Age range	M/F	Chosen by	Disability	*Access method*/ Contribution
D34	Professional	56-60	F	Y		*Participant 17/* Experience of direct EV, employee engagement strategy and restructuring. Long tenure.
E38	Union retired members forum	60 & over	F5 M17	N	Y	*Participant 3* Sense checking of initial findings. Impartiality - two members still work in the context but none were involved in the original research

Table 5: Phase 5 older worker participants

4.5 Research Structure

As illustrated in Figure 9, a stratified, six-phased design was used to explore the multiple levels of influence on EV that Wilkinson et al (2018) recommend. Phase one was a reflexive exercise to explore and document researcher assumptions, as discussed in section 4.2.

Phase two (Figure 9) involved gathering macro-level data on the history and context of the councils, with respect to the economic, legal and socio-cultural external factors impacting on EV (Kaufman, 2015a). At phase three, data was gathered regarding meso-level perspectives of the internal organizational context for EV and older workers. The fourth phase consisted of gathering secondary data regarding EV and equality and diversity policy from council websites and management participants, to support the findings of phases two and three. Phase five considered EV at the individual level, through the perspectives of the older participants sampled, using insights gained from the earlier phases to inform the questioning. Phase six was the TUC retired member's workshop included as a quality measure to sense-check the validity of the initial findings.

The stratification process was guided by Comstock's (1982) five-step process for research design in the critical theory tradition. The first and second steps involved reaching an understanding of the perspectives of the stakeholders. The sociocultural factors potentially influencing their perspectives were incorporated through a dialogue set in the natural surroundings of the phenomenon. The second phase of this research design similarly sought to understand the broader influences affecting EV. More loosely, Comstock's third step generally concerns existing sociocultural structures, but in this research, was interpreted at phases three, four and five through exploring organizational assumptions, processes and practices for EV. According to Prasad (2018, p.167), "This is the moment of *ideology-critique* where the researcher actively looks for inconsistencies, contradictions, distortions, and asymmetries".

The final two steps of Comstock's process for critical theory research are seldom actioned. These involve making the participants aware of the findings of the research, to promote good practice, empowerment and ultimately organizational justice. This will be a separate activity following on from the PhD, consisting of short reports to encourage the sharing of good practice among those in a position to improve the outcomes of older employees.

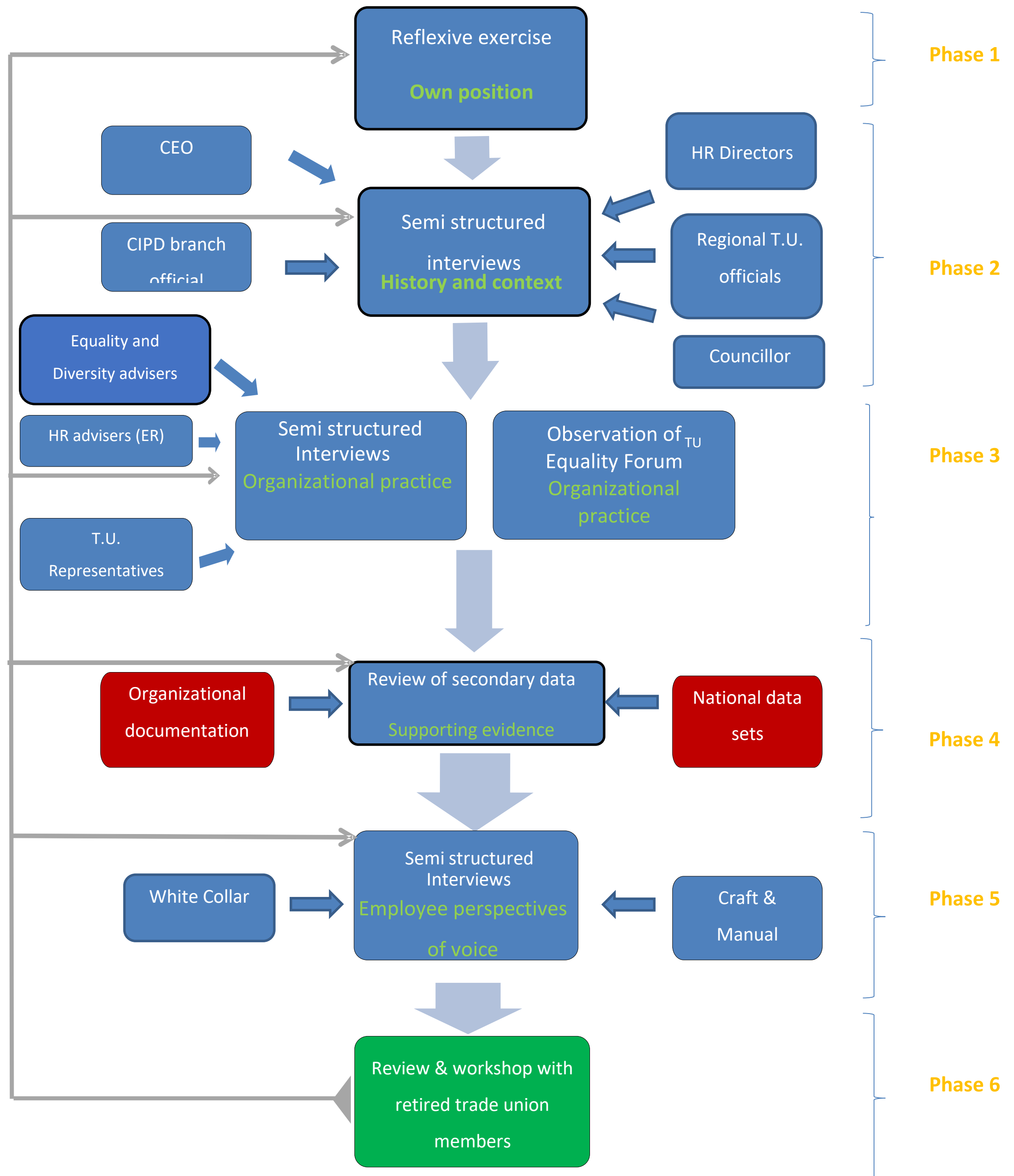


Figure 9: Data gathering process

As the final component of the design, Ryan and Bernard's (2003) recommendations for identifying themes were used to inform the analysis. The role of theory was significant; however, theory played a sensitizing, rather than a defining role in identifying themes (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). The detailed rationale for the thematic analysis is discussed in section 4.9.

4.6 Rationale for the methods

This section explains the rationale for the selection of the methods or "the particular techniques used to collect and analyse data in the research" (King & Brooks, 2017, p.13). These methods were principally semi-structured interviews and an observation, concluding with a workshop to evaluate the findings, as discussed. EV processes are sometimes private or time consuming, and some issues are not observable, thus justifying data gathering via interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As an aid to reflexivity and memory, field diary notes supplemented the interview transcripts to provide non-verbal details, capturing such reflections close to the event (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Secondary data, that is data which are useful to the research but which were gathered for other reasons, assisted interpretation of the empirical data against the general context for EV (see 4.6.5). Organizational documentation was readily available because regulations, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, require certain workforce data to be published. Secondary data is advantageous to the researcher in saving time and resources (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). As an embedded aspect of the research, reflexive practice, that is reflecting on how we reflect, for example as a critical theorist, then extended to data analysis in formulating the reducing and coding strategies (see 4.95 and Appendices 2 and 3). Next, the methods are explained individually.

4.6.1 Interviews

Understanding the limitations and strengths of interview types is vital to making an informed choice (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen to develop the rich data pertinent to addressing the research questions (Cook, 2008). Such interviews were a feature of the researcher's previous employments as a systems analyst, HR practitioner and lecturer, and as Rabionet (2011, p.565) concludes, "training and experience are crucial" to good qualitative research. Also, the first two interviews were approached as pilots to assess the process.

Contextual knowledge informed the physical preparation for interviews, for example in dressing to be acceptable to manual workers or HR officers. Corresponding with Ayres' (2008) view on the interviewer's capacity to interpret participant responses, sensitivity to reactions to the interviewer's class, age or gender was maintained during the interviews. The participant's comfort level and interest were supported by observation of paralinguistic and non-verbal clues (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). Knowledge of local government terminology, including the esoteric context-related jargon and the colloquialisms of the region further aided communication. Imposing the

interviewer's values on the interviewee was reduced by avoiding leading questions (Ayres, 2008), but as important was developing sensitivity and humility as a researcher in the exchanges with participants (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015; Rabionet, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews offered a less intrusive method of gathering data than participant observation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Rather than using a structured set of questions, interview guides (see Table 6 and Appendix 1) encouraged a purposeful and meaningful conversation (Ayres, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). A natural flow of conversation was facilitated by the flexible sequencing of the interview guides, since rich, as opposed to fixed responses were sought (Ayres, 2008). Consistent with the ethos of the research and reflecting Habermas's (1971) ideal speech situation, interview guides allowed the researcher to gather the participants' view on their terms (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Interviews reflected the participant's world as well as the researcher's interests (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015).

The interviews of phases two and three (Figure 9) were in the main conducted in the participants' places of work, with the independently recruited participants choosing neutral spaces such as coffee shops. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) identify, interview location adds to the knowledge produced, so was captured in the field notes. The areas covered varied according to the phase of the research and the participants' jobs. For example, employee relations specialists' guides were different to the chief executive officer's guide because their contributions to the research were different. In-depth semi-structured interviews encompass the contexts and situations from which data emerges, as well as providing insights into the cultural frames that participants use to make sense of their experiences (Miller and Glassner, 2011, p.145).

Using Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) metaphors of the interviewer as a miner or a traveller, some questions were designed to elicit or 'mine' information, for example, by asking closed questions, such as whether the participant was a member of a professional body. Other questions were designed to encourage the participant to tell a story. Such responses may challenge any 'taken for granted' assumptions of the interviewer, as a traveller might be challenged on their journey, for example to questions concerning perceptions of trade unionism. The unstructured interview was deemed an unsuitable instrument; an informal conversation would be time consuming for busy participants, and opportunities for exploration of common ground between participants would be lost.

Area of interest	Data
1. Role of participant (general introduction and settling in)	Place in organization, tenure, contract type, any representative capacity, requirement in role to speak out
2. Purpose of EV	The employee perspective of purpose, value to employee, managers and organization
3. Own voice as an employee	Feeling listened to in role and as a person. Evidence that views are actively sought and acted on. Any history of voice. Level of comfort in speaking out.
4. Voice in local government.	Organizational perspective of voice, Distinctiveness of working in public sector. Effects of outsourcing. Role of HR.
5. Diverse older employees	View on who should have a voice and at what level. Contribution of older workers Motivation to use voice over time. Barriers/ enablers to older workers using their voice Culture and attitude of others to age Workforce diversity over time and diversity of TU representatives. Awareness of policy
6. Use of voice mechanisms e.g. Digital media, meetings, one-to-ones, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, working groups, employee reps, TU reps, partnership groups, Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), employee forums, team meetings, employee member on board, quality circle, appraisal	Raising an idea or an issue with others Relationship with the collective voice Awareness of direct methods Usefulness of new methods Effect of available mechanisms on what is raised. Significance of mechanism for older and diverse workers voices Thoughts on deliberate and imposed silence
7. Developments	Anything in the pipeline? If you could put one thing in place to help you as an older worker, what would it be?

Table 6: Interview guide for older worker participant group

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe participants as ‘elite’ where they have expertise or positional power over others and as such, the usual symmetry of the research

interview may be reversed. Participants in phase two had power over the researcher because of their hierarchical status, and ability to restrict access to others. Awareness of background knowledge, technical language and the etiquette of management conversation encouraged their commitment and contribution (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). One elite participant was my former director. This affected how far probing questioning could be taken, but biographical knowledge and expectations of their possible perspectives gained through the former relationship, facilitated their contribution.

Acquiring understanding of what is unique to an individual, as opposed to what are common issues for older employees more generally, required a flexible approach to the phase five interviews. The inclusion of participants across five organizations, down their hierarchy and in different job roles encouraged a fair and democratic data set (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). As EV may be affected by organizational difference, phase three employment relations and equality and diversity (E&D) participants from across the four main councils provided comparative data, which informed the analysis and construction of the interviews of phase five (Figure 9).

4.6.1.1 Storage, recording and encryption of data

Interviews were recorded on a portable digital audio recorder. Supplementary to the formal informed consent process, a thorough explanation of how the recording would be handled formed the initial part of the interview (see section 4.7). Bryman and Bell (2015) identify that recordings avoid the limitations of human memory, enable repeated examination of the text by the researcher, and the critique of peers. It was better, and a matter of good manners, to give the participant full attention during the interview, rather than scribbling notes or losing eye contact (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). The recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, which was very time consuming as Bryman and Bell (2015) identify, but revealed contradictions and commonalities that were used to refine and improve subsequent interviews. The transcripts were returned to participants in an encrypted format, via e-mail, to confirm they were an accurate and complete record of the interview. One participant made a small alteration to add clarity, and another chose to redact an answer because on reflection they were unhappy with their response.

Brinkman and Kvale (2015, p.204) opine that “transcripts are impoverished, decontextualized renderings of live interview conversations”, based on limitations such as failure to record intonations and pauses. However, clarity was provided by returning

to the original audio recording to listen again to the participant's intonations, aided by the fieldnotes. The limitations of an inexperienced analyst were reduced by interpreting the finer nuances of participant responses as analytical skill levels improved.

4.6.2 Observation

In phase three of the data gathering, the unstructured observation of a diversity forum, as a non-participant observer, revealed how espoused diversity values applied in practice (Silverman, 2016). Gaining access to the closed setting was secured by attending a citizen's equality forum. Bryman (2016) advises that determination and perseverance are required for this type of access, as was the case here. Participation in the forum activities was not intended. The event was documented using copious notes written up shortly after the event (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Recorded elements included the room layout and the activities of the participants (Gray, 2017). In addition, the organiser provided an agenda and handouts on which supplementary notes were written. Groups belonging to the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 were represented. I was positioned in a group considering the ageing workforce, so observed this aspect of interest in more detail. At this point, the "observer as participant" (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015, p.161) position was taken to minimise researcher influence yet maintain the natural flow of the discussion. Complete observers are sometimes perceived as snoopers, thus prompting unnatural behaviour in participants (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). The notes were approved by the organiser and did not include direct quotes, as had been agreed.

Using an unstructured observation avoided imposing the observer's own framework, so that the views of the participants were heard clearly. However, control over the event was very limited. As an overt, announced observer, there were few ethical issues; participant information sheets were distributed, and participants were invited to ask questions regarding the research (Gray, 2017).

4.6.3 Field notes

Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) advocate a planned approach to field notes, to ensure consistency with the overall methodological and theoretical framework of the research. The purpose of field notes in this research was to capture details of the physical environment, to support other recordings, such as interview transcripts, with contextual data. For example, on one occasion, it was established that two participants had been informed of the closure of their facility, only one week prior to their interview, which was noted. As a critical theorist, any artefacts suggesting management hegemony or

oppressive power relations were of special interest, for example, the many framed displays of council values could be interpreted as 'brand management' from a critical perspective (Purcell, 2014b).

Easterby-Smith et al's (2015) checklist for writing field notes was observed, including exercising discreetness, meeting the level of detail required and avoiding analysis too early on. The notes were handwritten in a hardback notebook (Appendix 6), and were captured as close to the event as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Easterby-Smith et al (2015) encourage rigorous notetaking, as what appears to be insignificant at the time, for example participant body language, may later shed light on the findings.

4.6.4 Workshop

The workshop (Appendix 4) was an example of taking Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) advice to incorporate flexibility into research designs (see Figure 9, phase six). According to Bryman (2016), presenting findings to research participants to confirm that the researcher has accurately understood their perspectives, can strengthen the credibility of the research. The original plan was to hold a focus group with eight participants who were familiar with the collective voice as members of a trade union regional forum. As the phase six participants were not involved in the earlier phases, it was envisaged that their objectivity would strengthen the findings. The focus group method provides a rich means of evaluating initial findings through the interactions of the participants (Bryman, 2016). Krueger and Casey (2009) recommend between five and twelve participants per group as being most likely to promote a good level of discussion. Eight were selected because this was the number of volunteers who had confirmed their attendance to the chair of the meeting. The plan was to introduce the findings using a PowerPoint presentation, and then to hold the focus group.

The plan was abandoned due to 22 members attending, some of whom had travelled a considerable distance to take part. Usefully, some members were active in the research setting, and were able to contribute additional data, as well as informed commentary on the veracity of the initial findings. Suffice to say, additional participant information sheets, the pre-designed topic guide and a simple observation schedule, were rapidly adapted to exploit the opportunity (Bryman, 2016). After establishing informed consent, delivery of the planned presentation and a discussion using the original questions for the focus group, was facilitated by the assistance of the chair of the meeting. The use of a recording device became unviable because of the number of

participants, so notes were taken, which were subsequently distributed to all participants.

4.6.5 Secondary and National Data Sets

Secondary data, although collected for other purposes and so not contextualised (Seale, 2011), provided access to the high-quality research findings of others in the field (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Office of National Statistics (ONS) datasets, CIPD reports, and the Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS) (Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 2013) were the sources, although the latter was less useful than hoped for, as much of the analysis uses aged 50 years plus as a category. Organizational policies and reports from the public sector are largely in the public domain, and so were available on council websites. Senior managers provided other documentation, to evidence their approach to age, diversity and EV.

Using quantitative data to inform a qualitative study need not corrupt the integrity of the qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Easterby-Smith et al (2015) advise that although government sources, such as WERS, are generally of high quality, a critical evaluation is necessary before using them. Although the general limitations of surveys apply, the number of journal articles using WERS runs into the hundreds, suggesting that the data is held in high regard (Timming, 2009). The latest study in 2011 surveyed 2680 UK workplaces, and has evolved to reflect the changing nature of employment relations (van Wanrooy et al, 2013).

4.7 Ethical considerations

In qualitative studies, ethical issues may emerge as the research journey progresses, thus requiring reflexivity in dealing with dilemmas as they appear (Ryen, 2011). In one interview it transpired, through observation of body language, that a 'volunteer' had been coerced, albeit mildly, into participation. A dilemma arose in that the manager recommending the individual might withdraw other participants, or reprimand the individual, whereas the individual had every right to withdraw. The interview was paused to establish the basis of the discomfort, to reaffirm the purpose and confidential nature of the research, before ascertaining that the participant wished to continue. Ryen (2011) emphasises that unprofessional and careless behaviour may impede access to a setting for future researchers, so thorough preparation, clear administrative arrangements and respectful treatment of participants were maintained.

Principle	Action
1. Ensuring no harm to participants	Ethics training undertaken. Anonymised data. Overt, legally compliant research. Research design approved by supervisor with sectoral knowledge. Attention to participant wellbeing. Attention to beneficence. Written explanation of complaints process provided
2. Respecting the dignity of research participants	Active listening and fair representation of views. Acknowledging expertise and values of participants. Good manners and egalitarian questioning based on improving their position.
3. Ensuring fully informed consent	Participant information sheet explaining risks and benefits at each stage. Unpressured voluntary participation and right to withdraw or leave a question unanswered. Informed consent form approved by university ethics board.
4. Protecting privacy	Interviews held in a private area or off site in a safe location if preferred. Transcription and anonymising of data by researcher. Data retained until individual and organization anonymised. Adherence to the Data Protection Act. Submission of a data management plan prior to research approval process.
5. Ensuring confidentiality of research data	Password protected storage on SHU repository. Redaction of all identifying data relating to individuals and organizations.
6. Protecting anonymity	Individuals and organizations referred to by code in all circumstances so that, even where anonymity is waived, it is applied to prevent identification by elimination. Use of paraphrasing rather than quotes from organizational documents to prevent unscrupulous use of search engines. Anonymising organizational documentation, full references to be held by Sheffield Hallam University only.
7. Avoiding deception	The aims of the research included on the participant information sheet. Dissemination of transcripts and findings to participants.
8. Declaration of affiliations, funding sources and conflict of interests	Independent research
9. Honesty and transparency in communicating about research.	Abiding by principles of university and professional body. Clear communication of purpose of research on participant information sheet. Tailored sheets for participant groups incorporating issues particular to the group and stating aim of data gathering from that group. Contact e-mail address provided and openness to discuss concerns. Integrity as a core value of research
10. Avoidance of any misleading or false findings	Audit trail of research process maintained All documentation created in a secure area and to be readily available if needed. A balanced pluralistic approach to data gathering. Additional sources identified to resolve conflicting data.

Table 7: Application of ethical principles, adapted from Easterby-Smith (2015)

In their analysis of the ethical codes of professional bodies, including the British Psychological Society and the Academy of Management, Bell and Bryman (2007) identify several common elements. Table 7 summarises how these elements were addressed in this research. In addition to meeting Sheffield Hallam University ethical guidelines, as a chartered member of CIPD, their professional code of conduct was respected. In taking a critical stance "a moral tilt toward revelation" was expected Ensuring informed consent and confidentiality are the foundations of both trusting relationships and ethical research. One phase 3 participant did not return their consent form, so the transcript was disregarded.

Gill and Johnson (2010) recommend reciprocating a host's generosity in the form of reports and presentations to cement a healthy relationship. As previously stated, this will be realised through a non-academic report of recommendations arising from the research. Additionally, providing an interesting and informative event was an identified aim of consulting with the retired trade union members.

(Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 196), but the principle of beneficence and doing no harm was applied to such revelations.

4.8 Validity and other quality concerns

The criteria by which qualitative research is judged are different to those of quantitative research, although as is discussed within this section, it is possible to draw parallels between the two. If qualitative research were to be evaluated in the same way as quantitative research, it would be deemed invalid because it does not involve measurement, and is unlikely to be reproducible as social contexts are seldom static (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Validity is usually taken as research that measures what it purports to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 282), "validity refers in ordinary language to truth, or the correctness and strength of a statement". Validity in quantitative research is associated with the fact-based correspondence theory of truth, which Glanzberg (2016, section 1.1.2) characterises as " at its core an ontological thesis: a belief is true if there exists an appropriate entity - a fact - to which it corresponds", in effect a proposition that mirrors reality.

In qualitative research, validity permeates beyond concepts and methods, to incorporate the integrity of the researcher, and the ethical rigour of the research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In common with quantitative research, validity begins with the soundness of premises on which research questions are built. As discussed in 4.1.1.2,

the subjective epistemology of this research assumes that perspectives of EV differ. A simplistic illustration is that trade unions may regard EV as a mechanism of social justice, whereas managers may see voice as a way of enhancing profit or organizational efficiency. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 3, Wilkinson et al's (2014) view is that EV is subject to the differing interpretations of the various disciplines in which it is studied, inferring that there is no one truth corresponding to the concept of EV.

Easterby-Smith et al (2015) also consider validity within qualitative research as being contingent on the research methodology employed. Johnson et al (2006) call for a suitable criteriology by which to evaluate qualitative research, contingent upon the philosophical conventions of the approach taken. In contrast to quantitative validity measures, Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) support the concept of 'trustworthiness' for critical qualitative research. In this research, presenting the a priori assumptions and 'political baggage' that affect the perceptions of a researcher to the reader, is an example of striving for critical trustworthiness. Sensitivity as to whether disadvantaged older workers are repressed by hegemonic practice into accepting managerial values and truths as their own, in opposition to the ideal speech situation of Habermas (1971), is also consistent with Kincheloe and McLaren's conceptualisation of trustworthiness. However, participant contribution to the research design, as they commend, was constrained as a researcher who was a guest of the organizations in the research setting. Nonetheless, as discussed in section 4.6.1, interviews were designed to incorporate the participants' interests and world view. Managers were challenged (politely) and interview questioning was enlarged and improved upon, informed by participant reasoning. Other than the critique of the TUC retired members' forum and the responses of the senior managers interviewed, who were comfortable with the research strategy, participants did not comment on the plausibility of the research.

In responding to these limitations, Guba and Lincoln (1994) perspectives on trustworthiness were adopted as a pragmatic resolution to evidencing validity. Gill and Johnson (2010) connect Guba and Lincoln's criteriology for validity with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, and the consensus theory of truth. Consensus theory is associated with Habermas (1971) ideal speech situation, suggesting Guba and Lincoln's criteria was appropriate, although perhaps not the optimum choice in an ideal world.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) support trustworthiness differently to Kincheloe and Maclaren (1998) as a criterion for assessing qualitative research, constituting trustworthiness of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Bryman and Bell (2015)

identify parallel quantitative quality criteria, of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity for these, as follows. Firstly, Guba and Lincoln's concept of credibility resembles internal validity. This is acquired through consistent observation between observers, or alternatively between observation and theory development in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Credibility was encouraged by including alternative perspectives of the older worker EV, and a flexible semi-structured interview process to facilitate genuine and unforced participant responses (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). Confirming with participants that the research findings were fair and recognisable to them, for example, during the workshop presentation (see 4.6.4), supported the development of credible conclusions.

Secondly, transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) relates to quantitative external validity, or as Lincoln and Guba (1985) term it, 'generalisability'. This was addressed by producing a 'thick description', or rich account for others to contextualise. Regarding this research, there are currently 408 UK councils (LGIU, 2020), who mostly have an ageing workforce (Truss, 2013) and therefore have some common ground. Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) refer to using qualitative findings to learn from other contexts as 'accommodation', whereby the similarities and differences of the contexts are assessed to determine the applicability of the findings.

Thirdly, dependability is akin to quantitative reliability, or "the consistency of the results obtained in research" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p.242). This was strengthened by a clear audit trail, a robust research design and respondent validation. Dependability was achieved by confirming with the TUC retired member participants that the findings were plausible, and with interviewees that transcripts were a true record of what was said and intended at interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Transcripts were e-mailed unless a printed copy was requested, in which case they were posted to an address supplied by the participant (this happened on two occasions). Dependability was considered in the research design, for example, through careful questioning and transcription of the interviews (as in section 4.6.1), and a transparent process of analysis facilitated by Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) (Bryman, 2016).

Fourthly, objectivity, the much-vaunted prize of positivists, is related to confirmability in qualitative research, and here was regarded as a moral concept by which the researcher sought to minimise the effects of her biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a return to Gadamer's (1975) thoughts on preunderstandings or a priori assumptions

(Johnson & Duberley, 2000), attaining objectivity regarding subjectivity was viewed as significant to achieving validity (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Termed as 'reflexive objectivity', this entails an unrelenting search for misinterpretation or undeclared bias, by reflecting on sociocultural influences, and the significance of having worked in the context, which is consistent with critical theory (Johnson et al, 2006). For example, counting codes using NVivo ensured that data evaluation was correlated to the extent of the participant response, rather than cherry-picking responses to fit personal assumptions.

Critical validity is pertinent to critical theory, in that validity is strengthened by questioning accepted social norms and assumptions (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993). This was addressed by exploring contextual norms through the literature, in the interviews and during analysis. Alvesson and Ashcraft (2009) describe critical theory as a 'broad church'. Although not a strict requirement of qualitative research, triangulation was employed to produce findings acceptable to a wider audience within this 'church'. Triangulation of method and source underpinned the confirmability of the findings, by using an observation, secondary data and a stratified sample of participants. As Silverman (2017) comments, using more than one method can increase reliability. Additionally, Kaufman's (2015a) framework of EV determinants guided the selection of participants to improve the replicability of the method.

The expert feedback received from supervisors and peers, strengthened confirmability and credibility at an academic level. In addition, the reasonableness, or rationality, of the research findings was explored with critical friends at Sheffield Business School PhD conferences and a conference of industrial relations academics (BUIRA). Feedback on conference papers was used to provide focus, by abandoning interesting but extraneous findings. On a practical level, the feedback from the older workers taking part in the workshop progressed the credibility of the findings, through their alternative perspectives and provision of additional data. Guba and Lincoln (1994) maintain that authenticity contributes to validity, which concerns fairness and building the capacity for social change. This research incorporates the views of trade unions, managers, professionals and the older employees themselves, to promote a fair and balanced data set. Interviews were designed to encourage the anonymous participant to speak freely without constraint, respecting Habermas' concept of the ideal speech situation (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

Johnson et al (2006) explain that we are unable to accept the 'truth' or reality of what we receive via our senses because socio-cultural factors distort our experience, thus rendering the positivist's interpretation of validity unsuitable for critical theory research. The validity of qualitative research is at its heart concerned with "the integrity of the conclusions" (Bryman, 2016, p.697), rather than solely the measurement validity associated with the positivist perspective. Validity extended into the analysis, for example, by employing justified, plausible reasoning regarding coding strategies (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This was enhanced by using the memo feature of NVivo as an aide memoire, to journalise the reasoning behind coding choices (Appendix 2)

4.9 Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen consistent with the qualitative research philosophy, nevertheless achieving an appropriate style for identifying themes entailed some trial and error. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) refer to a theme as "capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset". Put more simply, themes are "a central organising concept" (Clarke & Braun, 2018). They are not concrete constructs and vary in their scope and character (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

The quest for an open-minded and inductive critical analysis first indicated a general grounded thematic approach. Easterby-Smith et al (2015) explain that this approach emphasises the participant view set in its historical and cultural context, however, the codes generated were too numerous and unfocused. Template analysis, which takes the middle ground between a purely inductive and a structured approach, focused the analysis better by using a priori themes. These were developed from the objectives and theoretical framework of the research. Braun and Clarke (2018) dub template analysis as medium qualitative thematic analysis, lying between treatment of data using positivist measures of reliability, and purely qualitative approaches.

Template analysis, being a technique rather than a methodology, is not tied to an epistemological position. However, philosophical assumptions guide the use of the technique (King & Brooks, 2017). Here, the realist ontology and subjective epistemology of critical theory was closest to King and Brooks (2017) category of 'limited realism', wherein the world is acknowledged as concrete reality, but is only knowable within the constraints of our own perspectives. Fundamentally, the researcher must be reflexive to prevent the findings from becoming merely a result of their own perspectives and subjectivity. Critical review of the template, for example, using the

critique of independent academics, encouraged the rigour of this process. Remaining faithful to a qualitative approach, while encompassing researcher subjectivity as a resource, requires a well-evidenced audit trail if the findings are to be respected by others in the field (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Template analysis has an in-built audit trail associated with the incremental progression of the template (King, 2012).

Template analysis was selected because of the flexible framework for data gathering and coding (King & Brooks, 2017). Unlike interpretive phenomenological analysis, where the focus is 'within case', a cross case analysis was required to understand EV in an entire context (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley & King, 2015). Template analysis manages large volumes of data (196,500 words of interview data), and accommodates multiple hierarchical levels of coding, where a rich seam of data emerges (King, 2012). There is less distinction between descriptive and interpretive coding than in Braun and Clarke's (2006) method. A further benefit is the integrative theme that permeates the data laterally, neither at the top of the hierarchy or neatly within one node. In this research, coding for the use of metaphors and unitarization ran across the main themes in this way. These features of template analysis sit well with the data manipulation facilities of CAQDAS, which support an inductive approach (Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson, 1996).

Interviews were transcribed into Word documents by hand (Appendix 3) and were subsequently re-read and checked for inaccuracies in transcription (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). This processed ensured that NVivo (CAQDAS) did not distance the researcher from the data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) and enhanced the transparency of the research process (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Using NVivo software as a tool for analysis (Appendix 2) also reduced the tendency to apply theory too early in the analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2015), a problem generally associated with inexperienced coders (King, 2012).

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) caution that CAQDAS can result in an impoverished analysis, if it is not a considered process. Equally, using NVivo allowed experimentation with more than one coding strategy (Saldaña, 2016). Using more than one style of thematic analysis, in a form of analytical pluralism (Clarke et al, 2015), exposed the integrative theme of unitarization. The detail of the steps to analysis is included in Appendix 3, and resulted in the five themes, which are illustrated in Figure 10 at the end of the chapter.

4.10. Limitations of the research methodology

The time frame available for the research constrained the sample size, making generalisation in the positivist sense less likely (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Also, although guided by supervisors, only one perspective on the design, philosophy and interpretation applied. In respect of the empirical data collected, participants selected by senior managers may reflect management views, but working previously in the context provided access to participants outside of this influence. Trade unionists offered contrasting insights and perspectives to those of management and HR, although it was impractical to gather data relating to every combination of older worker characteristic, as discussed in 4.5. Exploring the impact of the EV of older workers in one context was the objective, so the sample reflected the heterogeneity as it existed within that context.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p.209) advise that shared cultural meanings can affect researcher objectivity. In this research, public sector ethos and local government experience were shared with participants, so questioning "what seems natural and self-evident" was integrated through reflexive practice. The unfamiliarity of a novice was advantageous in adhering to this process. Additionally, the second chapter, exploring the local government history and context, was completed prior to the research design to address such concerns. Fuller reflections on the limitations of the research are included in section 7.5.

4.11. Summary of research methodology

This chapter presented the methodology of the research. The cross-paradigmatic approach under the overall banner of employment relations encouraged a rich picture of EV to emerge. Accommodating a balance of perspectives, taking the older employee standpoint, and answering the call to counter the rise of quantitative studies, suggested the utility of the qualitative approach.

The objective ontological positioning arose from the premise that EV processes and structures are external to the actors. However, the interpretation of EV was assumed to be socially constructed, signalling a subjective epistemology. This position is consistent with critical theory, wherein knowledge is regarded as valid only where it has been gained by legitimate means without coercion. Critical theory was chosen for this study in seeking to empower and emancipate the marginalised through their EV. The critical theory of Habermas was the preferred variant. His aims for communicative action and the ideal speech situation correspond with an EV for older workers based on undistorted

reason. The biases and experiences of the researcher were acknowledged so as to strengthen the validity and authenticity of the research.

Purposive sampling involved selecting participants according to the characteristics required to address the research question. Ethical principles were upheld in accordance with the university and CIPD code of ethical conduct. It was argued that quality in qualitative research requires a clear research design, incorporating a variety of perspectives, providing an audit trail, seeking respondent validation, and taking an ethical and reflexive approach. The analysis was inductive and thematic using the technique of template analysis and CAQDAS software.

The research design followed a multiphase data collection strategy. The phases reflected the three objectives of the research, to explore the history and context of local government, organizational practice and the older worker perspective of employee voice, consistent with Wilkinson et al's (2018) multi-level approach to EV research. Semi-structured interviews with 36 participants encouraged a purposeful and meaningful conversation and an in-depth account of EV. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, supplemented by field notes and the observation of an equality forum comparing espoused policy with practice. A workshop, initially planned as a focus group, appraised the credibility of the research findings and provided additional data. The use of secondary data, in the form of organizational documentation and national data sets, triangulated the findings.

The chapter concluded by considering the limitations of the research design, including those associated with lone research. The interpretation of the data in the next chapter, is framed by the themes emerging from the analysis, as illustrated in Figure 10.

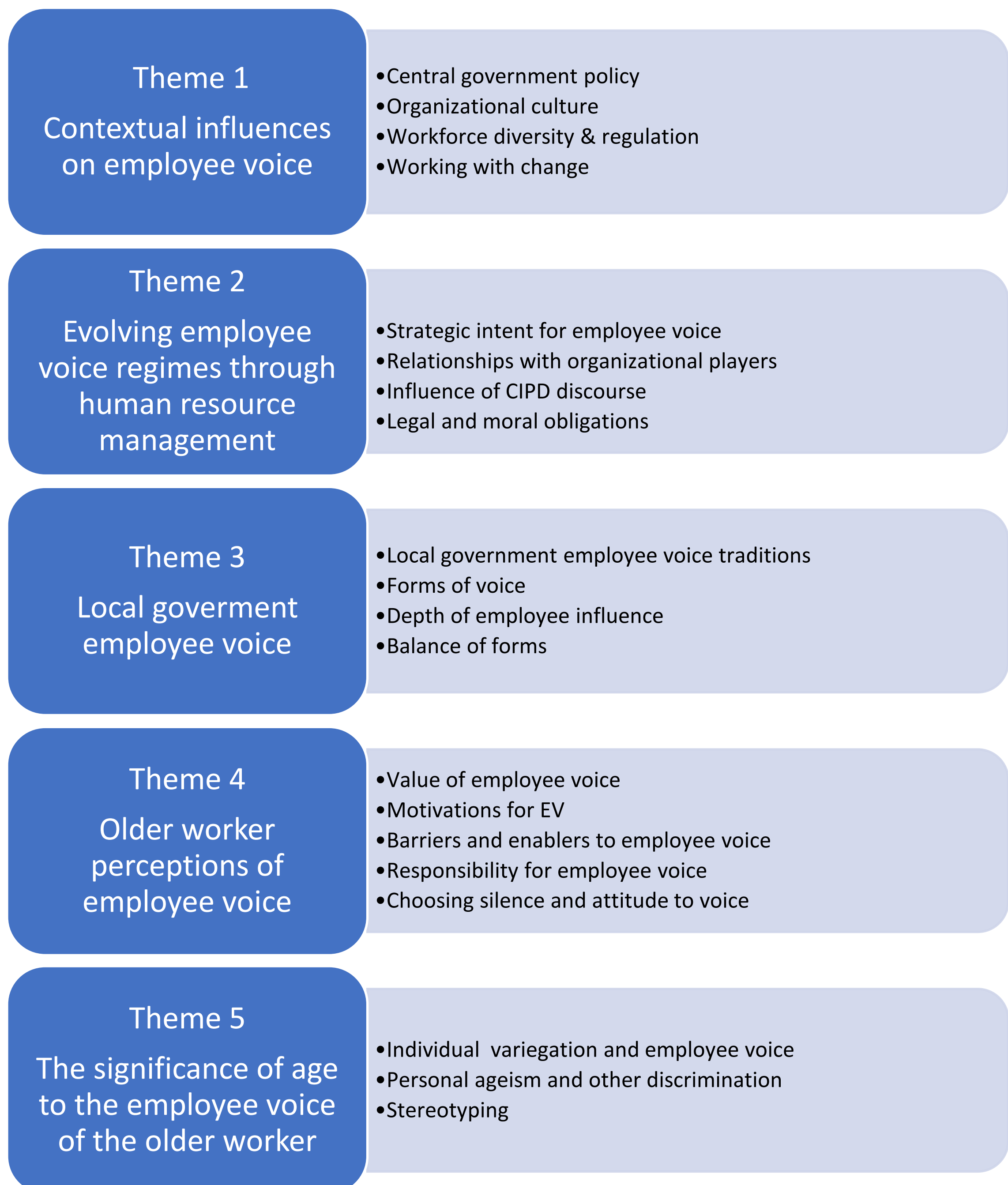


Figure 10: Themes emerging from the final interpretation

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

In the methodology chapter, the theoretical framework, research design and quality interventions used to address the research question were explained. The approach to analysis was inductive and thematic using template analysis to prepare the raw data for interpretation, via a combination of manual methods and CAQDAS tools in the form of NVivo. The resultant five themes are illustrated in figure 10.

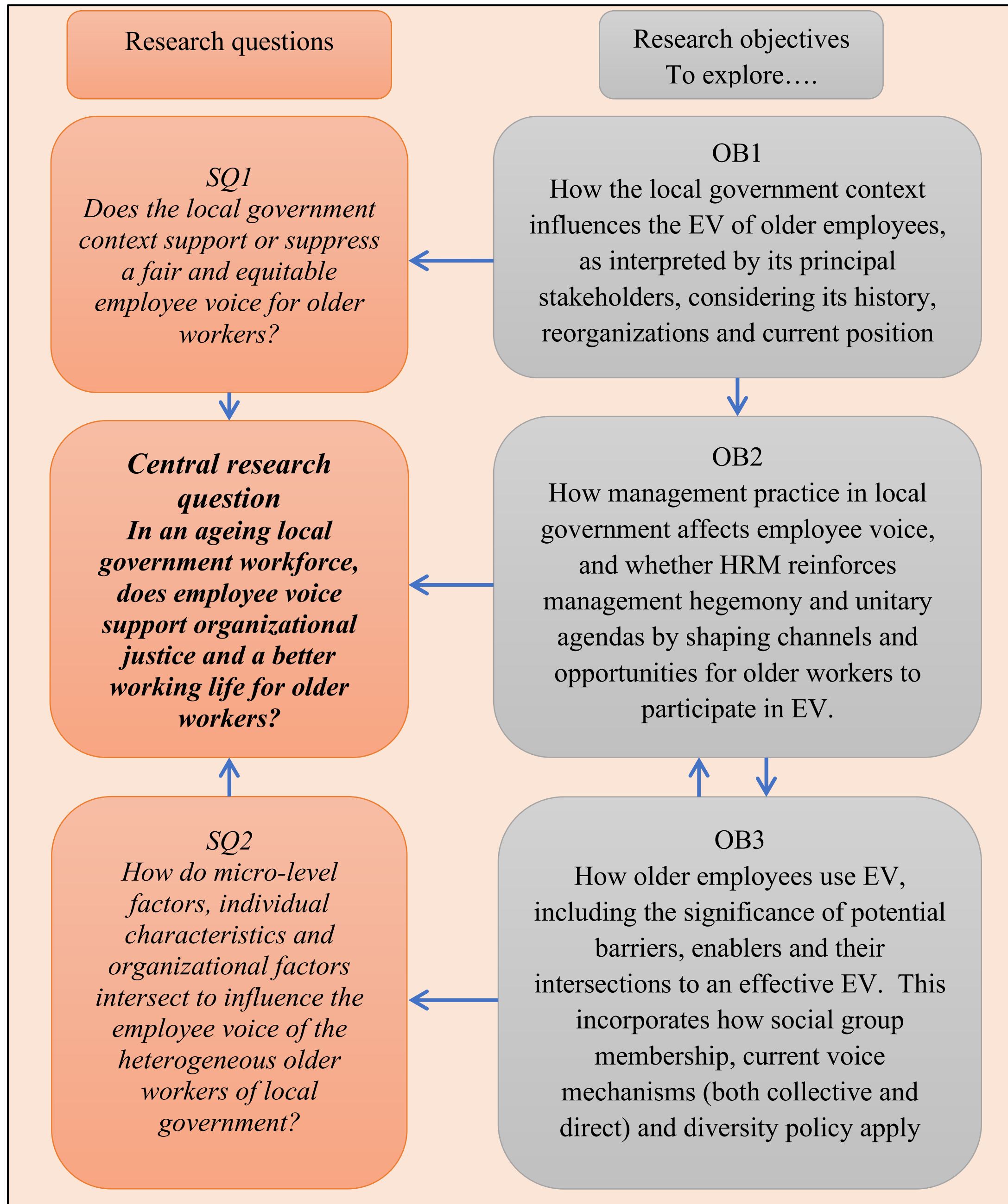


Figure 11: Relationship between the research questions and objectives

The research questions and objectives (Figure 11) acknowledged Wilkinson et al's (2018) guidance to explore EV at macro, meso and micro-levels, although the analysis uncovered that the levels interact, so could not be studied in isolation. The arrows

indicate the main interrelationships between questions and objectives, for example the older employees' use of voice (OB3) is affected by HR voice practices (OB2) in two directions. If older employees disengage from voicing their issues, practice is likely to change (unless silence is the intended outcome), thus reversing the usual direction of influence.

Findings can be presented in various ways according to the research design or subject (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018) and here, the five themes emerging from the analysis provide the framework (Bryman, 2016). In line with critical theory, representative participant quotations support the line of discussion so that all voices are heard (see 4.1.1). To begin, findings regarding the demography of the sampled organizations and participants are presented.

5.1 The sampled organizations.

A demographic summary (Table 8), using codes and approximate data to maintain anonymity, provides contextual details to inform the reading of themes. The councils varied in size, Council B had more than four times the number of residents, at approaching 590,000 by 2020, than Conservative Council E (ONS, 2018c).

Characteristic	Council A	Council B	Council C	Council D	Comparator Council E
Authority type	Unitary	Unitary	Unitary	Unitary	District (two tier)
Workforce (from gender pay gap reports – does not include casual workers) (2017)	3100	7200	3400	5200	600
Aged 45+ %	-	60	60	-	60
Aged 50+ %	39	-	-	47	45.5
Aged 55+ %	-	22.5	28	-	30.5
Aged 65+ %	-	1.5	-	3	6
Gender split M/F % (from equality and diversity reporting)	32/68	39/61	30/70	25/75	54/46
Full time TU convenors	3	15	5	6	0
Number of participants in the study	6	8 (+observation of 50)	3	15	2

Table 8: Size, age and gender of the sampled workforces

NB. 3 additional participants at regional level +22 workshop participants

All the councils had E&D policies, although none specifically focused on age. All recognised UNISON, GMB and UNITE and an assortment of teacher trade unions. In addition to trade union convenors, when taking into account part time representatives, Council B employees were best represented at one representative per 85 employees and Council A employees were the least represented at one representative per 126 employees (Cabinet Office, 2019). This may either indicate vacant posts, or perhaps that membership density is lowest in Council A. Council E had no convenors, but had representatives who were either retired or part-time employees

As alluded to in section 4.4, as has been the case for some time (Elcock, 1996), the councils delivered their services in various ways, which are frequently reconsidered due to austerity measures.

5.2 The sampled participants

Interviews were held between May and July 2018. The longest, with the CEO of Council E, lasted 1 hour 13 minutes and the shortest took 27.5 minutes, with the E&D director of Council A. The average duration of the interviews was 42 minutes. The equality event was observed for 3 hours and the retired members' forum workshop was an hour's duration. As established in chapter 4 (section 4.5) there were three distinct groups of participants (Figure 9), although there was some overlap. For example, half way through an interview, an older participant's trade union representative status became apparent, so organizational practice data was also gathered.

The first participants were the leaders, directors and external stakeholders (Table 3) principally interviewed to address objective 1 (Figure 11). The second group of participants (Table 4), sampled because of their role in operationalizing organizational policies and practices, were interviewed primarily to address objective 2 (Figure 11).

The observation of the equality forum provided exposure to organizational policy in practice. The event featured a wide mix of participants from the identity groups associated with the Equality Act 2010, however, the BAME participants appeared younger than 52 years, reflecting their younger demographic in the council workforce, as Wang and Seifert (2018) also found in their study. The third group of participants, the older workers (Table 5), ranged from 52 years upwards to 75 years, including four employees over 65. They were in manual and office-based roles, on full, part-time or temporary contracts of employment. These participants were interviewed to address objective 3 (Figure 11), although again there was some overlap, for example E20 and

D27 were also senior managers. Age categories were chosen purposefully to facilitate the analysis as described in Table 9.

Age range	Rationale	No of participants
52-55	Approaching early access to LG pension LGPS (2019)	2
56-60	Aspirational LG retirement age from participant responses	9
61-66	Approaching occupational or current state retirement age (66 by October 2020)	5
67-75	Participants working past current state retirement age and previously subject to default retirement age (April 2011)	3
65+ & 70+	Participants working beyond 65 who are increasingly part of the mainstream workforce (Lain and Loretto, 2016)	1 (65) & 3 (70+)

Table 9: Older worker (phase 5) age category rationale

The older workers included union members, representatives and non-members, individuals with disabilities (visible and invisible) and a gender split reflecting the workforce demography (Chart 1).

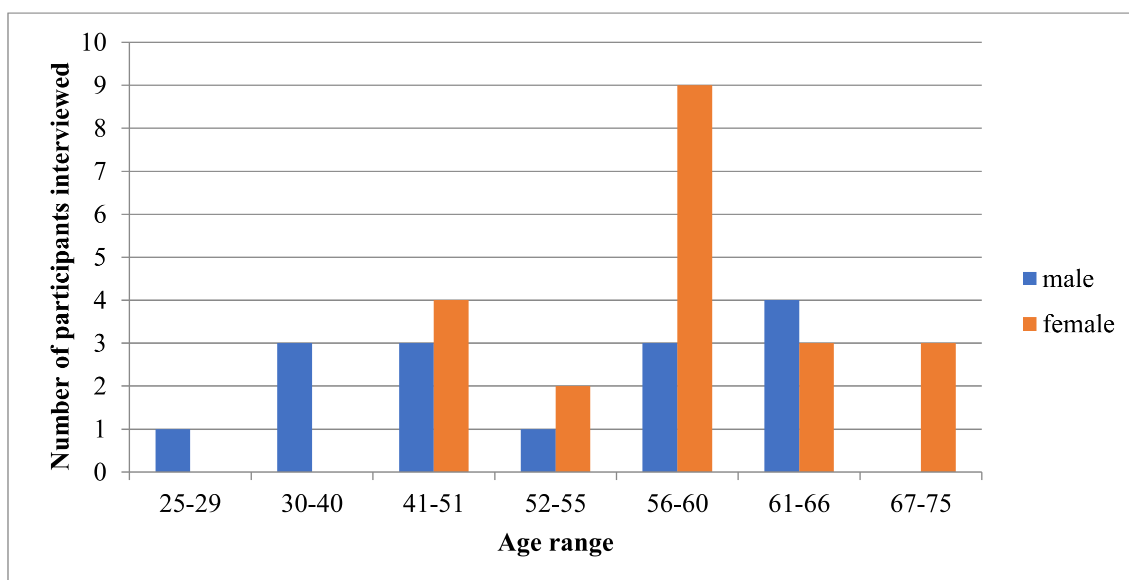


Chart 1: Overall participant demographics: Gender by Age

The purpose of the sample mix was to explore differences within the older worker age range, and to evaluate the significance to EV of intersections of age with other characteristics, such as disability. As discussed in the methodology chapter (4.4), for practical reasons not all combinations of diverse older employees could be accommodated. The five themes from the analysis are presented next in turn.

5.3. Theme 1: Contextual influences on employee voice

This theme concerns the contextual level factors that influence the EV of older workers in local government, and as such addresses subordinate research question 1 (Sq1). Echoing Gill-McLure and Thörnquist's (2018) findings, the CEO participant [E5] explained how new public management had removed the jobs for life, stable work patterns and yearly pay rise of the 1970s that Pendleton and Winterton (1993) depict. Austerity measures had 'damaged' local government [A4, E5], leaving some older employees to regard EV as futile [e.g., B12, D18]. Conversely, others [e.g., A9, B35, C19] found cause for optimism in their council's resilience to meet government targets and cope with large-scale change.

These broad trends frame the subthemes that follow, beginning with the significance of central government policy and organizational culture to EV. Following on, the changing demography of the local government workforce and the consequences of continuous change in the sector are explored.

5.3.1 Central government policy

Austerity measures had negatively impacted council residents, employers and employees, which older workers generally regarded as unjust and the fault of central government, as one protested:

> Central government's the ones that're making decisions. Central government should be put in court for crimes against its own people. [D29]

Council workforces are largely local citizens [A1], as Newman (2014) identifies. They encounter unique EV conflicts, for example, one older employee protested about the rent increase that contributed to her salary [D18]. Corresponding with Beszter et al (2015), central government hostility towards local government trade unions was the status quo [A39, B2, B35, E3, E37]. The regional GMB representative explained,

> I think that most councils and I am including both Tories and Labour, didn't deliberately try to put the unions down…. What it did was to force councils into having to make decisions that they probably didn't want to implement. [E37]

Reflecting Cochrane's (2016) interpretation of 'local' as a competitive space, Councillor [A4] perceived that competition for grant funding was reducing the unity of local government. Echoing Gill-McLure (2018), the relationship with central government was encapsulated by a CEO:

> Always torturous! It doesn't tend to change that much from government to government, this is the realm of culture, rather than practice particularly, and culturally the traditional view that central government takes of local government is either distain or disinterest, it's one of the two. They either think we are rank incompetent and useless, or don't even know what we do, or don't even give a monkey's. [E5]

Senior managers regarded local government as the poor relation of the public sector [C19], subject to a hostile central government [B5] and unfair funding policies [A1, D27], despite their good financial record [A1, C19].

5.3.1.1 Austerity

Austerity had bestowed older frontline participants with a siege mentality. Their councils had 'taken a battering' [E20. Older managers described 'relentless' funding reductions, yet central government was perceived to rely on the unpaid commitment of workers to deliver council services [D27]. Councils were leaner and smarter, but unable to deliver anything but their statutory responsibilities [A1, A4, B35, C10, D27].

Uncertainty and turbulence affected retirement plans, some older workers feeling they had no voice, as familiar channels disappeared [B12]. An HR director encapsulated their mindset:

> There is a deafness and survival mentality. This is not an age thing, but clearly the longer you have been around the more you have seen. [B35]

Two HR participants [D7, B36] had worked in other sectors, and expressed that council workers should be grateful to have any voice, but nonetheless viewed EV as crucial to successful change [C10]. Poor consultation, such as in Council B, where employees had been dismissed and re-engaged on four occasions, had damaged employment relations [B2], and reduced the appetite for EV [B11], the HR director added,

> It's made people feel, well if I did have a voice, nobody is listening to me, and we can't because sometimes we must do what they (*senior management*) tell you. [B2]

The prospect of further cuts [C19, E5] resulted in less seasonal workers being made permanent employees [D31], the precarity of their employment reducing their propensity to speak out [E6]. As Taylor et al (2016) describe, in the rush to make efficiency savings, retiring older employees was expedient [B35] but their replacement

with cheaper and sometimes inexperienced employees created an unsustainable loss of implicit knowledge [B36, C10, C19, D7], particularly in schools [A4, A14]. Subsequently, older volunteers for redundancy or early retirement were often disappointed when their requests were refused, so refrained from EV in protest [B35, C10, D17], concurring with quadrant 3 of Donaghey et al's (2011) model for employee silence (Figure 5).

An HR Director [A1] explained how organizational structures became limited in depth by design. Although flatter structures generally facilitate communication and agility (Morris and Farrell, 2007), they offer little alternative work for those with age-related illness. Supporting Mowbray's (2018) findings, the EV of older middle managers [D24, D25, D34] was diminished as higher-level managers were too far removed to understand middle management issues, a typical outcome of new public management [E38].

5.3.1.2 New public management (NPM)

In contrast to the earlier years of local government as experienced by older workers of long tenure, NPM with its market orientation, performance driven HRM and private sector management ideology had become the norm [Councillor, A4], (Bach & Bordogna, 2011; Truss, 2013). However, not everyone rejected neo-liberalism, as the CEO asserted,

> Maybe this is my New Labour roots but I am perfectly happy about people making money out of public services, if they are delivering quality public services. [E5]

He added that performance improvement initiatives, such as the government audit process of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (see 2.2.4), were useful in providing a performance snapshot. HR Director [A1] thought otherwise and concluded that financial efficiency does not always equate to good service, as evidenced by the Carillion debacle. The senior TUC participant [E3] linked NPM and neo-liberalism with poor outcomes for trade unions:

> I think there has been a concerted attack….to try to reduce the influence of trade unions. It's no accident; it came along with neo-liberalism. [E3]

Private sector style decision making was deemed as responsible for a local calamity involving a private sector environmental services organization [B15, E37]. The regional union representative [E37] encouraged union representatives to advise new

councillors of covert professional officer behaviour in such circumstances. Other than in Council E, union representatives and councillors shared the Labour party membership that could expediate this process. Alternatively, an older manager [E20] concluded that councils failing to adopt marketization practices would cease to exist. Another older participant [A23] regarded marketization as lessening the pastoral care of employees, reflecting Budd's (2004) view of the dehumanising effects of such practices.

5.3.1.3 Outsourcing

An older worker commented that outsourcing influenced EV because contracts are frequently paid up-front, so costs became of more concern than employees [B15]. Outsourcing cultivated short termism, impoverished employee morale [B21], thus constraining EV (Mor Barak, 2000). As Moore and Tailby (2015) identify, the TUC officer maintained that outsourcing reduced the effectiveness of collective bargaining. Older manual worker participants had been transferred to an outsourced service at least once. Moreover, Council D had inherited debts for machinery from an outsourcer that employees had voiced their doubts over [D29]. In contrast, a second private sector employer valued EV:

> They used to hire hotels, put coffee, biscuits and everything on for you…you'd discuss owt you wanted and if you come up with a good idea, you'd get an extra 250 quid in your pay packet. [D29]

As a policy Council A had minimised the hire of temporary workers [A8], and concurring with Jaehrling et al (2018), transferring employees to private sector organizations included some form of employee protection. Corresponding with HR adviser [C10], another stated,

> I'm not sure what their status is but our trade unions still represent them. We have an outside bodies' convenor and he represents people who we have outsourced. I am not saying they represent them for collective bargaining purposes, they don't, but they have a voice through the convenor. [A9]

Outsourcing had severed EV channels and confused the identity of older local government workers [B15, E3, E37]. Additionally, the CIPD branch participant equated employing temporary workers with outsourcing, conveying the disempowering effect of the weekly basis of their contracts:

> Those people don't feel they have a voice or an opportunity to say anything. [E6]

Contrary to Marchington's (2015) view that such employees become 'invisible', the TUC official [E3] was very aware of their reluctance to join a union.

5.3.2 Organizational culture

This second subtheme considers culture and EV in terms of the local government management approach, leadership style, and public sector ethos. Separation of the sectoral and organizational influences on culture was problematic because the interfaces were not distinct, therefore other cultural influences, including the use of organizational values, are expanded upon in theme 2. An older office worker perceived that although service delivery had changed enormously, the culture was largely constant [A23]. Alternatively, the E&D director [A8] suggested that the culture had changed 'massively' following the appointment of the CEO, perhaps indicating that cultural change was inconsistent, or had not filtered through the hierarchy.

Local government culture is affected by bureaucracy, a sizable number of laws, regulations and central government targets (Orr and Vince, 2009). Bureaucratic decision-making frustrated EV [D7, B2], as the oldest participant reflected,

> There's a pecking order, ain't there? …In like this big establishment, if you have got a problem it seems to take a long time to get through.… [D30]

HR participants universally recognised that management culture was significant to EV, for example,

> I can tell you some services where people do feel a bit sat on, and I can tell you other services where they totally feel free to say whatever they want. [B2]

Furthermore, subcultures within teams and professions affected EV; social workers were regarded as inclined to have an opinion on most things, whereas engineers and planners were thought of as task focused, and less likely to use their EV [B2, B15, B36].

5.3.2.1 Leadership and management style

Employee surveys indicated that some managers were not visible, or listening to employees [A1, B2, C19, D34]. Older managers [C13, D27] affirmed that training interventions (over 450 delegates in Council A) had improved matters [A1, A8, B2, C10] and Council D had acted to improve visibility:

> We have done a lot of team briefs; we have done a lot where the Strategic Directors go out and meet all staffs and get that voice. So, one person will be

> out in the morning at five o'clock to catch the refuse people. [D27, confirmed D7, D17, D34]

Senior management participants [A1, A8, E5] reported that their CEOs challenged poor management practice concerning EV. Conversely, concurring with Cullinane and Dundon (2014) and implying a unitarist ER frame, the regional GMB representative suggested Council A leaders preferred direct EV, making trade unions unwelcome at direct voice events such as town hall meetings. Supporting this view, HR participants advocated that such meetings provided direct two-way communication of the strategic vision to employees [A9, A8, C13], as one remarked,

> I'm talking about the sort of strategic leadership team, and they do take into account what people have said, and try to put things right. [D34]

A more nuanced evaluation was that leaders were more visible to office workers than manual workers [B15].

5.3.2.2 Managerial skills

Older manual worker participants [D26, D31, D32, D33] opined that the managers most open to EV were those who had risen through the ranks. A female warden explained:

> A lot of people who are in these top jobs have never been a foot soldier. I always find that if they've gone through the ranks, they are a lot better towards the employees than a person who, you know, got his qualification *(pause)* because they've been in the situation. [D33]

Senior managers and employees alike regarded middle managers as important to good communication, but also as a potential barrier to EV [A8, B35, B36, B12, E5]. HR responded with training interventions [B35, C10, C13] regular meetings and skills development days [A8]. An HR director attributed some lapses to avoiding bad news, but felt that employees preferred to be informed:

> It was with people saying like, you know what, we come to work, and we are grown-ups, why can't you be open and honest with us? [B2]

Some managers responded inappropriately to individuals with protected characteristics such as age, disability, sex and race. However, the CEOs of Council B and E were clear that the responsibility for listening to employees lay with management. Nevertheless, most older participants felt their manager actively considered their views [e.g., A14, A23, C13, D18, D27, D30, B36] or listened sometimes [B12, B15, D32, D33, C10] and

some felt 'listened to but not heard' [D24, D25, D29].

A retired members' forum attendee [E38] described managers who assumed their powerful hierarchical position exempted them from listening to employees, and an older worker's comment suggested a managerial hegemony:

> They're higher up than us, and we do it their way or not at all. [D29]

As Holland et al (2017) argue, trust between line managers and employees was central to a healthy EV [e.g., D27, D29]. An older manager conveyed,

> To be trusted you must be open and honest and deliver what you say you are going to deliver. [D24]

Most older participants had experienced good managers where their voice flourished, and bad managers where it did not [B12, D32]. The oldest participant offered that her manager's beneficent, paternalistic style encouraged her EV, highlighting the significance of knowing your employees:

> I think a manager, should be like a mother, a, shepherd bringing the sheep in, that kind of thing and be approachable and my boss is. [D30]

5.3.2.3 Public sector ethos (PSE)

PSE provoked some passionate and well-argued opinion from participants [e.g., A1, B36, C10, D7, E20]. Some associated PSE with role, for example [C13] proposed that social workers and [A14] school employees typically have a well-developed PSE and vocational inclination to use their EV altruistically. Emergency 24-hour snow clearing, where workers turned out for little additional money [C10] was provided as an example of PSE in action. Most participants regarded PSE as stronger in older employees, although HR Director [B35] suspected this belief was more instinctive than evidentially based. Older participants disagreed:

> I am like my (*older*) colleague a workaholic. If I do owt, it's got to be 110%. Not 80%. That's me. Same as my colleague. We're old school. [D33]

Older workers with long tenure expressed that they passed down service ethos to their younger counterparts [e.g., A23, B12, B15, D24, D25]. This may signify PSE as a component of local government culture, as in Schein's (2004) definition wherein assumptions are passed on to new members. PSE was also associated with apprentices, who were expected to have long tenure [B36]. Older workers expressed frustration at austerity measures that reduced service levels in their communities and consequently

experienced feelings of futility regarding EV [C19]. Regarding older managers, the regional union representative added,

> I also feel for, what I've really seen that's hurt a lot of people, especially managers, is they've built services up, just to see them dismantled. [E37]

Older workers used their voice in pro-social ways that exercised their ethos of public service, for example,

> They are proud that they've had some influence in changing something, if it makes it better for the customer as well, cos they're very customer focused people, in the council, the front line, well everybody is. [D34]

The CEO of Council E however, regarded PSE as proliferating intransigence and suppressing the re-emergence of the historical municipal entrepreneurship of local government of Chamberlain's time (Orr & Vince, 2009). More typically, an older HR adviser was the embodiment of the ethos:

> I am a council person right through to the middle. I will always be an advocate for it, and defend it and praise it absolutely to the hilt. [A9]

5.3.3 Workforce diversity

This third subtheme presents findings on workforce diversity and EV. All the participants [e.g., A1, A4, B11, C19, D32, E5] recognised their workforces were ageing. The gender balance in senior roles had improved since the 1990s [A1, A4], with female cabinet members in all the councils, some of whom are older, as listed in council public webpages. Representation of ethnic minorities was lower than in the general population, and even the best case in Council B (12.5 percent representation), most were below age 46 (Council B, 2018). BAME representation was negligible amongst older workers in Council A (Council A, 2018). Representation of disabled employees was fair across the setting, with less than two percent under representation in Council B (Council B, 2018). In council A the LGBT community was well represented (above 10 per cent) including among trade union representatives [A9]. Equality forum members identified that younger people were more likely to declare their sexuality as LGBT than older workers [B16], so there may be more older LGBT employees than declare it.

In general trade union representatives were white males in their 50s [E5, E6], but diversity was improving. More women were in post [A1], and BAME officials were taking on unelected roles such as branch secretary [D17].

5.3.3.1 Ageing workforce

An older manager [E20] expressed that age was no barrier to career aspirations or to contributing at work, which was affirmed by other older participants [e.g., A23, B15, C13, D14, D24, D30, D33]. A senior older manager added that although manual workers were more likely to suffer physical ill health, many were able to continue working:

> My dad was still building metal sheds when he was seventy…. what I guess I'm saying is don't just assume because we are older… and we need to be sensitive to that. [D27]

For some, the physical deterioration associated with manual work brought forward their retirement plans [e.g., D24, D29] and as Kirton and Greene (2016) found, it was not in their best interest to work into later life [C19]. Rejecting requests for early retirement frequently had negative consequences for EV [B35, D17], potentially initiating silence, resentment (Cullinane and Donaghey, 2014 and see 5.6.5) or instilling a 'hanging-on' mentality:

> I know one person who is 55 and could go on a pension but doesn't want to go, unless she can get a redundancy pay off as well….. She is in a job she would never be made redundant from because that job will always be needed. [D17]

The regional TU representative agreed that for some older members, the position had changed from desperation to remain, to hoping for a pay-out [E37].

Other older workers connected EV with the value of their accumulated knowledge of council operations and the culture of the town [A23]. Older workers were able to pool such resources to resolve problems, and reduce their need for grievance processes [B36]. The regional union representative explained,

> They've got the experience to push the boundary but not go over the line. [E37]

Older workers assisted younger workers to develop their EV [e.g., B12, D18, D26, D31, D33] and traded life skills and experience for young perspectives and familiarity with new technology [C13, C19].

5.3.3.2 Equality and diversity strategy

This had fared well in all the councils during austerity, gaining resources and strategic importance. As Phillipson et al (2018) found, the E&D message was culturally embedded:

> We don't really need to do an awful lot because we live and breathe it every day, and I think it's well established. [D34]

E&D managers [A8, B11, C13, D17] agreed that equality and diversity was integrated through all policy and practices. Social justice objectives regarding services for the resident population were considered alongside workforce E&D strategy, although until recently, the emphasis had been on residents [A8, B11]. Wider stakeholder groups contributed to policy, with one ongoing initiative incorporating outsourced service providers and local universities [B2]. Managers conveyed an authentic commitment to an equal and diverse workforce, with Councils A, B and D recently receiving awards for good E&D practice. Collaboration with the trade unions on equality matters was consistently well regarded by both managers and union representatives [E37].

Although district Council E differed in its responsibilities from the four unitary councils, the CEO appeared to take a contrasting stance in supplanting the justice case with the business case for diversity:

> There needs to be a genuine, practical understanding of what diversity is and what the benefits are, what is the business case? It's morally right but it's also sensibly right. [E5]

The unitary councils more upheld the social justice perspective [e.g., A8, B2, D17] with Council B including 'social justice' in job titles. The move towards inclusivity was apparent, as in other sectors (Oswick and Noon, 2014):

> I think traditionally the Council has been focused on equality….. when we are looking at our employment policies, we are looking at it from an inclusivity aspect [C19].

For older workers, who are over represented in the workforce, achieving social justice is more focused on disadvantage associated with health and role in combination with age (see theme 5).

5.3.3.3 Policy and practice

EV groups based on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 were declining [B11, C19, D17], with some events cut due to austerity measures [D17]. Council C employees had formed self-help networks, supplemented by an organizational group for diverse employees as a whole [C19]. An E&D adviser [D17] preferred inclusive groups because separate groups often had similar issues, however

HR sponsored groups are unlikely to challenge the status quo. The self-help network may be the more democratic option, provided it is not a façade for under-resourcing (Conley & Page, 2018). One older employee considered that inclusive groups encouraged her participation, without being labelled as old [D34], reflecting McFadden and Crowley-Henry's (2018) findings. Alternatively, older worker [B12] disliked the merged groups, highlighting the challenge of developing acceptable voice mechanisms for diverse employees. Council B and D were recruiting employee champions, for example, for age, carers and disability [B11, D17]. However, Bacon and Hoque (2015) view such champions as a weak form of representation. In Council B, a Strategic Equality and Inclusion Board also considered the interests of diverse employees [B16]. Employee knowledge of E&D support and guidance was typically good, as an older worker responded,

> It comes from the corporate HR via the intranet as a policy... you are required to read them, backed up by e-mails from managers and we have shop floor discussions about it. [B15]

Although manual workers had poor access to computers, they cited examples of expected behaviours around race and gender from printed guidance. A Council B HR manager had few age-related diversity cases [B36], but her counterpart in Council C [C10] reported how older workers had been reprimanded for using inappropriate 'banter' concerning diversity.

Council equality provision was peer reviewed, for example Council A had recently reviewed Council D [A8, D27]. Councillor [A4] added that the Local Government Association had working groups on equality policy and practice. The youngest HR adviser cautioned that the justice and beneficence aspects of E&D practices were diluted by the bureaucratic process, which distanced people from engaging with practice [D7].

5.3.4 Legislation and regulation

In addition to state pension age increases, regulation modifications affecting access to pensions because of ill health, require employees to consider other suitable work [C19]. This was limited, so could lead to a capability process [E38]. E&D advisers, HR advisers and managers were clearly uncomfortable with this, but were required to support the regulations [e.g., B36, C10, D17, D25]. An E&D adviser argued,

> Economically it's quite good for the Government not to have to pay a pension but for the person, I question that. For employers it becomes more difficult to

give people that dignified exit. [C19]

Another issue raised by the (legally qualified) CIPD branch officer, and upheld by the retired members forum [E38], was the failure to enact section 14 of the Equality Act 2010 concerning dual discrimination. Combinations of characteristics, such as age and disability, are more likely as employees age, increasing the opportunity for dual discrimination and the disadvantage arising from the intersections of such characteristics [E6]:

> For something like EV, it's fair to say it's not just gender or age or ethnicity, it's a combination of those.... It is a barrier for the employee. [E6]

She regarded the Public Sector Equality Duty as vague in expecting organizations to pay 'due regard' to equality, rather than follow a prescriptive regulation. However, an E&D adviser [C19] informed that compliance had recently extended to equality planning, including planning for EV (see also 5.6.4.2.). Participant [E6] commented that the primary mechanism for evidencing compliance, the equality impact assessment, was limited in its effectiveness and open to manipulation.

5.3.5 Working with change

This subtheme concerns working with change, whether it be technological, structural, regulatory or process based and how this affects the older worker EV. Concurring with Schlosser and Zolin (2012), HR directors and the CEO [A1, B2, B35, E5] regarded EV as essential in times of change:

> There must be a genuine two-way conversation where there is listening and responding. I think without this, almost anything we do will not be a success. [B35]

An E&D adviser reasoned that austerity provided a common purpose, and the courage to speak out as a group regarding change [D17]. Conversely, an older participant opined that employee silence was more likely for fear of losing a job [B12] (see 5.6.5). Some participants [A4, C10, E3] perceived older workers to struggle with the ever-increasing rate of change, but others disagreed. For example, one manager's secretary had retired at 78 and had managed well until that time [D27]. A further factor was that older office workers viewed organizational change as relatively unimportant compared to life events such as bereavement [D28]. They were unfazed and perceived their length of tenure to confer an advantage, as one described:

> I certainly know how this council works; I was born in the district. I've worked here in all the periods of austerity, and understand how life must operate differently. [A23]

However, keeping abreast of technological change required effort, as one older worker confided,

> You might have to show me a few extra times because I'm knocking on a bit, but once I know what I'm doing I'm fine. [D18]

The CEO of Council E used EV, as from a survey (75 percent response), focus groups and one-to-one meetings to encourage all employees to participate in change. EV mechanisms were generally technology-based, disadvantaging those without access or confused by technology, however, the face-to-face mechanisms that most older workers prefer were also available.

Older manual workers [D26, D30, D32, D33] regarded consultation during change as unmeaningful, but accepted that it was the manager's role to see that change happened. Likewise, the GMB representative [D29] remarked that frontline representatives were generally presented with a fait accompli. Although HR managers across the context consulted with trade unions, and espoused to respect collective bargaining, changes to terms and conditions were not always negotiated, as indicated in section 5.3.1.1. Where it suited the management agenda, for example in job evaluation exercises, trade unions were heavily involved. This caused some older employees, who had not benefitted from job evaluation, to become disillusioned with their union [B12, B15, E37]. Collaborative working was evident on change associated with E&D, for example regarding disability reporting [D17] and in conducting equality impact assessments [A8, C19], which as Bennett (2010) identified, can strengthen their perceived validity (see also Theme 4, 5.6.1.1 b).

5.3.6 Summary of theme 1

The findings of theme 1 suggest that central government policy is oppressive of local government and their trade unions. New public management was the norm, austerity had lowered employee morale, imbuing feelings of futility among older workers regarding EV. Moreover, structural change had disrupted voice mechanisms. For the trade unions, outsourcing had complicated balloting, negotiation and collective bargaining. However, outsourcing was not wholly vilified, with some older workers preferring the direct voice opportunities of their new employer. Direct voice was

encouraged, but older participants and unions representatives questioned how their views would be received if they challenged the unitarist management agenda. Public sector ethos was regarded as more prevalent in older employees, was culturally embedded and contributed to the distinctiveness of the context, yet the CEO participant regarded it as a barrier to progress. Organizational culture had a strong effect on EV and is discussed more fully in the next theme.

All the councils in the research had ageing workforces. The increase in state pension age and more stringent local government pension regulations had effectively priced out early retirement causing some older workers to refrain from EV. Benefits for older employees arising from the Equality Act 2010 were constrained by the failure to provide for dual discrimination, and the weak 'due regard' phrasing of the Public Sector Equality Duty, suggesting some voices would be unheard. Change was a way of life for older employee. Older worker EV was acknowledged to contribute to organizational performance during change but some managers failed to appreciate a mature and useful change skill set. Trade union consultation was inconsistent, with some initiatives being fully consulted upon and others not, although equality and diversity consultations were close to partnership working.

The role and impacts of human resource management in shaping EV, are presented in the next theme.

5.4. Theme 2: Evolving EV regimes through human resource management

Human resource management functions are attributed with moving away from collective bargaining towards more individualised employment relationships and direct forms of voice (Kaufman & Taras, 2010). In a context where collective bargaining persists, this theme presents the findings on how human resource strategies and practices shape EV regimes. Considering organizational factors that affect EV addresses subordinate question 2 (Sq2) by exploring whether HR are the agents of management or enablers of organizational justice for older workers. Although the theme primarily covers organizational-level factors affecting older workers, macro-level influences such as marketisation interrelate, so are considered.

Strategically focused human resource functions are very different to the personnel functions older workers experienced on entering the workforce. As discussed in theme 1, in achieving austerity led efficiency targets, HR was required to retain skills whilst concurrently reducing workforce numbers, initially by retiring older workers (Flynn, 2014). However, austerity unlocked opportunities for HR, as one HR Director explained:

> It created much more visibility for HR, and led to us working much more closely with finance, the change teams, ICT, etc., etc. Austerity isn't a great thing, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone, but in terms of HR, it absolutely has been a game changer for us and our positioning. [B2]

Four subordinate themes are incorporated into this chapter. These address the significance of strategic HR to EV; the relationship of HR with other organizational parties; the influence of the CIPD discourse, and lastly the moral and legal obligations associated with HR and EV.

5.4.1 Strategic intent for employee voice

This subtheme is concerned with the effect of HR strategy on EV, such as the effect of restructuring transactional HR operations, and equality and diversity services affecting older workers. The connection between HPWS, strategy and the managerial objectives for direct and indirect forms of voice are considered. Other aspects of direct and indirect voice are discussed in Theme 3. Demand for EV was inconsistent, but HR participants consistently acknowledged that employee feedback informed strategy, policy, thus expressly connecting strategy with EV. The CEO [E5] explained:

> I think I spoke to about 150 of our people and got some really good data about what was frustrating people about the organization. It created a lot of the intelligence to inform the corporate strategy. [E5]

The HR functions were structured to support corporate strategy more so than employees, as Marchington (2015) found. This was clearly evidenced by strategies for transactional HR administration. In all the councils, the approach was to separate transactional processes from the more strategic elements of HRM. Other than in Council E, where the fundamental value of transactional services was emphasised [E5], the resource-based view of HR prevailed. Cost minimisation was achieved by reducing the number of HR administrators and installing electronic employee portals to create value (Farnham, 2015). Council B chose an outsourcing route, and then reversed their decision to return the function in house, whereas Councils C and D shared their transactional HR resources, as in Harris's (2007) findings. Council A adopted yet another strategy by placing the function within an in-house multifunctional transactional data team dealing with other data, such as for council tax. Reflecting the values of the controlling local Conservative party, the CEO [E5] assumed an entrepreneurial position:

> We are looking at going into partnership with a private sector operator to deliver our transactional HR, we don't want to just outsource it, we want to do it in a partnership environment…... This will provide our HR services, but we want to go out and trade it as well.

Variants of Ulrich and Brockbank's (2005) 'three-legged stool' for HR service delivery were in place in all the councils (see 3.2.3), reflecting Francis et al's (2014) view of its pervasive nature. Roles and terminology associated with the model were used, as an HR adviser disclosed,

> We are not so shop floor now, we are very much part of the decision-making process now and operate a business partnering model. [A9]

Councillor [A4] had observed council strategy from the late 1970s onwards and relayed how the marketisation of local government had affected HR:

> Not only have we embraced, I mean councils in general, that the private sector model is best, we are more and more (internally) adopting those private sector practices. That comes in through HR and their practices in the work place. [A4]

Contrary to the general trend, E&D management teams became larger during austerity in Council A, five employees where previously there had been one. The E&D director [A8] explained,

> We see it as more important now which is why we have put in extra resources.

E&D teams were less integrated with HR than formerly, operating independently but remaining the responsibility of the HR director. E&D advisers [B11, D17] described their roles as 'seconded from HR' to reflect current council priorities, for example,

> I am over there because of the strategic importance. [B11]

Appearing at odds with the espoused inclusive HR practice, including for age, only Council C continued to locate E&D management within the main HR structure.

5.4.1.1 High performance working

Agreeing with Harley's (2014) discussion of performance improvement expectations, EV was integral to HPWS in all the councils. HPWS were the accepted norm [A9, B36, C19, D27, E6], and although 'toolkits' were available to managers [B36], there was disagreement as to how well these were embedded in practice. In response to the question '*How is the HR strategy linked to the council's overall strategy?'*, two participants from Council D offered contrasting views. A senior manager [D27] described the process as ongoing, but an HR adviser contested,

> In terms of alignment, no, it's not good at all, I don't think so, you've not actually got a specific policy team in HR and I think that's a bit crazy really. [D7]

In addition to vertical alignment with council strategy, the use of values to achieve horizontal alignment within HPWS was widespread. As confirmed by other participants [A1, A8, B11, C19, D17], an HR adviser stated,

> The values are threaded through everything we do, so, on the JPs (*job profiles*) we have to look for evidence that they support the values through the use of the criteria. They need to embrace our values. It runs through the recruitment, the induction the whole process. It's in the PDRs (*performance and development reviews*). [A9]

Corresponding with Marsden's (2013) findings, Council B HR managers had incorporated EV into appraisals, supported by management training [B35, B36]. In Council A, appraisals (or PDRs), voice was restricted to learning and development

choices [A8], and in common with the other councils, was linked to the council values and strategy [B11]. In terms of Gennard et al's (2016) conceptual framework, EV was a unitarist inclusion related to task, typical of the high commitment variant of HRM (Boxall and Macky, 2014). There was no evidence that older workers were rated unfairly at appraisal, but appraisals are a situation where E&D and HR advisers working as one could promote good practice.

For managers there was a clear line of sight between EV and high performance. An E&D adviser represented their view:

> If staff are more engaged in the planning and development of services, they are more likely to be engaged in delivering them. [C19]

The desk review of relevant council documentation revealed a distinct difference in internal and external facing documentation. Employee facing documentation portrayed the unitarist 'one team' message, for example the vision and values statement of Council A (2016), whereas the public facing strategic documents made little mention of the workforce' team', for example the corporate strategy 2018-2025 (2018) of Council E.

5.4.1.2 Ownership of voice strategy

Participants perceived ownership of EV to be shared between the CEO, senior management team and HR; as one older worker stated "it's a joint effort" [A23]. Employee ownership of EV strategy did not feature outside of the collective voice, other than a self-help group for menopausal workers formed by employees in Council C [C19]. Participants from all five councils perceived that leaders sought direct dialogue with employees, but some parties felt excluded from the process. For example, an HR adviser commented how employee suggestions now bypassed HR, going directly to the CEO [D34] and in Council A, the CEO was viewed as exceptionally committed to direct forms of voice [A8, A9, E37]. An older HR worker [C13], commented that despite HR's efforts, busy managers may deprioritise voice. Council C [C10, C19] participants left the impression of a lower organizational impetus concerning voice, as this older worker's response implies:

> If you had asked me this a few years ago I would have said no, but I think it is starting to be. [C13]

5.4.1.3 Intention for direct voice

Improving organizational effectiveness and employee engagement were the most frequently mentioned intentions, as an HR Adviser explained,

> Without listening to your employees, about how they are feeling and how things are impacting on them, and having their input on how it is delivering at the fore front of our services, we can't move forward and we can't improve….We might think we have managed a front of 'doing okay'…One of our values is 'honest'. [A9]

Unlike Council A, where the values were created by employees 'from the bottom up' through direct surveys and workshops [A1], HR produced the Council D values, with 'respect' added by an employee focus group [D17]. Participants connected to the HR function discussed values, and three managers [D24, D25, D27] mentioned 'honest' as a value, but they were not mentioned by any older frontline participants. Having an EV regarding values did not seem to increase their interest and may, as the GMB union representative [E37] proposed, be perceived as a fad. Creating values was a component of the employee engagement strategy. Contrary to the intended direction of a unitarist agenda, when asked how EV directed engagement, an older employee who had analysed survey data qualified,

> Probably more with the team than the organization, depending on what level you're at. [D34]

Direct voice was strongly associated with employee engagement among the HR participants, for example,

> You're encouraging managers to have an open door, to communicate well with their employees and engage them, so really you would be expecting employees to be able to disclose things with their manager and discuss issues. [D7]

Additionally, corresponding with Wang and Seifert (2018), an effective EV was associated by HR with improved retention of all employees,

> We need to keep our good employees. Whether we are not listening to them, or not treating their wellbeing seriously, or not respecting them, people will leave. [D17]

5.4.1.4 Reducing alternative views

Direct voice had unitarist overtones, as Gill and Meyer (2013) identify. In Council C, some views in non-union forums were suppressed, as managers decided who could

participate and trade unions were marginalised. Selecting employees prior to non-union forums suggests orchestration of EV and creeping managerialism.

> In my area we are going to start staff forums and giving employees a voice in that way…. We need to gel those teams together and get them to work well, and so we are doing away-day sessions. The staff survey did show that some teams are ready for us to have those forums, and to listen to people. [C13]

The Councillor [A4] opined that direct mechanisms, such as away days, support managerial agendas by grouping teams in such a way that the desired answer seemingly emerges unforced from the floor. Trade unions were not included in Council A's CEO employee briefings and as Bach and Stroleny (2014) suggest, direct voice and a listening culture had reduced the employee appetite for a collective voice. An HR Director [A1] commented:

> The thing I've noticed is that they don't feel they have got to challenge it through the trade union anymore. There is still a strong place for trade unions in this organization but staff feel quite comfortable raising matters which 10 or 15 years ago would have been raised through a JCC forum [A1].

An HR advisor from Council C regarded union membership reductions as a justification for introducing alternative staff engagement activities [C19], which could further marginalise the unions. This corresponds with Wilkinson and Fay's (2011) views on attempts to reduce union influence. Conversely an HR Director stated,

> The infrastructure that we have here both at an individual level and representative of a group of employees, via the unions, gives the unions a say in virtually everything we do. [B35]

Employees were encouraged to behave consistently with organizational values [C19], echoing Purcell's (2014b) evaluation of values as a form of control, or brand management. Concurring with Greenwood and Van Buren (2017), the regional union representative [E37] viewed council values as a deliberate move to reduce the influence of the unions and those managers with alternative views:

> If you don't buy into the values and how it's set up *(pause)* anybody deemed to be even challenging it, or not even challenging it just speaking up and offering an alternative view, is deemed as not on board, so they get shut (*rid of them*). There are a lot of people at senior levels who have just disappeared. [E37]

This represents a move to reinforce management power and managerial hegemony.

5.4.1.5 Intention for collective voice

Old workers are more likely to be in union membership (Flynn, 2014) and although trade union power was perceived as declining [e.g., A23, B11, B12, B15, C13, D24, D25, D26, D31], they were recognised as useful by HR. An employment relations adviser [B36] was representative in recounting an ongoing dialogue having its 'ups and downs'. Collective bargaining was acknowledged as a tried and tested route of negotiation, being less problematic than negotiating with multiple groups. For trade unions, collective bargaining was a defence against those parties who would exclude them [E37].

Consulting trade unions on policy demonstrated their rectitude [C10] and for most HR participants and CEO [E5], trade unions were an accepted means of resolving collective and individual issues [A9, B36, C19, D7]. Council D HR participants had the closest relationship with unions, recognising the importance of union feedback on HR policy [D17] and agreeing that unions were widely consulted [D7]. Recent collaboration on policy included joint working to improve disability declarations, which is an issue that disproportionately affects older workers [D17].

For employees, an interchangeability between the unions and HR surfaced:

> Yes, they can either go to trade unions or to HR depending on what they want to do. [D7]

The regional TU representative summed up the value of collaboration with HR:

> Times are bad and austerity's shocking, but we are still looking for opportunities because if we don't do a lot together…all we're doing is enabling the running down of the workforce. There's nothing in it for nobody, just bad news. [E37]

Other HR relationships are considered in the next subordinate theme

5.4.2 HR relationships with other organizational players

The second subordinate theme concerns the relationship of HR with workers, leaders and managers and considers whether HR is an employee advocate, or an instrument of management hegemony.

5.4.2.1 Relationship with employees

As a result of austerity measures, HR sought to realign employee expectations regarding their employment [e.g., C19, B36]. The HR Director [B35] embraced the opportunity:

> It's about how do we change the mind-set of the employees so that we can provide a different role to citizens...that's exactly what HR should be contributing to. [B35]

The HR Director proposed that unions, as opposed to HR, were better able to address individual issues. Alternatively, an HR service manager [B36] expressed that having fewer resources led to employee dissatisfaction with HR, adding that employee issues had festered and boiled over, whereas an effective EV would be ameliorating. Older workers were nostalgic about the former more paternalistic HR function. Increasingly, impersonal online alternatives (see 5.4.1), and management focused employment relations experts, were in place, as in Ulrich and Brockbank's (2005) three-legged stool model for HR. A returning retiree provided an illustrative example from 1980s:

> I had to go to the HR office for a reference, and the guy in HR took me to one side and said 'do you know you are valued here, don't do anything stupid'… They seemed to have more control; they are invisible now'. [B15]

The TUC officer observed that as personnel management transitioned to HRM, it became more unitarist and management centred.

> It is my experience of HR as a trade unionist, that HR will always come down on one side, if push comes to shove. I have never been in a situation, and I have been in a lot of situations, where HR has said to the employer, 'hang on a minute, you are out of order here'. [E3]

Conversely, the older union representative valued his consultations with HR, but was unconvinced of their impartiality:

> It's not only the management who can go to them, we can go to them. But are they gonna tell us the truth? That's your problem. [D29]

A senior HR adviser [B36], considered that HR's position was survivalist, reflecting Cook et al's (2016) findingd of harder forms of HR during retrenchment, and Pritchard and Fear's (2015) discourse of HR's struggle to sustain a strategic identity. HR employee champion roles (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005) were so diminished that a senior HR adviser [C10], reasoned that clarifying behavioural expectations was a form of employee protection, reminiscent of the behavioural agendas of Ulrich (2016). Using council values to frame behavioural expectations in this way indicates their use as a control mechanism.

A manual worker [D32] who had worked for two of the councils in the study alluded to the inconsistency of the employment relationship, viewing her current employer (Council D) as far better. Significantly, Council D appeared to have the closest relationship with the unions. HR was unimportant to most older employees. When asked '*does HR have an impact on you as an individual?'* most manual workers (84 per cent) in the study [D26, 29, 31, 32, 33] answered 'very little' or words to that effect. As confirmed by the HR Director [B35], access to HR for manual workers was constrained by poor access to council computers. Older front-line office workers also had little contact with HR, excepting the oldest participant in the study, who was monitored to ensure her health and safety. An older professional worker added,

> They (*HR*) were contracted out and then came back in house. It's quite confusing as to who HR is, and what HR is now. There are some e-mail addresses kicking about that aren't used anymore. [B15]

This supports Marchington (2015) in that by taking a strategic focus, HR had reduced their attention to the sufficiency of EV. Alternatively, CEO [E5] foresaw artificial intelligence and computerised HR administration systems as improving employee relations and EV. In this research, manual workers of the arms-length management organization[3] of Council C were given electronic tablets [E38], and Council A were developing an extranet for employee smart phones [A8], which could be used for EV.

5.4.2.2 Relationship with leaders and managers

HR's relationship with councillors was dependent upon councillor personality and individual interest, rather than political affiliation. It might be expected that a labour councillor would be interested in employees, but this was not always so [B36]. An HR director explained that some councillors have less understanding of the importance of people management. A senior HR adviser added that although leaders were more visible than in her previous council, they added to her workload [B36]. From the leadership perspective, the CEO of Council E viewed a healthy relationship with HR as essential to achieving the cultural change necessary to achieve strategic objectives, including for EV [E5]. Another manager added that her good relationship with HR, ensured fair management practice [D27].

[3] Arm's-length management organizations are not-for-profit organisations charged by government to improve and manage council housing stock.

As Francis et al (2014) identified, tasks traditionally associated with HR were now delegated to line managers, which gave them less time to listen to employees [D24, D25]. Council B HR provided support for managers through a triage desk system [B36] and training interventions, including those for EV, which was emphasised as 'absolutely key' to the Council's future success [B35]. Line managers were the first port of call for the older worker EV, as the regional trade union representative [E37] confirmed. He argued that HR existed to support managers:

> I think, well, obviously HR's job is to provide support for managers, and once decisions have been made, I'd expect any HR officer to put that, to make it happen, that's what they're there for. [E37]

5.4.3 Influence of the CIPD discourse

The effects of the HR professional discourse on EV are considered in this subtheme. The CIPD is the largest association for HR professionals in the UK (CIPD, 2019). All bar two of the HR participants were CIPD members [D17, B11], both being E&D advisers. Two participants [D7, C10] were undertaking CIPD level 7 qualifications at the time of the research.

When asked if EV supported the CIPD strapline objective of "*Championing better work and better working lives*", all the HR participants including the non-members, agreed that it did. A CIPD branch participant emphasised that only a genuine and authentic EV was of value to employers and employees:

> They should have the opportunity to say what they want to say, and know that it is being listened to and being respected. That's the other thing, it's okay to have an EV mechanism, but if it's not effective for either the organization or the employee, you are going to end up with disengaged employees. [E6]

A senior HR advisor [B36] summed up the general response of HR advisers, agreeing that an ineffective EV negatively affects employee morale. When asked *"Do you think EV in the council echoes the CIPD take on voice?"* the participant commented that in practice, it was more aspirational due to the austere climate. The two youngest advisors [C10, D7], who had undertaken an employment relations module shortly before their interviews, were enthusiastic regarding EV:

> We take it very seriously; we do try to engage more and more with our employees and we tell managers that it is so important to communicate. Communication, is vital. [C10]

The CIPD behavioural expectations significant to older worker EV, are 'working inclusively', 'valuing people' and 'ethical practice' (CIPD, 2018). An interesting aside is that three of the four councils in the main study sent their HR employees to the same education provider, so were likely to receive a consistent message regarding EV, which may have influenced their beliefs and practice (Kuhn, 1970). The CIPD have good intentions regarding voice, diluted by their strategic aspirations that ultimately require voice to improve performance rather than promote social justice. Additionally, the precarity of local government resources may constrain what HR are able to achieve by EV.

5.4.4 Legal and moral obligations

The final subtheme encompasses the moral and legal obligations of HR regarding EV and older workers, its position as the moral compass of the organization, and how this has changed over time. Older participants assumed that HR upheld the standard regulatory requirements of the employment relationship, including for EV. One older worker gave an unexpected answer:

> We've also got an HR who has a legal obligation to us, not just to the management. I could be breaking the law. [D29]

This participant was employed by a council that had endured a public inquiry, prompting stringent central government control measures. The circumstances had affected his expectations of HR and use for EV.

The Council B equality forum [B16] was a high-profile example of good practice, exceeding the 'due regard' required by the Public Sector Equality Duty. Recent council projects included improving equality in partner organizations and attaining diversity quality standards. Commitment to an inclusive workplace was embodied by the presence of a councillor, the CEO, the officer for social justice, and senior HR officers, enhanced by the symbolic location and refreshments served on the ceremonial china. The attendees were from a mix of roles and departments representing the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, including older workers, however there was no trade union presence. At interview, retiring HR director [B2] disclosed Council B's commitment to a fair employer charter laying out how employees should be treated, providing evidence of actioning social justice at work. A senior HR adviser added that this was tempered by the operational necessity to deliver services [B36] and fewer resources for HR, which Bell et al (2011) caution, impacts HR's ability to champion minority causes.

The E&D participant [D17], referred to the Equality Framework for Local Government (LGA, 2019) as prescribing an EV for those who share protected characteristics, but advised how achieving this can vary. The participant regarded HR as the moral compass of the organization:

> HR ensures that we do things legally and properly and that we treat people fairly, sometimes it's differently. [D17]

Like Kulik et al (2016), an HR adviser cautioned that austerity had resulted in managers having little time for anything other than their day job:

> I think if HR didn't promote it (*equality*), I don't think anyone else would because we have a lot of people just focusing on the job, and what they have got to do, so HR still has a role in this. [C10]

The regional GMB representative expressed that employees transferred by council HR services under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 were consulted fairly, but was concerned that private sector HR services might be less equitable:

> HR officers for the people I TUPE'd, at the local government end, always were conscientious and made sure that people's contracts were in place, updated and we got all that kind of thing done, but once they go to the new companies, the HR provider can be anybody, [E37].

The representative added that HR workers who were transferred to private sector organizations tended to retain their public sector ethos. An HR Director pointed out that moral and legal obligations extended far beyond the HR function:

> I would say the whole organization has got a role to play in that. [B35]

5.4.5 Summary of theme 2

As an agent of management, HR were instrumental in realigning employee expectations, and promoting forms of voice that were consistent with the vision and values of the organizations, high-performance working and the councils' strategic objectives. Older workers and trade union participants were largely unimpressed by this. Direct forms of voice in HPWS were emphasised and union involvement de-emphasised, although in Council D the links with trade unions were stronger. Trade unions retained a key role and working relationship with HR in all the councils as the representative voice of older employees, but were perceived to be declining in power.

For the employee, all the councils were committed to promoting an equal and diverse workforce, although there were no policies specifically for older employees. In accordance with equality frameworks for local government, diverse employees were given a voice. The observed equality forum did not include a trade union presence (that is not to say they were uninvited), but was an example of procedural justice regarding the older worker voice. Council D HR worked more closely with the unions, for example to assist disabled employees in speaking up, many of whom were older. In agreement with Richards and Sang (2016), the councils were generally equitable and law-abiding employers, but HR participants expressed concern that their moral obligations were increasingly difficult to meet because of increased workloads and reduced resources. The CIPD strapline “Championing better work and better working lives” was agreed as a noble aspiration, including for EV, but in practice this was open to interpretation and the influence of HR’s more strategic aspirations.

The next theme examines the findings on the channels, mechanisms and forms of EV present in local government, incorporating the influences identified in theme 1 and 2.

5.5 Theme 3: Local government employee voice

This theme considers the channels, mechanisms, forms and regimes of local government EV available to older workers. The nature, extent, and balance of the direct and collective forms are included alongside the organizational factors impacting on EV, as raised by subordinate question 2. In addition, the theme directly addresses the central research question in exploring whether EV in local government can support organizational justice, or whether EV is, in some guises, a form of control. The theme concludes with a summary of the main points arising.

5.5.1 Employee voice traditions

Employee voice in local government has transformed alongside societal change, political ideology, management practice and technology, however, the 'dance' of negotiation between management and unions continues [D27]. Although union membership increased in 2018 (BEIS, 2019), the rise of direct voice infers a progressively unitarist employment relationship (Bryson et al, 2013). Equally, concurring with Beszter et al (2015), trade unionism retains its significance through collective agreements [E3, E6, E37], a well-developed knowledge of negotiation, and conflict resolution, as the TUC participant submitted:

> I don't know of any council in this region that would regard the trade unions as disruptive, although they have their arguments. I think they see it as significant machinery for solving problems. [E3]

5.5.1.1 Traditions of trade union influence in local government

Council D unions appeared to be most influential [D7, D17], for example, union representatives were included on the recruitment panel for an HR director [D27], an unlikely event in Council A [A8]. Political affiliation affected the collective EV as excepting Conservative led Council E, strong links with the Labour party existed across the four Labour led councils, as a councillor relayed:

> In our council, several (*councillors)* have come up through the ranks as trade union officials and trade union organisers, shop stewards etc. [A4]

Although the relationships were useful, unions could not always influence council decision-making [E37].

Most older participants perceived industrial action to be less frequent than in previous years, which is supported by ONS statistics (see Chart 2). Older worker [B15] recalled lively office debates with union representatives during the 1980s, but felt currently there

was less appetite for conflict. Furthermore, the GMB representative regarded UNISON as less militant than their NALGO antecedents:

> We had some really heavy trade union people in office, but I think that's deemed as we don't wanna get involved now. We're going against the ethos of the management. [E37]

Reflecting Greene's (2015) account of a lack of gender diversity, a female HR director [A1] relayed that in the 1980s, the only female union representatives were part-time, however the gender balance had since improved. In Council A's UNISON branch, the chair and half of the branch officials were female (UNISON, 2018).

Although the four main councils were Labour led during the research, this was not always so. Concurring with [E37], the retiring Council B HR Director had experienced a Liberal Democrat administration and regarded Labour councillors as closer to the unions. Her successor [B35] relayed a similar situation:

> To give you a very quick and blunt example from my last council, this went from a Labour to a Conservative administration. So, the Conservatives got into power in May, and by June they had made the political decision to reduce the amount of facilities time[4] available to trade unions by 50 per cent. [B35]

In agreement with Gill-McLure (2014), the CEO [E5] viewed legislative changes as progressively reducing union influence. Conversely, the latest manifestation, the Trade Union Act 2016, setting out new conditions for strike action (Lewis & Sargeant, 2017), was thought to have little impact [C19, D17, E3]. The regional TUC official also deemed it a 'red herring' in legislating for something that was established practice. All agreed that recent industrial action was more about national than local issues, for example, Government imposed pay freezes. Resonating with Hyman's (2015) assertion that unions need to change if they are to change society, the CEO [E5] advised,

> Don't be static, be dynamic. If the environment changes, which it clearly does and you've got a reasonable ideologically led Tory government, you have got to be nimbler than they are.

[4] Facilities time occurs when an employee takes time off from their normal role to carry out their duties and activities as a trade union representative. (UK Government Cabinet Office, 2020)

Older participants acknowledged that their unions supported employee wellbeing, learning and development, and employment rights [B12, D32, D33]. Moreover, management participants [D27, B35] envisaged more welfare issues passing to the union, reflecting the earlier experience of line managers (Francis et al, 2014). Although front-line union representatives traditionally filter out trivial 'no soap in the gents' toilets' type issues, higher level issues may be outside of the average representative's availability or skill set, as Hyman (1997) identifies.

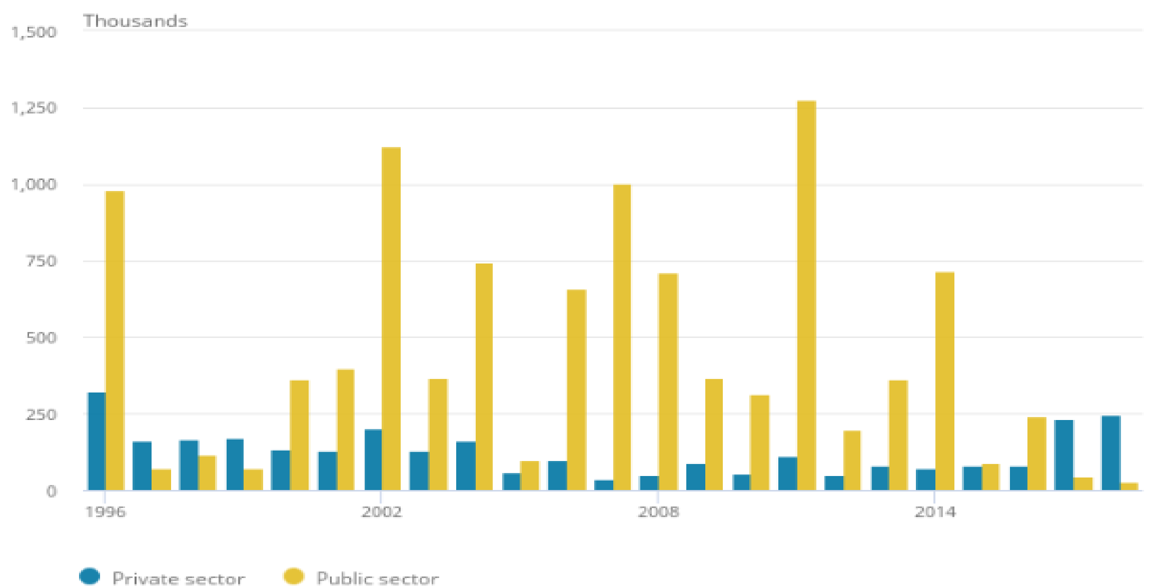


Chart 2: Number of working days lost annually since 1996 (source ONS, 2019b)

5.5.2 Forms of employee voice

The findings on collective and direct forms of EV in the setting are presented next, beginning with the collective voice.

5.5.2.1 Collective voice

Although representative groups were still common, such as those based on the Equality Act 2010, trade unions were the principal collective voice. Attempts to build other mechanisms had been abandoned in at least two of the councils, inferring that the unions used exclusivity as a power base. The E&D director [A8] explained,

> This is a contentious area. We have a lot of working groups and boards taking place. We tried one…..where we had a couple of employees on the board and the trade unions did not like it. They said that's our role, we should be round that table, not employees.

Although fewer employees volunteered for shop steward roles [A1], union advice was available when needed [e.g., A23]. Council A was unique in having an LGBT and equality union representative [A8] as generally all representatives took on some responsibility for equality and safety matters, including for age-related issues [A23]. Some older workers had a voice through their professional bodies, for example CIPD offer advice and recently produced research on the older workforce (e.g., Boys, 2019).

5.5.2.1.1 Channels

The five channels for collective EV identified by older participants were telephone, e-mails, face to face meetings, social media and print. Role affected employee preferences [B36, D29]; manual workers had poor access to e-mail, so preferred face to face or telephone meetings. The GMB representative [E37] added that although he used e-mail to manage and audit member requests, meeting face to face enabled healthy working relationships. Two older manual workers [D32] (GMB member) and [D33] (UNISON member) seldom encountered their representative, so were inclined to resolve their own problems. The oldest participant [D30] had never attended a union meeting and as Greene (2015) found, family responsibilities hindered participation [D18] (see 5.6.4 for other barriers).

The TUC participant upheld that social media was used more by unions than employers, but that it was a passive and easily disregarded form of voice:

> For example, you can sign as many petitions as you want online, you can get a million signatures in an hour and 10 Downing Street will ignore it. If you get 100,000 people outside 10 Downing Street, it's a different matter. So, it's about information, mobilisation and education. [E3]

Older members were perceived to need time to adjust to social media, but could be useful for branch news and strengthening the local older member community [E37].

5.5.2.1.2 Voice mechanisms

Other than for information or administrative purposes, collective voice mechanisms were for consultation and codetermination reasons (Figure 4). There were many collective agreements in place [C13] and the GMB regional representative [E37] reasoned that these were an important source of power. An older office worker added that the council was observant of these agreements [B21]. Participants described successful consultations with unions regarding bin collections [C10] and wellbeing projects [D27], but regarded agreement on pay or conditions as less likely [D7]. The TUC officer [E3] provided a surprising factor:

> One of the biggest things that has knocked collective bargaining is the minimum wage…. That's the biggest headache and biggest disincentive to join a union. [E3]

The councils in the research paid the living wage for 2019-2020 of £9 per hour (UK Government, 2019), but this was less likely to affect older council workers, other than those on a fixed rate, as many were at the top of their pay scale.

The principal mechanism for consultation was the local Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) wherein unions, HR, employees and in some cases elected members sat to consult on significant employee relations matters [A1, B36, D17]. These were declining. In Councils A, C and D, shorter meetings were held at directorate level [A8, C10, D7]. As confirmed by the GMB representative [E37] and HR participants [A1, B2, B15], an E&D manager reported,

> Our JCCs hardly ever meet because there are no perceived issues. That gives you a mark of the temperature of the organization. They have not met for months. [A8]

HR participants [A9, C10, D17], attended lower-level trade union liaison meetings. In Council A, these were held monthly [A9] and employee relations forums were held fortnightly [A8]. Consistent with an entrepreneurial outlook, the CEO participant preferred more informal approaches,

> Some collective voice will remain through the more formal trade union route and some of it won't. [E5]

Unions and employers formed partnerships to fight budget cuts, such as for adult care, and jointly worked on E&D policy [A8, B11, D17] through their common goals regarding community service and the survival of the councils [A9] Council C had few partnership arrangements, which an HR adviser attributed to union militancy [C10].

5.5.2.1.3 Influences on union power in the context

All the HR advisers believed the unions had retained their power, whereas older participants considered unions to be less powerful than previously. One older participant [D24], argued that representatives were less skilled than their predecessors, and were overburdened with HR tasks. Furthermore, the TUC participant [E3] argued that outsourcing activities had reduced union organising power, such as for ballots (Coffey & Thornley, 2014; Prowse & Prowse, 2007). The job evaluation scheme, addressing pay inequality, had disenfranchised some members because the internal

relativity between the pay of front line and supervisory roles was reduced [B12, B15]. The regional GMB representative explained,

> I've come across them type of people; they are very anti-job evaluation...most low paid staff did okay out of it… Some, probably works supervisors in that day, didn't get as much. [E37]

Other influences on union power offered were the unitarist management style [E37], the political control of the council as alluded to in section 5.5.1.1, and employee friendly employment law emanating from European Directives. These had replaced elements of union protection, such as the Working Time Directive 2003, the right to a written statement of terms, paid holidays, and transfer of employment protection. The TUC officer explained the impact:

> More and more people turn to the law quite quickly, whereas workplace solutions always used to be the best. The unions knew the employers and worked out a strategy to deal with it, now that's not available so people just bang a tribunal in. [E3]

Agreeing with "workers of the world" (2018), the CEO of Council E urged unions to update their thinking and practice to maintain relevance.

5.5.2.1.4 Membership choices

Consistent with Hirschman's (1970) exit option, one participant had exited union membership because she felt her views were disregarded [E6]. Managers [B35, C10, E5] perceived that this occurred where member views did not fit the union agenda. As Bryson (2008) found, and suggesting negative perceptions concerning distributive injustice, the non-union employees benefitting from union negotiated pay and conditions adversely affected membership decisions [B15, D25, D26, D31]. Alternatively, all older office and female manual participants of long tenure were loyal trade union members, for example participant [A14] indicated that she would remain a member after retiring. Her colleague added,

> When I first started in 1978, it was compulsory, you had to join a Trade Union whether you wanted to or not. I don't remember which year that you could come out. I still opted to stay in. [A23]

Although those over 60 were self-reliant, they trusted the union to uphold their employment rights [B21, D32, D30, D33]. An HR adviser [D7] added that older union members also used their direct EV effectively, proposing that union protection played

its part.

According to the TUC participant, retired member sections were an area of expanding and active membership for UNISON, UNITE and GMB:

> Well unions have what we call retired members sections, which are probably the most active sections of the trade unions. We have got a retired members' committee. There's more turns up for that than turns up for the executive.... Retired members are anyone really who is above 60. [E3]

Two attendees of the retired members' forum [E38], were still working (other than for the union) in councils making up the sample. In addition to matters of importance to older people, forum members discussed wider social justice, inferring their potential to support trade union activism and social policy development.

5.5.2.1.5 The trade union representative

An outcome of smaller membership numbers was fewer paid trade union convenors, there being three convenors and 22 trade union representatives in Council A (Council A, 2019). In Council C, there were two UNISON, one UNITE and one GMB convenor [C10]. In Council D there was no UNITE convenor, there being only 100 members [D17], however the regional UNITE offices were nearby, so could be contacted. Fewer representatives make for a busy life for those in post, which in turn may account for the fewer volunteers that HR manager [A1] reported. Excepting the youngest participant, who was a recent appointment, HR advisers had an established rapport with front line trade union representatives. Acknowledging that some managers were less than reasonable, an HR Adviser [C10] attributed a fair degree of conflict between representatives and managers to personality.

Contradicting Farnham (2015), a forum participant [E38] professed that trade union structures mimic those of employers, and far from emancipating their members, they sustained the status quo. In contrast, the older GMB representative [D29], a front-line manual worker, was less philosophical attending to the practical needs of members, to the extent of reminding them of their shoes size for safety boots. He did not contribute to JCCs with senior managers, nor was he inclined to. He was empowered to deal with local issues and negotiated with the manager on site. He recognised that in negotiations the manager generally prevailed, but had experienced some notable successes.

The regional GMB representative [E37], who had previously worked in Councils A and B, revealed that building layout was significant to EV. The corporate building of

Council A was open plan, whereas Council B had a traditional construction of smaller offices. The open plan layout of Council A facilitated trade union information gathering and sharing, and older workers were active in this process:

> On every floor I knew somebody that would gossip, and I could get stuff around like that... They couldn't control that…Your older people's the ones that probably do that, that's been around... .. I think they play a pivotal role [E37]

Although communication was hampered by walls, partnership working in Council B was more prevalent than in Council A.

5.5.2.1.6 Non-Union collective representation

This included school board members acting independently of the unions for their colleagues [A14] and identity groups, as an older participant specified,

> Yes, for disabled people, age, black and ethnic minority etc. The age hub is looking at hormones [B12]

Employee champions were in part displacing the identity groups [B11, C13], for example for working carers, women, BAME and disabled employees. In common with CEO [E5] and the councils generally, TUC participant [E3] preferred inclusive approaches to specialist groups and champions. His experience was that learning champions supplanted trade union learning representatives and that specialist groups isolated workers.

An older participant [B15] described an initiative in a neighbouring council, whereby shop stewards and non-union employee-representatives attended management meetings, giving employees an alternative route to voice their concerns. He added,

> But you should know that the individuals who volunteered and were very good at the start, became assimilated into the management and union structure. [B15]

A similar scheme in Council A was unsuccessful because the unions objected to the arrangement [A8].

5.5.2.2 Direct voice

Direct voice occurs where the communication between managers and employees, either individually or collectively, is not through a third party (Dundon et al, 2004b). Even within the same council, contrasting attitudes to direct forms arose, from the very positive assessments of HR and E&D employees [A1, A8, A9], to the more cynical evaluation of the Councillor:

> We annually run a series of big workshops through the chief executive and HR, that take in the whole workforce and all the councillors, and these will be around a particular theme. Well, you could say that that is giving everybody a voice, or you could say it's keeping everybody in line. [A4]

Consistent with Morrison's (2011) OB perspective, direct forms of EV (Chart 3) were associated with employee engagement and performance improvement. Employees were naturally expected to speak up on unlawful behaviour, for example regarding bullying.

5.5.2.2.1 Channels for direct voice

The five channels identified were face to face, intranet, social media, e-mail, and telephone. E-mails and telephone (except for helplines) were viewed as an initiating mechanism. For example, one participant [D28] would send her manager an e-mail to arrange a face-to-face meeting. Also, surveys accessed through embedded links in e-mails, were more associated with the intranet. The CEO of Council E acknowledged the limitations of e-mail:

> You can get to a lot of people very quickly, but there is no substitute for face-to-face contact. I send an e-mail to staff once every week talking about anything and everything, whatever's going on and invite questions. [E5]

HR practitioners in all the councils encouraged face to face communication with employees, for example, Council B had management standards for one-to-one and team meetings [B2]. Larger face-to-face meetings, such as the observed equality event [B16], were for information gathering and to embed policy [B11, D17, C19]. For older front-line workers, direct EV was associated with face-to-face meetings with line managers [e.g., D26, D31, D32, D33].

Councils A and C produced weekly CEO blogs. Consistent with Fox's (1966) unitary framework, the subject matter was a management choice, although there were opportunities for older employees to contribute [A8, C13]. HR director [B35] was planning interactive internet-based forums, but was constrained by the capacity of the council's ageing computer systems. Additionally, the lack of access to computers experienced by about 30 percent of employees was largely unacknowledged [E37] implying little informational justice for these individuals. For manual workers, even where a computer was available on site, access could be problematic as this older worker explained:

> No, we have an intranet, if you go on there, but there's only management on computers and you can only go on it at dinnertime, and they've put their password in. [D29]

The councils used social media for resident communications, but use for employees was inconsistent [B12, B21, D7]. Council A led the way in using internal Facebook pages and Microsoft SharePoint for collaborative working between departments, and for blogging [A1, A8, A9], although this was to enable agile working as much as for EV [A23]. The social media platform Yammer, had been abandoned in Council B because of perceived misuse. Their HR service manager was generally uneasy regarding social media:

> Coming from an ER background, I can see all sorts of pitfalls. [B36]

Speaking of Yammer in another public sector organization, the CIPD branch participant advised,

> People think, I am going to tell it to the computer, and completely forget that it is going out to 3000 other people. [E6]

All bar one of the female older workers and half of the men were on Facebook, indicating its potential for EV. Representing Facebook use in older workers, a participant commented,

> I, for one, go on every day but it's usually sharing the minion's things, or just looking what's going on. [D18]

As Thornthwaite et al (2018) observe, Council D assigned a low priority to such initiatives:

> We've looked at quite a few (*social media platforms*) but because of the cost element, we've looked at our own intranet as well but it's so rubbish that you couldn't do anything like that …… it's the last thing that people want to spend money on, which I think sometimes is a bit short sighted. [D34, confirmed D7]

In Council C, it was a downwards form of communication, however an HR adviser responded that a change was imminent,

> Our Chief Exec loves social media, it's a big thing….it gives a voice in different ways. [C10]

The CIPD branch participant [E6], referred to EV on external web platforms, such as Glassdoor, where employees rate their employers anonymously and so speak openly. A

brief perusal of Glassdoor for the councils sampled, revealed a mixed picture of EV. One reviewer communicated that experienced employees are sometimes ignored, whereas others felt they were listened to. Using specific material from Glassdoor required additional ethical approval from the university, so was not included in the dataset.

5.5.2.2.2 Voice mechanisms

Chart 3 shows the number of participant references to direct voice mechanisms, other than to confirm their use. In this research, a voice mechanism is taken as a process for expressing EV by whatever channel it takes place in. So, for example, suggestion schemes are mechanisms using either intranet, face to face or paper-based channels. Examples of direct voice mechanisms were numerous, so the three mechanisms receiving the most participant attention, that is surveys, appraisals and one-to-ones, are discussed, after a brief perusal of the others.

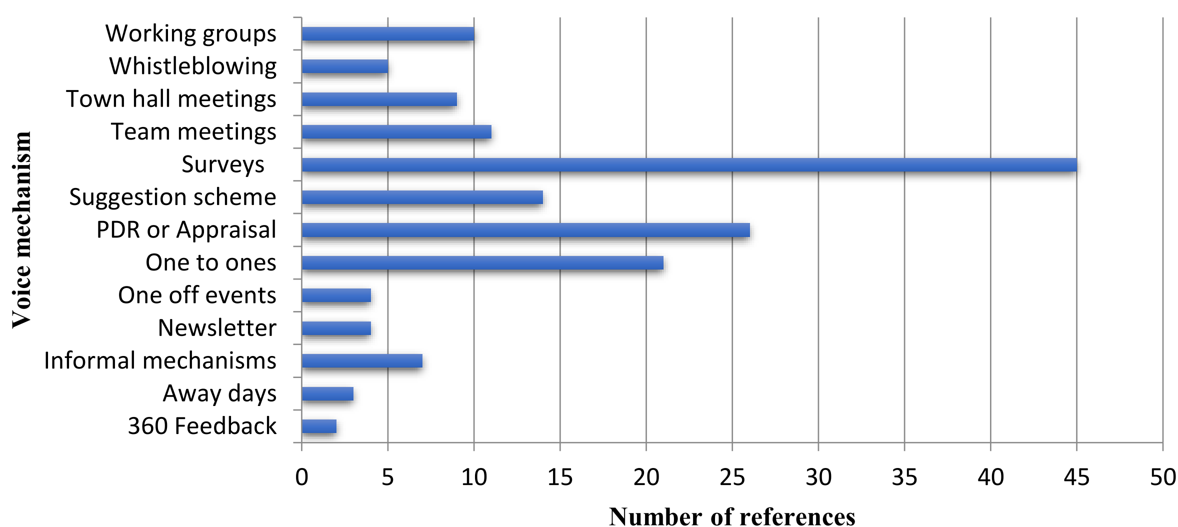


Chart 3: Participant response to direct voice mechanisms

Suggestion schemes featured strongly, but only to convey that they had been abandoned or were under used [e.g., B12]. 360-degree feedback received a small, but significant response from Council A participants in that 800 managers and supervisors had received employee ratings of their listening skills [A9].

As Heery and Noon (2017) ascertain, town hall meetings, where all employees gather to hear a message from the CEO or senior management, were a growing trend (see 3.1.4). Managers and union officials viewed these as important, for contrasting reasons. One HR advisor's view was typical:

> We have had briefings where every member of staff has had the chance to attend so they can understand what's going on, where they can put their views on what might work. It's that kind of thing that makes people appreciate their part. [C10]

In contrast, the GMB regional representative regarded town hall meetings as 'spin' mechanisms that marginalised unions, as unions were uninvited [E37]. Participant responses regarding 'whistleblowing' exposed insecurity and suspicion, as an older worker explained:

> You can't always go through the line manager because they might be party to it, and you wouldn't go through the union …as an older employee you might be motivated to do that…The fact that anonymity is stressed, straightaway makes you suspicious. [B15]

An independent inquiry revealed that frontline employees of one council in the study were not believed by senior managers over their concerns regarding a serious issue. Although the council had since made significant progress, an older employee [D34] felt that the EV of those employed at the time continued to be devalued. Line managers generally found whistleblowing to be problematic [D7]; it is a high-risk mechanism that is likely to challenge the authority structure (Brinsfield, 2014; Klaas et al, 2012). There were few comments on other mechanisms.

5.5.2.2.2.1 One-to-ones

One-to-ones were affected by access to managers, for example, the primary school worker [A14] had frequent contact, whereas the female street cleansing worker [D33] was remote from her manager. Open-door policies were commonplace [e.g., D24, D25], whereas others had monthly meetings [e.g., D18, E20, B12, B36]. Some met up so infrequently that appraisals were regarded as their one-to-one meeting [D26].

Font-line older participants, both office-based and manual, had good relationships with their line-managers, and were comfortable voicing their concerns. This supports Morrison's (2011) finding that the psychological safety of a good relationship encourages voice. An office-based worker provided a typical response:

> Oh yes. I have a good relationship with the manager. I've never had any other issues that went further than that. [A23]

One-to-one meetings were actively encouraged by HR across the councils, to engage employees and to avoid unnecessary conflict [e.g., A9, B36, C19, D27, E5]. Consistent

with other managerial participants, an older manager confirmed that her older workers preferred face to face meetings [D25]. One-to-one meetings extended through the entire hierarchy, as the older strategic senior manager pointed out [D27]. In contrast to Bennett (2010), the emphasis was on individual over team meetings, as an E&D manager advised:

> It's the one to ones. Team meetings are one thing, but people much more have the one-to-one relationship. [C19]

5.5.2.2.2.2 Appraisals/ PDRs

All employees, including manual workers, were expected to have a PDR at least annually. Council C adopted a very structured approach:

> We have six monthly and 12 monthly appraisals and monthly one-to-ones. We have standard paperwork, but all those have time to raise issues and feedback. [C19]

Council E also had an additional shorter 'check-in' appraisal [E20]. Council D older manual workers confused PDRs and one-to-ones, but clearly valued the opportunity and regarded EV as a genuine part of the process [D26, D31], as did most office-based older workers [e.g., B21, E20], agreeing with Korff et al (2017).

HR participants agreed that appraisal quality was inconsistent [D17] and achieving management compliance was a struggle [B35]. One older office worker [B12] thought appraisals were meaningless, however, all the councils provided appraisal training and were actively streamlining the process [A8, B21, B36]. Supporting the retired TUC member's thoughts on how trade unions reflect the organizations they work with [E38], the regional TUC representative disclosed that he had an appraisal, but as in Council A, the event was centred more on development than on providing an opportunity for EV.

5.5.2.2.2.3 Surveys

Employee surveys produced the largest participant response (Chart 3), generating strong opinion, as will be discussed. Surveys were available in online and printed formats, although participant [A14] had not received a survey. Two of the councils, C and D used external providers, with the others producing their surveys in house. Surveys were regarded by HR participants as both a form of voice and evidence that employees felt they had a voice, for example an HR adviser informed,

> I think the employee survey has more than 70 percent agreement that they (*employees*) can influence decision making and have their say [A9]

The frequency varied from six-monthly (Council B) to three-yearly (Council E) with only Council C issuing an annual survey. Other more targeted surveys were carried out, for example, regarding employee car parking patterns [C19], employee benefit packages [A1] and for disabled employees [B35, B36, B11]. Insecurity regarding anonymity affected response rates, for example,

> I have my own number, my own everything, they know all these things, I don't think they are anonymous. [D32]

The highest return was achieved by Council E at 70 percent, where considerable efforts to allay concerns regarding anonymity were made [E5]. Older worker sometimes interpreted such efforts as coercion, for example,

> We fill it in cos they more or less make you fill it in, it's not a choice. Do they listen? We're not sure about that one. [D32]

Council D had a response rate of 44 percent [D17], but the low 25 percent return of Council B caused some [e.g., B11] to question the validity of the survey. Concurring with older workers [B12, D24, D25, D34], HR managers commented that austerity measures had reduced response rates [B35, B36]. Accordingly, the Council D survey revealed that less than a third of respondents believed the findings would be acted on. Council A and C participants were less candid about their rates, an E&D adviser indicating that they had improved by using an external provider [C19]. HR director [A1] commented,

> It has probably run its course …we had to really try to get people to fill this in. When we did some focus groups as to why they didn't fill them in, the answer that we got was that we do it (*communicate*) all the time. [A1]

Investors in People investigators reported that engagement and communication were good in Council A, and other means of soliciting staff opinion were available in the form of trained 'change enablers' [A1].

Survey results were not analysed by age group in either Council C or D[5] [C19 & D34], but older workers were quite negative about surveys, for example,

> I think mine's the one that they disregard at t'bottom with all swear words on it! [D26]

---

[5] Other councils were not questioned as the issue emerged too late in data gathering

> Yeah, they usually go straight in't dustbin.… I'm 100% that I've no faith in them whatsoever. [D29]

> It's always met with derision and laughter! [B15]

Two older participants [D30, B15] added that following the initial reaction, they and their colleagues completed the survey honestly, and believed it to be a fair source of employee opinion. Participants did not view surveys as the form of impression management that Purcell (2014a) depicts.

Like HR Director [E35], an older worker added that long tenure was a factor:

> I dunno if its people that's been here a long time, have seen the changes but they seem to have become more negative, probably cos they've seen better things. [D28]

Whatever the mechanism, as the CIPD branch participant reasoned, it is not the mechanism per se that determines its effectiveness:

> The relationship between the employer and employee is a two-way process and if you don't respect that, no matter what mechanisms you put in place they won't be a success. [E6]

5.5.3 Balance of forms

Concurring with Gill-McLure & Thörnqvist (2018), HR participants [A9, C10] maintained that although trade unions were well-established, direct forms of voice had grown in prominence (Bryson et al, 2013; Bennett, 2010). An HR adviser explained:

> They can raise concerns with their manager at their one-to-one or raise it as a grievance. We have a lot more informal grievance processes, so things are resolved earlier and its much rarer to get as far as the trade union. [A9]

Managers consistently sought out direct forms of voice [A8, B36, C19, D27, E5]. Conversely, an HR adviser [D7] cautioned that the volume of voice generated can become unmanageable, as Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) uncovered, implying the utility of a collective voice. Direct voice was the strategic preference, as evidenced by the CEO meetings with employees, and was espoused as enabling a more consultative culture [A1]. Although Council B participants did not mention 'town hall' meetings, their CEO addressed the observed equality event [B16], and garnered older workers opinion above other groups present. The range of direct voice mechanisms may have widened but this did not equate to a shift in the balance between the forms. As

"workers of the world" (2018) submit, technology expands the options for the collective voice, yet was underdeveloped [E3].

The CIPD branch participant [E6] contended that the ascendence of direct voice was portent of a trend towards individualised employment contracts in the public sector. Forum members [E38] and regional GMB representative agreed that direct forms of voice weakened collective mechanisms saying "Course they are. Yeah" [E37]. He ascribed the regional trend as originating in Council A, stating that it did not necessarily increase employee influence, in agreement with Kaufman and Taras, (2010). Most direct mechanisms were at the shallow end of the involvement and participation continuum (Figure 4), were low threat mechanisms (Kaufman, 2015a) and were adversely affected by the workloads of managers. In an ideal situation, the two forms would sit side by side so that older workers feel valued as individuals, but protected by the collective voice.

5.5.4 Summary of theme 3

Older workers were aware of the channels and mechanisms for EV, and regarded direct EV as ascendent. Collective bargaining and conflict resolution maintained their union's position, yet external factors occasionally disempowered the collective voice, such as the imposed changes to employee terms and conditions. Direct voice mechanisms were largely management-led initiatives, however employee rating platforms, offered new possibilities for EV. Older workers either viewed direct voice as a managerial tool for increasing employee commitment to achieve performance outcomes, or alternatively as an opportunity to contribute and to be valued at work.

There was almost a continuum of emphasis on direct voice from Council A where it was most prevalent, through Council B and C to Council D where it was least emphasised. Investment in direct forms of EV appeared to correlate with its effectiveness. For example, Council A had rethought the employee survey process after consulting with employees, but the introduction of change enablers implies a narrower voice focused on management concerns related to performance, again suggesting a form of control. The CEO [E5] had a unitarist agenda with less formal and more individualised employment relationships, supported by direct EV. That said, even those with the most developed direct voice accepted that the two forms could co-exist, and was advantageous to achieving both performance improvement and organizational justice for employees. The next theme explores the significance of age to EV.

5.6 Theme 4: Older worker perceptions of employee voice

This theme brings together older worker perceptions of the value, motivations, barriers and enablers of EV; as such this theme relates to subordinate research question 2. The theme explores the older worker standpoint on EV set within the perspectives of the other parties that influence EV. Considering older worker perceptions of a fair EV involves reflecting on corresponding perceptions of organizational justice, as in the central research question. With regard to procedural justice, the research participants unanimously agreed that everyone should have a voice "from the bottom upwards" [A14], with more than a third adding unprompted that EV should be respectful and purposeful, as represented by the oldest participant:

> If you listen to people, everybody's got their point of view, you might not always agree with it but they've a right to voice it, haven't they? You know, in a polite manner. [D30]

Other than the trade union participants, older worker views of EV coincided more with OB perspectives, such as those of Morrison (2011). Older managers [D27, C13] regarded EV as unifying the employees and managers building the recovery of their towns, reflecting the 'true unitarism' that promotes genuine shared interests (Kaufman, 2020). The findings are organised by subtheme beginning with perspectives on the value of voice.

5.6.1 Value of employee voice

This subtheme considers the value of EV to older workers, and the sometimes-contrasting views of the HR and management participants who control and act upon their issues. The perspectives of the parties are presented separately to accommodate the differences.

5.6.1.1 Value of employee voice to employer

Agreeing with older participants [e.g., A14, B15, C13, D30, E20], an HR director captured the HR perspective:

> So, I think voice, to me, is about listening and taking the (organizational) temperature on a regular basis, and then dealing with what people say.... I think it will engage people. [B2]

An HR participant [B36] reasoned that older workers utilise EV to make ideas workable or acceptable to managers arising from a felt responsibility to contribute their knowledge. As an older manager offered:

> I feel that as you reach your later years that you become more of an ambassador than before. It's important to use your vast experience for the benefit of the authority. [E20]

An HR Director [B2] confirmed that this behaviour coincided with organizational values and objectives, alluding to ambassadorship as a form of unconscious self-control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, Müller, 2018). The three areas where EV was perceived to add most value were, a) improving performance/ cost reduction, b) managing change, and c) supporting a culture of honesty and transparency, as are discussed next.

a) Improving performance

Concurring closely with Islam's (2012) assessment on the limitations of objectified performance measurement categories, a senior older manager [D27] surmised that improving performance was a complex concept:

> You need to delve deep; performance is one of those clunky things where you measure what you can measure, rather than what it really means. [D27]

However, corresponding with Leisink and Knies (2011), older frontline workers made the connection with EV, for example,

> I would say performance is improved and morale is increased when people think they are being listened to and acknowledged. [B15]

When ideas went unheard, older workers felt undervalued, disempowered and frustrated [B15, D25, D32, D29, E38], and some managers paid only lip service to EV [B15, E37]. This corresponds with Islam's (2012) view of recognition as a humanising concept that can mitigate the effects of the reification of employees according to their capabilities. Eramo (2017) adds that recognition is particularly valued by older workers. As established earlier, the loss of older workers in the early years of austerity has increased the value of the remaining group, supporting the value of recognising their EV [E5, A4, C10, D17]. From an HR perspective, such recognition may improve retention rates [C13, D17].

Two older manual workers [D26, D31] stated that using EV had produced training and innovative ideas for their organization. Another [D33], viewed frontline workers as the eyes and ears of the council and so worthy of a strong voice. An HR adviser commented,

> The basic thing is that employees are the ones doing the job; they often have the best ideas because they are the ones that are doing it…and that's valuable. [C10]

As Morrison et al (2015) found, older workers with specialist skills had greater personal power that reinforced their EV [e.g., A14, A23, B21]. Resonating with Schlosser and Zolin's (2012) findings, the CIPD participant [E6] identified that the consequence of failing to listen was to disengage such employees. The CIPD and HR participants all associated EV with employee engagement and HPWS [A8, C19, E6]. Moreover, as older participant [D34] argued, giving employees a genuine voice improves the manager's operational knowledge, significantly contributing to successful change, as is explored next.

b) Facilitating change

The older worker EV has a potentially unique contribution during change [E5], as the CIPD participant explained,

> It's like the emperor's new clothes, everyone's saying let's look at this great new thing that's been invented, and they saw that 20 years before. [E6]

Older employees accepted the legitimacy of management decision-making, for example, two participants [D26, D31] intimated that although they valued the opportunity to have a say, ultimately the manager had to manage. An HR manager [B36] and older manager [E20] agreed that managers should consider the employee view, but the responsibility for change lay with managers. Conversely, acting on EV, even where it might be advantageous to the organization, was contingent on its alignment with the management agenda [A4], as the regional GMB representative identified,

> If it's towing the line, it's viewed positively. If it's not towing the line, if they're looking for another way round something or another way round a problem, it's viewed negatively. [E37]

This unitarist stance positions direct EV on the employee involvement side of Gennard et al's (2016) model (Figure 4), adding weight to the comment,

> The collective voice is the only realistic way to challenge bad management practice and poor conditions. [E38]

c) Honesty

Participants agreed that EV was "instrumental" [B36], or "very valuable" [A8], to sustaining a culture of honesty. Honesty was interpreted as truthfulness in dealing with

others, as personally acknowledging the truth and as accountability. Accountability was considered as 'essential' to honesty, but not without its challenges [C19, D7, D17]. In line with Martin et al (2013), honesty was associated with transparent decision-making [B36]. Honesty was vital to growing the trust required for EV [A23], as Holland et al (2017) espouse.

Some managers did not listen, despite 'honest' being an organizational value, for example, participant [D25] considered that the closure of her service was a foregone conclusion and her ideas on an alternative strategy were ignored. Another submitted that honesty was affected by political expediency [D28], based on the denial of a press rumour that subsequently proved to be true. Older worker [D29] reasoned that managers who work covertly make it difficult for employees to be effective or to contribute their thoughts. An HR director expanded,

> If managers can't justify a course of action to employees, then it's likely they shouldn't be doing it. [B35]

Agreeing with Burris et al (2017), he added that managers were pivotal to enabling the psychological safety required for their employees to be honest in their EV. Equally, HR participants [A1, B2, C10, E6] advised that older workers often lived up to the regional reputation for forthrightness, and were honest despite the risk to themselves.

5.6.1.2 Value of voice to the employee

Concurring with Kooij et al (2014), participants perceived EV to have benefits for older workers. An HR adviser [D7] surmised,

> I think giving employees a voice and control, and feeling they have some contribution to decisions, is a lot better than working in an organization where you feel as though you've not got any control, and you're just following orders. [D7]

Concurring with the literature (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Purcell, 2014a; Wood, 2008), HR employees opined that EV fostered feelings of belonging [C10, C19], involvement [B35], control [D7], engagement and purpose [D17]. Financial reward, as identified by participant [D29], was limited to outsourcer organizations (see 5.3.1.3). Most significant to older participants was feeling valued and acknowledged [e.g., B15]. EV provided the reassurance that the organization was not writing them off because they were old [C13]. EV was associated with direct mechanisms, but as ascertained in theme 3, unions were valued as a safety net. Employee voice was perceived as important, a) to

challenge decision-making or contribute ideas, and receiving the largest response, b) to support wellbeing.

a) Contribution and challenge

Direct voice was associated with making a contribution at work, as an older manual worker explained,

> It shows that you're concerned about what you're doing and your job [D26]

In common with temporary workers in Council C [E6], seasonal worker [D31] did not engage with the collective voice due to his precarious employment status; it was perceived to have no benefit, concurring with Kaufman (2015a) and Dundon et al (2017). Alternatively, permanent employees were more proactive in making suggestions, which increased their job satisfaction [D18, D28]. An older office worker [B12] was prepared to challenge management decisions, as she explained,

> I am known as a person who sometimes challenges things ……You should be able to challenge things and if things aren't right you should be able to question it. … I have worked for the council for a long time, I know how things work, so know how to do it. [B12]

HR manager [B36] genuinely valued challenging but constructive opinion as an opportunity for learning, but cautioned that vexatious employees spread their discontent to others.

b) Wellbeing

The relationship between voice and wellbeing was interpreted differently by senior managers, HR, and older workers. These three participant quotations capture the differences. The first from a senior manager relates to organizational improvement:

> I think being heard and having your views considered, and being part of the improvement journey, seeing that is quite good for your wellbeing. [D27]

The second, representing HR participants [e.g., A1, B35, C10, D7], signifies a humanist perspective, wherein meeting employee needs is considered alongside performance:

> It makes employees feel part of what you are doing, I think, rather than feeling like just a resource to be used…. Because once they feel valued, they become more engaged [C10]

The third quotation emphasises the contribution of voice to mental wellbeing, by older participants [e.g., A23, C13, D30]:

> Stops you getting frustrated for a start…it does, cos if summat's not running right, at least you can go in and talk to somebody. [D31]

The E&D adviser [C19] associated frustration with disempowerment and stress. As an older worker with a disability, [B12] commented that EV was very important to the wellbeing of disabled employees.

EV was perceived to sustain an older individual's identity at work [C10], as Islam (2012) discusses. An older worker explained:

> You have that work persona and that persona when you are at home, where you are a mum, a wife or you are a partner of somebody. You come into work as yourself and not as a mum etc. You can be yourself and can contribute to the job you're in. [C13]

Further supporting the views of Islam (2012) and Eramo (2017) on the value of being recognised at work, an older male officer worker [B15] offered that being listened to increased his self-esteem. Mental health awareness was attributed to recent HR interventions to encourage workers to speak-up regarding their wellbeing [C19, D17]. HR participants [B36, D7] added,

> You're dealing a lot with stress, depression and anxiety, and giving employees that feeling that they have more control over their work is probably a big part in resolving some of those issues. [D7]

Female older workers put forward that good mental health was supported by EV only within a fair and trusting relationship with managers [B21, D24, D28, D33], reflecting Colquitt and Rodell's (2011) view of trust and perceptions of organizational justice. Furthermore, HR Director [B35] stressed that an EV for employees with mental health issues could avoid a downward spiral. Participant [B36] added that Council B compared favourably with her previous employers in terms of health and wellbeing provision. Wellbeing was a hot topic in the setting, but less so in Council A. Two older workers [A23, A14] did not mention any specific interventions or mechanisms, but were clear about the connection with EV:

> If, as a result of speaking to someone, you get things off your chest, you get information that you perhaps might not know, to clarify things that might be causing you anxiety, or other sources of stress, it's got to be a good thing. [A23]

5.6.2 Employer motivations for employee voice

This section presents participant opinion on why the councils provide mechanisms and

channels for EV. HR participants agreed that EV was needed firstly because employees wanted it, implying that it was perceived as a matter of procedural justice. Alternatively, managers motivations were based on improving performance as discussed (5.6.1.1), and for planning, for example, by using employee survey data to inform strategy [A8, E5]. Older participants associated voice demand with work tasks [e.g., A14, B21, D18]. Alternative motives were offered, such as achieving legislative compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty or Local Government Equality Framework. As an older worker explained,

> Its part and parcel of being a council, it's for the stats, it's what they have to do. I don't think personally it is because it's morally right. [B12]

As Purcell (2014b) alludes to, others [B15, E37] regarded EV as a public relations exercise. In common with the Councillor [A4], the GMB regional representative viewed direct EV as a managerial tool to achieve conformity. Management attitudes to EV were changing, but their prioritisation of EV was unclear. However, it was acknowledged as conducive to forming good working relationships [E6] and demand for EV by senior leaders signalled its rising strategic importance.

5.6.3 Employee motivations for voice

Most older employees used EV to improve their performance, for example, by removing communication blockages [D30], proposing process improvements [B2, D28], or questioning decisions regarding the use of consultants [D24]. One older worker spoke out to uphold the law, as he explained,

> I'll say to my manager, I want to see the law on this, and he'll say well why? And I'll say because as an employee, I have the legal right to know that. As an employer, you have a legal obligation to produce that law, to stop me and you from committing an offence. [D29]

Grievances, such as job evaluation disputes [B15, B12, B16] and disagreements regarding reasonable adjustments for disability, were raised by older participants, mostly without consulting a trade union [B12, B16]. The regional TUC participant [E3] observed that this was typical of the self-reliance of older workers, but added that trade unions were usually consulted in complex cases. HR manager [B36] had worked in three councils, and perceived that employees with longer tenure expected annual increments, so that pay was the main EV issue. Alternatively, suggesting perceptions of interactional injustice were prevalent at any age, E&D manager [C19] regarded older workers as no different to their younger counterparts, viewing relationship breakdowns

as the main presenting issue. A UNISON convenor agreed and explained,

> In my experience difficult working relationships tend to be a large factor in all grievances submitted, regardless of age. [A39]

HR Director [A1] proposed that employees sometimes spoke out on a "what am I getting for my council tax" basis, as older participant [D18] had, and added that some valued employees did not contribute beyond their own role, and that this was their prerogative. Of the research participants, only one conveyed this mind-set [D26], the effects of austerity measures having shaped his views of the futility of EV.

5.6.4 Barriers and enablers to employee voice

Although certain factors were solely a barrier or an enabler to EV, the majority fell on a continuum between the two. For example, at one end of the continuum sat the trusting and supportive management style sustaining older worker EV, and at the other end was the manager who viewed EV as a threat or a source of conflict. This section also includes findings on why employees might be deliberately silent.

5.6.4.1 Enablers

Enablers of EV were connected to organizational culture, resources, or personal skills. (see also section 5.3.2.). Hierarchical position, specialist expertise or a supportive manager [A1, A14, D27, E5] impacted on EV irrespective of age, both for access and influence. However, where age was subject to a statutory regulation, such as evidencing compliance with the Local Government Equality Framework [B12, C19, D26], older worker voice had more influence. Line-managers generally accommodated EV [A8, B36, C19, D34], contradicting the employee opinion survey results, as an older worker offered,

> My manager, I feel as though I could take this into her, I really do…. I've not been made to feel that oh she's only a *manual grade worker*[6]. [D30]

As the survey findings in at least two of the councils were not categorised by age, older workers may have better than average relationships with their line managers, concurring with Leisink and Knies (2011) findings. Four older participants had previously experienced poor managers, and one [D32] had moved between the councils in the sample because of this. A manual worker intimated:

> These lads will listen to you. They do talk to you. Others could make a decision

[6] Post redacted to maintain anonymity

> and they wouldn't change it, you know, no consultation. [D26]

Despite two older participants occupying IT roles, and another in her 70s being very proficient with technology, face to face meetings were the favoured voice channel (see 5.5.2.2). Other enablers included the support of peers, team and departmental colleagues [A14, B12].

Circumstances beyond the workplace were significant to EV. During the observed equality event [B16], the CEO conveyed that a policy for working carers was a priority and proposals to consult with older workers were outlined. However, no mechanism for this was established, although an HR adviser reported the intent to join a national review on hidden impairments, which tend to increase with age [B16]. The intersections of age with other characteristics, such as disability, were a noticeable aspect of the study and are discussed further in theme 5 (see 5.7.2.1).

Confidentiality rather than anonymity was viewed as an enabler of EV; acting on anonymous information was regarded as problematic [B12, B36, D18, D24, D25]. Furthermore, receiving good feedback positively affected decisions regarding future EV contributions [e.g., A23, B21, C13, D31, E20]. To that end, the E&D director [A8] and HR Director [B2] planned more "You said, we did" type communications, and Council C was using employee survey data to inform improvements in communication [C19]. Good communication generally was regarded as an essential enabler of voice, countering mistrust, even where it was bad news [B2, E6].

Certain individual attributes were enablers of voice, as a returning retiree offered:

> I have done work and made it clear that it's a one off, and I have been firm and refused to do some things too…. Sometimes you have just got to clearly state your position. [B15]

Like the older professional participants [A14, C13], manual worker [D26] and older managers [e.g., D27, E20] he was very articulate so, within limits, could influence life at work (see section 5.7.1. for further discussion).

Older managers [C13, D27, E20] recognised that an effective voicer knows which battle to choose. That said, middle managers [D25, D34] were less successful, perhaps because there was no alternative but to fight for their service. Experience and confidence were advantageous to EV [A8], as an older manual worker reflected on his younger self,

> You didn't really have a voice, well you did, but nobody listened. But now, there's a possibility that somebody does listen to you sooner or later. [D31]

5.6.4.2 Barriers to employee voice

This section presents the findings regarding barriers at several levels, from external barriers such as legislation, to internal factors such as fear of retribution. Contextual influences such as the law, economy, education and politics, feature in theme 1, so are discussed only briefly here. Meso-level barriers to EV are considered, including poor access to voice mechanisms and the decreasing capacity to accommodate age related ill-health. Other age-related characteristics are considered in theme 5. The section concludes with findings relating to employee silence.

a) Macro-level barriers

Findings from theme 1 revealed the negative effects on EV of austerity measures and political change, for example, a women's forum closed due to financial cuts [D17] and trade union convenors faced reductions in facilities time [B35]. Most significant to EV were the removal of the DRA, pension regulation change, and legislation pertaining to dual discrimination, as alluded to in section 5.3.4.

For some, pensionable age changes provided the opportunity to continue in a job they enjoyed [E20, D30], but others doubted their ability to continue and none of the manual participants wanted to work beyond 65 years [D31]. HR participants [C10, C19, D17] viewed early retirement expectations as unrealistic:

> A lot of people have left with VER (*voluntary early retirement*) and got things early. For everyone that is left now, you can't afford to let the knowledge go, you can't afford to get rid of the posts, and some people are feeling a bit aggrieved. [C10]

Additionally, E&D managers agreed that workers approaching retirement kept quiet if they were unwell [B11, C19, D17], substantiating Morrison et al's (2015) view that low self-power perceptions affect EV. Concurring with Wilkinson et al (2018), macro-level factors did not operate in isolation. For example, unpaid dependants' leave (Employment Rights Act 1996), affected the EV of working carers at an individual level (see section c below).

b) Organizational level barriers

Despite most senior leaders being older, some were unsupportive of their contemporaries [D27, E20], as the Councillor discussed,

> No one is going to tell an executive director that they are too old and they need to keep up…… They can be sat there talking about workers in their late fifties when they are in their late fifties too. [A4]

Three older middle managers were left adrift with no immediate manager either due to an organizational restructure [D24, D25], or a lengthy recruitment process [D34]. Such middle managers were subsequently held responsible for communication failures not of their making [A8, B35, C19, D7]. HR adviser [D7] observed that middle managers and older employees share many objectives:

> They're union members themselves and they are caught in between being a manager and an employer in public, but often share the views of the employees as well. [D7]

As alluded to in section 5.3.2, HR participants observed some poor management practice around EV [A1, B2, B35, C13, C19]. Concurring with Ramsay's (1977) observations, where the subject was contrary to the management agenda, participants [e.g.D24, D25] were unconvinced of their influence. The older GMB representative remarked,

> We have meetings in here with senior management and directors and they say oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, and nowt changes. We can have a say, but it's up to them whether we change or not. [D29]

Leaders selectively ignored concerns, and 'speaking truth to power' [D7], wherein employees perceive that raising a genuine issue to leaders would present a personal risk, produced a low threat EV. Adding to issues of access to ageing IT infrastructures (see 5.5.2) was the lack of resources to modernise them [B35].

Agreeing with Kaufman (2015a), tall organizational structures were viewed as a barrier [e.g., A8, E6, D30, E20] and HR directors [A1, B2, B35] aspired to developing the flatter structures that enable EV:

> So, one of the things we try and do is to limit the length of a structure… it's quite important in terms of empowering the staff to feel they have a view. [B2]

Equally, the CIPD branch participant identified that restructures usually occurred irrespective of the employee view [E6]. Older participants [B12, D25], E&D adviser [B11] and HR participant [C10] agreed that restructures created confusion by fracturing communication lines for EV. Further structural barriers to EV occurred where

functional units were largely self-managing, for example in a school or ALMO[7], which was manifest in their poor survey response rates [D34]. Concurring with Donaghey et al (2011), HR participants [B35, A8] acknowledged that some managers fail to pass on information to the front-line, as an older manager reported:

> It's up to the manager to cascade that information, and some of them just stick it on the notice board. I've spoken to people in say like a care home, and they never look at it. [D34]

An HR advisor [B36] added that formal voice mechanisms were often incompatible with manual working, where a culture of informal conversation and fast feedback was prevalent [B36]. Older manual workers were comfortable with task focused EV but disliked entering the central corporate buildings where larger voice forums were held, believing their work clothes created an impression of inferiority [D26, D31, D32, D33]. Whether their feelings were justified or perceptual required further investigation, but a 'them and us' culture between manual workers and office staff was palpable. One manual worker in his mid-60s expressed feelings of exclusion:

> We are out of that circle that, shall we say where decisions are made and things like that. And I really do, I believe that we're out of it. [D26]

Another's view resonated with Bourdieu's theories (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) on appearance and power, inferring a structural barrier to EV based on class:

> As far as I'm concerned, we're classed as scum. They're shirt and tie. [D29]

The impacts on EV of health and wellbeing are discussed next.

c) Health and wellbeing

Concurring with Bacon and Hoque (2015), older manual workers refrained from voicing their health concerns, for fear of raising doubts over their capability [A9, B17, C19, D28]. HR participants [B2, B35, C10, C19, D17] agreed that age related disability was under reported, reflecting Phillipson's (2014) view. Older workers were suspicious of HR (see theme 5.7.2):

> I don't think they realise all the support that's in place…… They won't tell you because they think they are going to lose their job. [C10]

HR participants [A8, B11, C13] agreed that changes in regulation for ill health

---

[7] An ALMO or Arm's Length Management Organization is a company set up by a local authority to manage and improve all or part of its housing stock. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2003, p.2)

retirement were harsh and socially unjust:

> You've got a lot of people …. in manual roles where they've got muscular skeletal issues. Their health doesn't qualify them for retirement so you've got that issue sadly where you've got a lot of people that are in the late stages of the absence management procedures. [D7]

Similarly, and agreeing with Austin and Heyes (2020), the equality event [B16] and HR participants, reported that most working carers were in the older demographic, and that caring can affect wellbeing. An older worker described her after work visits to a care home as adding to stress at work, leaving little space for EV [D34]. Conversely, participant [D33] conveyed that during her husband's illness, her manager had listened and accommodated her needs. Reflecting on the need for wider social change, an E&D adviser [B11] cautioned that it will take more than unpaid dependant's leave to meet the challenge of caring, and with her counterparts [C19, D17] judged that councils were insufficiently prepared for the expected increase in working carers.

The menopause was another age-related factor that affected EV and some managers were unsympathetic [B12]. Female participants reported the variability of the effects and suggested that policies should be similarly flexible [B21, D27]. The CIPD branch officer agreed,

> It is an indeterminable length of time; it's an indeterminable set of conditions which can affect an individual physically and mentally [E6]

The worst effects on EV occurred during face-to-face meetings such as one-to-ones and team meetings. Agreeing with participants [D24, D25, D27], an older manager clarified how EV might be affected,

> There is a misconception that it is just about hot flushes. It can be very embarrassing when you lose track of what you are talking about and you can feel overwhelmed. [C13]

Councils B and D were actively working on interventions to support symptomatic workers, and older managers [C13, D27, D34] expressed that their managers were prepared to listen. Conversely, an older worker in Council D stated,

> I did speak to the union about this and I asked her if this was on their agenda and she said oh yes but that's as far as it went. From my perspective I have only had the support of colleagues. There is nothing in place…You can be sitting in a

> meeting with a group of women of a certain age and we are all having hot flushes, and everyone is too embarrassed to say anything. [D25]

Griffiths et al (2013) agree that women often fear stigmatisation and additionally, participant [D24] identified that although the menopause is a temporary condition, it can generate absence management sanctions. As approximately 70 percent of the workforces in the sample were female, this was not a minority issue. A self-support group organised by employees in Council C, was publicised on their council intranet, but the (younger) E&D manager [C19] felt that menopause "was a bit of a buzzword at the moment" and that the effects of prostate cancer were as significant for EV.

Age related poor mental health was recognised [D24, D25, D34] as adversely affecting EV. This was an emerging area of interest for Council D, but a strategy was some way off [D34]. Poor mental health often reduces the confidence of those affected to speak out, or causes them to speak out inappropriately [C10]. Council B was an exemplar of support for the physical and mental health of cancer patients. As the HR service manager explained,

> One of my team has worked on a pack with MacMillan to support managers and facilitating people back into the work place, which has had some really good feedback. [B36]

An older participant concurred that she had received the employee survey, and regular updates regarding organizational developments, retaining good access to voice mechanisms throughout her chemotherapy [B21]. Despite the inevitability of the workforce ageing further, evidence of organizational planning was otherwise scant. The subject of Alzheimer's disease was raised with HR participants given its relationship with age, but little, if anything, was in place [B36, C19, D34].

Agreeing with Detert & Edmondson (2011), the TUC retired members' forum maintained that age related health issues adversely affected EV, and for conditions such as dementia this was in a caring capacity also. Although people can work during the early stages, they are vulnerable and in need of an advocate such as a trade union to secure the protection they may otherwise be unable to access.

5.6.5 Choosing silence as an older employee

In addition to those not wishing to draw attention to their ill-health, were older workers who chose deliberate silence. Suspicion and mistrust suppressed EV generally [C19], but staying quiet in the approach to retirement was a feature of older workers [A4, B35,

C13, E6, E37]. Older participants [A14, A23, B12] also reasoned that some were silent to avoid causing problems for colleagues. Others were disinclined to speak against their employer because of the precarity of their job, or because of their service ethos or a loyalty born out of austerity, as Prouska and Psychogios (2018) found in Greek firms. An older office worker explained:

> There is a feeling of battening down the hatches, and perhaps that we ought to stick together…. you will not get many employees badmouthing the council. It's like turkeys voting for Christmas. [B15]

Some older workers did not have the courage of their convictions or trust in their own judgement, and so remained silent [A14], as Robinson and Shuck (2019) also found. An office worker in her 70s offered,

> I don't like saying that, for want of feeling silly if you like. They might think I'm stupid thinking that. [D28]

Another [B12] suggested that some regarded their issue as "no one else's business". More sinisterly, participant A23 had encountered a manager curtailing council policy, but whose subordinates would not speak out. He attributed this to a culture of silence associated with fear (Morrison et al, 2015), constructed to constrain voice, as Donaghey et al (2011) tender. The CEO, who had worked in several local government organizations, agreed:

> I think that codes to the culture of the organization, if the environment is seen to be pervasive, then it is less likely that people can speak open and freely. [E5]

Participants also felt there was a stigma associated with raising negative issues, even where they were well-distanced from whistleblowing [B12]. As the oldest participant [D30] described,

> I think sometimes that they don't want to be causing trouble, making ripples …. If it's the same person, they think she's got another beef! [D30]

Personal risk was another reason for keeping quiet. Nine participants used the phrase "don't want to rock the boat" [A9, A14, B11, B12, B15, C13, D32, D34, E3] with others similarly expressing that people kept quiet for fear of losing their jobs, or worsening their situation, corresponding with Detert and Edmondson (2011). An older manual participant [D33] argued that disciplinary warnings were perceived to occur more frequently, which also contributed to a culture of silence. The CIPD branch participant added that employees were sometimes left without a voice, the 'black hole

'of Wilkinson et al (2018), because of covert management behaviour. Additionally, the CEO [E5] and HR participants [B35, B36] recognised the potential for dominant personalities to stifle the voices of less confident colleagues in small enclosed offices. Alternatively, a senior older manager [D27] attributed silence to a quiet personality, or apathy. Another [E20], advised that some employees hold back their good ideas because they might be tasked with their implementation [E20]. Workloads were heavy, and taking on extra work could force an error for which the worker would become accountable [B12].

Some older manual workers [D26, D29, D31] perceived EV to be futile, to the point of exasperation in one case,

> We offered us advice and they chose to ignore it, well walk into it then! Get it! You can have it! We got it last year, you're not listening to me, go and do it! [D26]

A professional older worker [B15] explained how futility extended to the collective voice (see 5.6.5):

> You only have to look at the pay claim this year. We have accepted two per cent, but there has been hardly any discussion or debate or vote on it, everybody I know is just happy to take the two per cent. There would be no appetite for striking.

Silence can be costly in terms of employee wellbeing, and in lost opportunities to receive available support. Having no voice leads to frustration and poor mental health, and as an HR participant commented, may result in sickness absence [B36] or alternatively, in presenteeism [C19, B15] in that sick employees were turning up to keep their job. Moreover, two managers [D32, D33] were instructed 'to be quiet" with staff when managing the closure of their service, reflecting Müller's (2018) perspective of ambassadorship as a form of control, as one revealed,

> We have to act as an ambassador for the council. Politically, we can't do that. [D33]

Participant opinion was that everyone should have a voice, making employee silence irrational, yet sometimes silence met personal or managerial agendas. Also, as Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) identify, some employees have nothing to say [A1]. A summary of the theme 4 findings follows.

5.6.6 Theme 4 summary

Older worker perceptions of EV were impacted by contextual, organizational and individual factors. Employee and employer perceptions of the value of voice coincided regarding organizational improvement, engagement and building a culture of honesty. The organization emphasised conflict reduction, meeting government targets and managing change, while employees were more concerned with being valued, having some control and fair organizational practices. Both sides agreed that EV supported the good health and wellbeing that contribute to a better working life.

Managers also supported an EV because their employees wanted one, however, beyond the immediate line manager, some older workers felt that EV was a form of control. Employees associated voice with task related issues and grievances, more so than collective issues and generally felt more listened to by their line managers than senior managers. Manual workers expressed that EV mechanisms sited in corporate locations were not for them, suggesting a class-based barrier to voice. A unique basis for EV was as a council resident and tax payer.

Older workers cited a supportive culture, good relationships with line managers, access to appropriate mechanisms, a senior hierarchical position, effective communication skills, timely feedback and longer tenure as conducive to EV. Conversely, barriers to EV emerged from poor management practice, inaccessible mechanisms and organizational restructuring, lowering employee perceptions of procedural justice. Occupying a manual role, poor health, caring and low confidence also supressed EV. HR and older workers agreed that changes in pension regulations affected EV, but that such injustice originated from outside of the organization at the macro-level. Finally, the reasons why an older employee might not use their voice, included 'coasting' to retirement, loyalty, futility, an unsupportive culture, work intensification and mistrust of managers or colleagues. Others were silent due to apathy, having nothing to say, or just preferring to get on with their work.

In the final theme findings, the significance of age to EV is considered at the individual level thus completing the findings at the micro-level.

5.7 Theme 5: Significance of age to employee voice

This theme explores those characteristics of the ageing local government workforce that are significant to EV, thus addressing subordinate question 2 and the central research question. Working later in life and beyond the age of 65 years is increasingly likely for several reasons (ONS, 2018), as was the case in the councils [A9, B11, C10, D17, E5]. The oldest participant [D30] had unwillingly retired pre-April 2011 before the default retirement age was removed, but returned soon after. Conversely, participant [B21] had no choice but to work into her 70s because she had insufficient national insurance contributions for a full state pension. The scenario for those in their late fifties and sixties was mixed; manual participants planned to retire by 65, but most office-based participants would work on, if adapted working patterns were available [B15], concurring with Porcellato et al's (2010) findings. Others had their retirement date firmly in mind,

> In all honesty I've got six hundred and fifty-six days to go until I can retire! [D18].

This theme includes four sub-themes, the first considering how personality and age affect EV. The second then explores the effects of ageism and other discrimination, including the significance of identity group membership intersections. The effects of stereotyping are discussed in the third subtheme before a summary of the main points arising concludes the findings on the individual-level influences on EV.

5.7.1 Individual variegation and employee voice

Unsurprisingly, perceptions of EV varied alongside older worker personalities that were at least as diverse as those in other age groups. Furthermore, it was not inconceivable that the oldest participant at 75 years, could be the mother of a 52 years old participant, so that generational differences to EV applied. Agreeing with Macky et al (2008), the oldest participants faithfully observed protocol, censoring others who skipped management levels, or 'ranks', to express their opinion [D30]. On the other hand, participants in their 50s were open to direct action, for example,

> Some people say there is a process and you have got to follow that, but if you followed the process and nothing is happening, I would be prepared to take it to the top. [B12]

5.7.1.1 Significance of personality to employee voice

Concurring with LePine and Van Dyne (2001) and Kakkar, et al (2016), all participants recognised that personality affects EV, indeed, the conscientiousness of the oldest

participants is a recognised antecedent. The traits most frequently mentioned were extroversion and introversion. Participants considered that extroverted individuals were more likely to use EV, adding that a that self-righteous or self-seeking individual might overuse voice to the detriment of others. Older participants reasoned that managers were accountable for managing this behaviour [A14, C10, D17]. Voice mechanisms such as town hall meetings, where all employees gather, were viewed as problematic for quieter individuals, [e.g., A9, A14, B12, B15, D37]. For an introvert, exposing their voice at a large event would be "absolutely terrifying" [B15]. School IT technician [A14], a self-confessed introvert, preferred one-to-one mechanisms but in common with participant [D30], identified an advantage to her introversion:

> As a quieter person I am not that outgoing, extrovert person that wants to say something all the time…I know that if I went to see the Head, he would know that it really mattered, and would try to do it because I wouldn't be there otherwise. [A14]

Almost unanimously, older workers adopted a protective, procedural justice stance regarding introverted colleagues, as one manual worker explained:

> Quieter introverted people, they have still got the same rights to come in and see you, see the supervisor and in their quiet manner, polite, and its management should recognise their voice as much as me, standing at that door. [D26]

An older manager described how Council C had taken action:

> We have done the Myers-Briggs assessment in our team a while back … we have a lot of extroverts and they're the ones that speak out. The ones that don't are often more thoughtful, and they are the ones you have got to capture…. this person over here might have lots of good ideas but can't bring themselves to say it, so you must tease it out of them. [C13]

The older workers' concern for the EV of the introvert was surprising. It may be connected to parenthood but requires further investigation to establish its origins. At interview, the CEO [E5] lauded the works of the introverted Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and his colleague had a similarly romanticised perspective:

> Through life there are always people who will sit there quiet, even though they have wonderful thoughts. It's a case of offering them another option, say of e-mailing to meet later. [E20]

Reflecting the Habermasian principal of the ideal speech situation, HR participants aspired to a culture where all individuals could speak up [e.g., A9, B36, C10, D17], and like older senior managers [D27, E20], regarded line managers as instrumental in enabling this. Conversely, two older workers expressed that it was the introvert's responsibility to speak out by using e-mails and written forms of voice.

Although not widely mentioned, participant [C13] advised that a regional tendency for stoicism might cause older men to remain silent regarding valid grievances, referring to this as an "it'll be right" mentality. The next section considers the significance of other emotional and attitudinal representations, such as cynicism, to the older worker's EV.

5.7.1.2 Emotional or attitudinal representation and employee voice

The three emotions or attitudes most widely raised were a) confidence, b) fear and c) cynicism, with confidence mentioned three times more than other factors. Lesser responses included futility, impotence and apathy [B36, D28], for example, due to funding constraints [D18, B12, E6]. Consistent with Orr and Vince's (2009) traditions of crisis and fragmentation, the youngest HR adviser explained the impact of the organization's own discourse of crisis:

> They probably think it's not worth it. It's not a lack of desire to change, there's so much at the minute, about lack of resources and budget cuts. [D7]

Frustrations were directed at senior managers, for example, regarding a lack of consultation. Speaking of her front-line workers an office manager in her late 50s opined,

> They can see how things could work better or more efficiently because they are doing the job on a day-to-day basis. If senior managers took the time to come on to the coalface, if you want to call it that, they would see where staff are coming from. [D25]

The three most referred to emotional representations are presented according to their response size.

a) Confidence

Older participants consistently conveyed that the confidence to speak out increased with age [e.g., A23, B12, B15, C13, D31, E20]. A forthright comment from one older frontline participant was indicative of the general trend:

> Yeah, because with maturity comes a bigger mouth, you don't take owt! [D18]

A more nuanced explanation was that over time, their voice skills had advanced with experience and training [C13], which a former senior manager [B21] associated with length of tenure rather than age per se. Concurring with Macky et al (2008), participant [A14] argued that gender intersects with confidence and age, in that she was afraid to speak out as a younger woman but would do so now. Similarly, healthy older workers were generally less concerned about managerial perceptions of their views than their younger peers [B15]. As participant [E37] opined, older workers are less affected by mortgages and aspirations for promotion. Some skilled voicers joined retired union member forums to campaign in their own time on issues internal and external to the workplace [E3, E38]. Whether their activism sprang from public sector ethos or a general concern for society requires further research, but these forum members were not about to rest on their laurels, they sought societal change. Aside from the union, an E&D participant discussed how a retired colleague campaigned on local issues by protesting outside the Houses of Parliament. Like the older workers who sought procedural justice for introverts, age was no barrier to speaking out regarding social justice.

b) Fear

In the main, fear was raised in relation to third-parties and ranged from considerable anxiety to the moderate unease described by participant [B15]:

> I think the opportunities are there, and I don't think anyone is prevented from speaking out, it's just people feel a bit cagey about it.

As an equality manager identified, fear of losing a job can silence or cause employees to acquiesce to the management position:

> It is simply that if you shout out and are difficult and inflexible, you may be the one that goes. [A9]

For a more detailed examination of the fear associated with EV see section 5.6.4.2, in which several bases for fear are considered including poor managers, colleagues and ill health.

c) Cynicism

HR advisers working in employment relations roles, two of whom were older, [A9, D17], reasoned that long tenure rather than age produced cynicism regarding EV. Agreeing with older worker [B21], an E&D manager provided a representative assessment,

> It's more about their experience and because they have been about for longer, they are more likely to have had a disappointing experience. [C19]

Some cynicism was directed at HR. Older workers were dismissive of the straplines and buzzwords associated with new EV initiatives, which were perceived to be 'old wine in new bottles' or paying 'lip service' [B15]. An older participant with a well-developed knowledge of EV practices [C13] responded regarding the organization's intent to listen with "*we do **now***", (emphasis as spoken), inferring that older workers' opinions were well founded. The HR jargon around voice reflected the employer branding discourse of Müller (2018). For example, employees were rewarded with e-thankyou cards and awards where their behaviour represented exceptional examples of 'living the values' [D27]. Consistent with Alvesson and Willmott (2002), values were a source of cynicism with some workers 'buying in' to the idea and others perceiving them to be a source of normative control [E37]. For participant [D17], occupying an HR role and being older conflicted,

> Sometimes I can be cynical, it depends which hat I am wearing.

5.7.1.3 Age and the tendency for advocacy

Older workers did not seek justice only for themselves and often represented others in group issues [B12, B15, B35, D26, E37], reflecting the felt responsibility that the older manager [E20] and administrative worker [B12] alluded to earlier (see 5.6.1.). This advocacy was not limited by role or hierarchical level and typically supported vulnerable, diffident or inexperienced colleagues. A senior manager offered,

> I will speak out if I think something needs saying or challenging the way we are thinking or if I think there was some injustice, but I guess that's all linked into everything about the life we've had, our education, I guess. [D27]

This participant had risen from humble roots to her senior management role, highlighting the significance of personal background to EV (Porcellato et al, 2010). Manual workers [D26, D31, D32, D33] mentored younger colleagues in using EV, as one explained,

> I always say to them, go and ask the supervisor if you can have a quiet word and ask him in a proper manner in a proper place, and he'll talk to you, and he'll listen to you. Even if he doesn't like what you're saying and you don't like what he says, but at least it's done. And it's talked through. [D26]

Office worker [B12] was frequently chosen as an accompanying person at return to work or disciplinary interviews, which she ascribed to her age and experience. A contributory factor may be that in gaining support for her own disability, she had acquired a useful skill-set. Participants [C13, D18] similarly supported others, were trade union members, and had a disability, but as participants [B12, C13] explained, union involvement was signalled where it was appropriate:

> I feel that I have to champion the need for people to have a voice, to ensure that we have the channels available to do that. [C13]

Job type affected the tendency for advocacy, for example, older participant [D24] worked with vulnerable adults:

> We wouldn't let anything go past us because we have a duty of care, not just for the individual, but to safeguard the staff, so we speak out for both.

Participants connected advocacy with direct forms of voice and all the forms of organizational justice, but did not volunteer for trade union representative roles [A1]. Direct voice did not supplant collectivist-based advocacy, rather it was an adjunct and was additional to the ambassadorial organizational advocacy that participants [E20, A9] presented (see 5.6.1).

5.7.1.4 Voice preferences

Older workers favoured face to face and one-to-one meetings [e.g., A23, B35, D28, D30], with older participant [B15] valuing letter writing. An HR adviser connected these preferences to role as well as age:

> A lot of our manual staff haven't got any IT skills, and some struggle with reading and writing, so for them doing anything other than face to face can be difficult [C10]

Although this sample of manual participants was small (and acknowledging that others may not be fully literate), four of the six manual workers interviewed were proficient in IT, and all six were literate indicating this was not the main basis of their preference. The ER specialist's [B36] assumption that manual workers prefer fast feedback and action on EV may be more significant. Equally, an HR adviser [C10] recognised that poor literacy justified the collective voice of the trade union to uphold organizational justice, agreeing with Hyman (1997) that some workers are unable to represent themselves.

Although older workers were more likely to be trade union members than their younger counterparts [A8, B36, C10, D7, D17, E3], most were passive members (see also 3.1.5). The union was valued for acquiring training, support in a crisis and collective bargaining expertise. Two participants [D24, D31] were not in membership and were scathing of the union. Their earlier membership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in a closed shop environment, had shaped their view of local government unions as ineffectual and subject to the free-riding that Bryson (2008) identifies. Similarly, two older office workers [D25, D26] commented,

> Thinking back a long time ago to when there were the miner's strikes and that, the unions played a strong part, and they were a strong voice. We have just been through a consultation process and I am paying my money, and I don't think I got value for money. I think they could have fought a lot harder. [D25]

Office workers had better access to EV mechanisms than manual workers, chiefly because of their location and access to computers. Most of the front-line workers were members of UNISON, but were self-reliant. The trade union was an option of last resort [A23, B12, B21, C13, D30].

Family members, particularly fathers, who had been members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, one as a union secretary, had positively influenced decisions to join a union [D30]. The school technical worker declared that her father "would turn in his grave" if she were to leave the union [A14], indicating the significance of social context. A family tradition of trade unionism was evident among older participants, who advised very young workers to speak with their parents regarding the unions [e.g., D18].

Manager and employee responses coincided regarding how confidence, self-reliance and advocacy grow with age. In the next subtheme, ageism and other forms of discrimination are considered.

5.7.2 Ageism and other discrimination

The most overt discrimination reported concerned comments regarding retirement dates made by people outside of the older worker's workgroup, [B21, D28], as the oldest participant retorted,

> When they said to me, when are you gonna retire, I said when I can't do the job! [D30]

The oldest male participant [E20], a senior manager, had experienced similar comments but also was valued because of his local and organizational knowledge. Alternatively, a returning retiree [B15] felt that he was not regarded as a "proper worker" and so was not heard,

> I am not convinced that the skills of older workers are utilised enough, particularly where they may have retired and come back to work…. It's as though it is just a pin money job, and you are not taken seriously.

Senior managers were generally positive about older workers. An older manager [D27] commented that ability rather than age should be what matters, upholding the reputation of councils as fair and equitable organizations (Richards & Sang, 2016). Although the CEO [E5] valued the experience of his 68-year-old employee highly, in agreement with Carbado et al (2013) he cautioned,

> I think there is still the possibility of discrimination. We are societally much more alert to the dangers of prejudice, but I wouldn't say it doesn't exist, I would probably argue that because of irresponsible political rhetoric in recent years, it may have got worse in some ways. [E5]

Vasconcelos (2015) advises that some older workers discriminate against their contemporaries, as Councillor participant [A4] observed, however, an HR adviser reported of the over 65s,

> It's surprising how many (we have), especially in catering and cleaning. We have a few in other areas, and some of them are fitter than most. [C10]

Discrimination against returning retirees or poor health may reduce EV, but for some the confidence that comes with age mediated the effect. The next section explores how age combines with other aspects of diversity to affect EV.

5.7.2.1 Intersections with other forms of diversity

The most frequently raised intersections with age were, a) disability, b) role, c) race and d) gender in that order. Of the other factors raised, good practice regarding sexual orientation emerged from Council A participants. An HR adviser advised that LGBT employees were confident enough to declare it, she added,

> I think we have quite a high proportion of LGBT employees, I think the survey said more than 10 percent of the workforce. [A9]

Despite the organizational support, the social taboos regarding sexuality that older

workers endured in their youth may linger to supress EV.

Contract type was thought to affect voice, but temporary employees of all ages were less inclined to speak out [E6]. Accordingly, seasonal worker participant [D31] recognised the precarious nature of his contract renewal but did not associate age with any increased risk. Participant [B15] identified that part time workers sometimes missed out on communications. Again, this applied at any age. Religion or religious belief was not mentioned by older participants, and was not raised as an issue at the observed equality event, although race was. Although the religious mix of the resident population was increasing, in the last UK census (2011), 94 percent of the region were either Christian or of no religious belief implying that older workers may be more homogeneous in this respect. The effect of age in combination with the factors identified by participants are considered next.

a) Age and disability

Disability was such a diverse category that the effects on EV were complex. Councils went to considerable lengths to include the voice of disabled employees, and this had improved over time [e.g., A23, B12, D30], however some managers were uncomfortable in dealing with disability [E38]. Invisible disabilities, such as diabetes or mental health illness, affected voice differently because of poorer understanding of such conditions [C13, D18, D24, D25]. A female worker with a visible disability articulated,

> I always say that although people can be disabled, if their disabilities are hidden disabilities, their experiences are not the same (*poorer*). [B11]

Visible disabilities were associated with having a voice and being heard, whereas older participants with an invisible disability were less satisfied,

> I think that disabled people have always been the lowest ranked of the disadvantaged groups in getting anywhere, especially for people like me that have an unseen disability. [B12]

Employees who were disabled since childhood were viewed as better than average at using voice mechanisms [B12], and E&D manager [D17] added that some disabled workers were very vocal, both in their job and in the council generally:

> Having to fight for their job and, I am thinking about someone with MS, having to fight for support in their personal lives. Even if you weren't before, suddenly

you must become a champion for yourself. [D17]

Despite this, E&D manager [B11] revealed that the lowest satisfaction scores in their employee survey were from disabled employees. This apparent contradiction with the council's good reputation may be due to delayed action on disability adjustments, over 12 months in the case of one older worker [B16]. Participants [B16, C13, E20] identified that an age-related disability could make workers less likely to speak out to avoid perceptions of incapacity, or to avoid the social stigma associated with disability, reflecting Detert and Edmondson's (2011) position. Older manager [E20] reflected that becoming less physically able would impact his confidence, and another clarified,

> I think some people, a bit like me, don't want to admit that you're that old, and that you need that help so, there's a mixed group there. [D34]

E&D participants agreed that the underreporting of disability led to more than employee silence [A8, BA2, D17, C19]. One undisclosed disability had resulted in unnecessary disciplinary action [C10], while, as discussed in 5.6.5, other older employees continued to work when they were sick [C19]. Various organizational interventions, mostly in partnership with the trade unions, had progressed matters, but undisclosed disability was an ongoing concern and was recognised as negatively affecting EV [B11, C10, C13, D17, D29].

b) Age and role

Corresponding with the retired members forum, occupying a manual role and working in a lower grade, or frontline role, as an older worker negatively affected EV (see also 5.6.4). There was an unexpected proliferation of military metaphors from the respondents in lower grades, particularly in Council D, recalling Organ's (1996) thoughts on military language, and the implied constraints on employee thoughts and actions. For example, more than a third of manual [e.g., D33] and frontline office workers [e.g., D18] used the unsolicited term 'foot soldier' to describe their role. Their 'rank' and 'soldiering' was perceived to enhance the value of their voice because of ground level knowledge and direct interactions with the public. Manual worker [D32] attributed her age to finding the courage to make a challenge:

> I said, just because I'm a foot soldier, you think I ain't got a brain and I actually said those words to him, I said, but we have. We see it as it is on the streets. They don't. [D32]

Alternatively, at the upper end of the hierarchy, age was not a barrier to EV; as the

Councillor A4 identified, most senior managers were over 50.

Most significant to manual workers was poor access to computers and the physical wear and tear of their occupation as discussed earlier. Returning retiree [B15] described acquiring a disability as a “showstopper” for manual workers, indicating the significance for EV of the intersection of age, role and disability. For these employees, union representation was important, as the oldest worker explained,

> I do think, if you are disabled…. somebody’s got to speak for you to put things in place, ain’t they? [D30]
>
> (Colloquialism as spoken)

A further factor, as much for listening as for speaking out, was the degree of empathy required of the role, for example participants D24 and D25 managed services for vulnerable adults, and were thoughtful listeners as well as active voicers.

c) Age and race

There were very few older workers who were other than white and British. The E&D managers of Councils D and A, and HR director of Council B [B2], the most ethnically diverse workforce, reported that diversity was greater among younger workers, for instance,

> I have no examples, not from the older part of the workforce but we have younger workers who are more diverse. [A9]

Older workers suggested there were specific EV mechanisms for BAME workers [e.g., A4, C13, D28, D29, D32, D33, D34], but believed that government equality targets were behind the organizational support. The oldest participant, speaking without malice, exposed the challenge of some older employees who were raised in a monoethnic town for E&D managers:

> I don’t think that we treat anyone differently. We had a young lady and well I’ll say she were a Pakistani, but she spoke just like we did. [D30]

Older workers endeavoured to understand racial difference, for example,

> From any walk of life, whichever colour, whichever. You know, I might not understand them all and things, but you try. [D33]

At the observed Council B equality forum, the BAME workers were younger than the 52 years lower limit of the study. A BAME representative questioned the inconsistency

between high levels of performance, and the high numbers of disciplinaries among BAME workers, but did not question EV provision. Other BAME employees represented characteristics such as age, disability and gender. In common with the other councils, the message of racial equality was well embedded, as an older manual worker commented,

> In this authority, we're not allowed to discriminate, we're not racialists, we're nothing, we work as one. We're all the same. [D29]

A possible future issue for BAME workers as they age, are cultural expectations within their communities, for example, where older people are not expected to work [E6]. In this study there was insufficient evidence to draw reliable conclusions on the effect of age and race on EV.

d) Age and gender

The influence of gender on EV varied between the sexes with no participants choosing to identify as other than male or female, perhaps indicative of the more recent nature of gender explorations. Caring for elderly parents and grandchildren was more mentioned by females, as was the loss of confidence and physical symptoms due to the menopause, both of which negatively affected EV [e.g., D25] (see 5.6.4). Trade unions provided support [C13, D27] and HR participants confirmed that their organizations were actively preparing policies.

A female participant in her 70s, and another in her late 50s, had encountered discrimination by a man at work, but not men in general, with the experience being of sexism rather than ageism, as she explained,

> I have to be careful because he is more senior than me, so I probably err on the side of submission. [B21]

The expectation of the manager concerned was that she would make the tea or perform menial duties, which she regarded as an abuse of power. The younger participant's experience was a more intersectional form of discrimination relating to her age, disability and sex through comments made by a younger male colleague, portraying her as a 'weak, older female' [C13]. The low incidence of gender-based discrimination may be linked to the high percentage of females in the workplace including in senior positions, however two high profile women's events had been axed. As Conley and Page (2018) discuss, the council may regard gender discrimination as successfully dealt

with. Alternatively, at the individual level, an older male technical worker suggested,

> All the best offices I have worked in have had good communication and female managers. [B15]

The councils were tackling gender role typing, for example, a large poster of the older female waste management participant was displayed in a library to challenge role stereotypes. The final section of theme 5 explores how such stereotyping affects EV.

5.7.3 Stereotyping and employee voice

Stereotyping affected the older worker EV indirectly, for example in how they were listened to or selected for their opinion, rather than through policy. Consistent with Posthuma and Campion's (2009) conceptual model, the forms of stereotyping with the highest participant response rates concerned the inability to use technology or unwillingness to train. As Kulik et al 2016) report, self-stereotyping featured strongly, wherein older workers live up to their stereotype with no underlying cause other than the prejudice imported from societal expectations of age.

5.7.3.1 Age and information technology (IT)

Several direct voice mechanisms were internet based, and unlike manual workers, older office workers had access to the internet through their work. An E&D adviser [D17] summed up HR opinion regarding older workers and IT, as a mix of abilities. There was no specific mention of IT training for older workers, except by two female manual workers who had received training via their union [D32, D33]. Older workers [A14, B15, B21] had worked with IT throughout their careers yet, as Kirton and Greene (2016) identify, participant [B15] was bypassed by managers who preferred younger workers to champion IT projects, even though his knowledge of council IT systems was superior:

> The younger graduates tend to know only one form of IT, and they know Windows or Macs, or the latest programming language, but a lot of the IT we use goes back to the eighties, they have no idea about DOS, or any old form of coding. [B15]

The Councillor [A4], regional TUC participant [E3] and E&D director [A9] regarded older workers as less proficient with technology:

> With the introduction of new technology, I think the worth of the older worker has become less because lots have struggled with it. [E3]

Conversely, the CEO [E5] and senior manager [D27] held the opposite view, and two older females [A14, B21] were highly skilled and accepted as experts by managers. Others found IT 'unfathomable' [D26] and older participant [D34] described herself as a 'dinosaur' but most older participants fell between the two extremes. All the participants in their fifties, and all the manual workers bar one [D26] were reasonably comfortable with IT, using their smartphones and laptop computers purposefully, despite the lack of access at work, as [D31] relayed,

> I've got my internet on and stuff. Got my laptop.…I'm not fantastic with it but I can use it. Do what I need to do on it. [D31]

Contrary to Holland et al's (2016) findings, most older participants viewed social media as useful to EV, as discussed previously (5.5.2.1.1). Female Facebook users were more observers than contributors. As a reward for her good service, the oldest participant [D30] was attending a prestigious national event, and had learned how to post a photograph using her smartphone so that she could share the day. As an older colleague affirmed,

> If there is something we don't know, we sort it out as a team…. with technology, you are learning every day. [D25]

New technologies may have special significance for EV as more mechanisms become intranet or technology based. These findings tend to refute the assumption that all older workers are resistant to training or learning something new, as is discussed next.

5.7.3.2 Training and older workers

Training was an area of concern for older workers. As Kirton and Green (2016) identify, older workers are unreasonably perceived as harder to train, exacerbating perceptions that their ideas may be outdated, so not worth hearing. Austerity measures had reduced certain types of training, including for IT [A23, D29], although as discussed, some had sought out alternative sources, such as trade unions [D32, D33]. Also, (often younger) expert colleagues voluntarily assisted those older colleagues who were unfamiliar with more complex IT tasks. Most older participants had undertaken task related training and connected the failure to train with low commitment to their work [A14, A23, E20]. Most older workers embraced some opportunity to train [B15, C13, D24, D25, E20], however, one older participant [C13] hinted at how views on training might evolve with age:

> I still want to develop myself, even though I don't particularly have career aspirations because of my choices …… I have aspirations to do things well and to participate.

Agreeing with Sonderegger et al (2016) and participant [C13], participants at the observed equality event [B16] commented that e-training was not a panacea or necessarily effective for older employees, however generally no alternative was available. Kooij et al (2014) also advise that training needs may differ with age, as an older participant commented,

> I am not very keen on the new e-learning. I like the face-to-face interaction, not everybody does but I do…When you get to my age you start to look at things differently…. I don't think because I am getting older that my development has stopped, it's just changed. [C13]

Other older workers acquired new skills with the help of patient, often younger, colleagues, sometimes requiring repetition where the subject was new to become fully proficient [e.g., A23, D18, D30, D32]. One older manager response was typical:

> I have just got on with it, and then can do it. [E20]

Older workers were expected to embrace opportunities to upskill [A9, B35, B36, D7] but HR participants did not acknowledge that their training needs may differ. An employment relations adviser articulated the challenge, as HR saw it:

> They think I have done this job for so many years, I don't need any training and that comes into the PDRs, but as everything changes you do have to keep up with your development. [C10]

The untypical comment of one older worker provided support for this hypothesis, suggesting that the purpose of development was not well communicated:

> I don't want to climb the ladder, I'm too old. [D18]

Self-stereotyping, wherein the older worker self-discriminates on the grounds of age is discussed next.

5.7.3.3 Self-discrimination and employee voice

Concurring with Kulik et al (2016), some older workers self-discriminated, negatively affecting how managers received their EV. An older manager aged 65 years [E20] expressed frustration at individuals who adopted an 'older' mentality:

> I think sometimes older workers are guilty of portraying that, that they won't move forward. Once they get going, they are usually ok. There are certain skills that older workers don't try to get, and just think I will let the younger workers get on with that, so they make victims of themselves really….. Some older workers can act old and grumpy [E20]

Older worker [B21] agreed. As an early adopter of new technologies, this participant maintained that keeping a good working knowledge of IT was essential to being heard, and added that acquiring advanced skills had facilitated social interaction with younger colleagues:

> I am not staid in my ways; I keep myself up to date with what's happening. I can have wonderful banter with my young colleagues. I am up with the latest jargon and all the rest of it, and I engage in it myself! [B21]

As alluded to earlier, the Councillor [A4] had encountered older managers who decried the abilities of their contemporaries, and the older manager [E20] heard similar ageist remarks commenting,

> I was appalled by what was said really. I thought I will speak out more whereas previously I thought, no, I want to get on with my job. [E20]

The CIPD branch participant [E6] and E&D director [A8] suggested that some older workers deliberately appear incompetent at work to avoid IT tasks, when at home they have paid their bills and booked their holidays online. The oldest participant advised managers to challenge such older workers to prevent them from living up to this stereotype,

> I think, older people, give them the chance. It gives them a sense of going forward, not looking back.... and every day, I've got another challenge [D30]

5.7.4 Summary of theme 5

Organizational ageism was less apparent than the ageism that permeates from society, however, some older managers were ageist and likely to reduce procedural justice for their contemporaries. Older workers wanted a voice, except where this drew attention to a weakness associated with age. Precarious work and fear of being labelled as old inhibited EV, whilst others had become cynical because of a previous experience. Even if EV was primarily task-related, seeking organizational justice was not limited to their own issues. They were advocates for their younger and more vulnerable colleagues,

signposting the trade union where this was appropriate, and in return younger workers helped with learning new skills. Furthermore, older workers expressed a felt responsibility to use their EV as ambassadors for their council.

It is reasonable to assume that older worker heterogeneity occurs throughout local government, and additionally that longer-life experience augments other differences that impact on EV. Generational differences within the older worker age range are not static, and will change as the upper age limit extends as younger workers become older. Participants over 65 adhered to formal EV processes, whereas participants in their 50s were prepared to access higher levels of management to be heard, which may continue as they age. Influences on the voice of older workers included their role, disability, personality, personal and work history and their individual circumstances. They had become more confident in expressing their opinions with age. Managers and older workers alike were aware of the influences on EV of personality traits and accommodated this through alternative voice arrangements.

Age combined with other forms of discrimination to produce negative effects on EV, although long term visibly disabled participants were competent voice users. The significance of gender was primarily connected to health and caring; male or female power-based discrimination was not widely reported. There were so few older workers who were not white and British that no conclusions could be drawn regarding race. Of the characteristics intersecting with age, a manual role was most significant to EV. For those acquiring an age-related disability in addition to a manual role, the outlook was poorest, and a collective voice was required to represent such workers. Finally, older workers who lived up to the stereotypical grumpy person, resistant to change or adapting to new technologies where they clearly were capable, were regarded as adversely affecting managerial perceptions of older workers and their EV. This stereotype was unrepresentative, but highly likely to reinforce the prejudice of others.

In the discussion chapter following, the findings of themes 1 to 5 are considered relative to the three research objectives.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter draws together the findings of the research, which suggest that older workers have a varying and unequal experience of EV. Consistent with critical theory, the effects of wider societal factors, the employer's strategic agenda and employee-level influences are considered. In a new synthesis of the findings, the chapter focuses on each of the research objectives as they move from macro to meso, to micro-level influences on EV, corresponding with Wilkinson et al's (2018) recommendations. However, the levels and influences are inextricably linked as in Kaufman's (2015a) model of EV determinants, as will be discussed.

6.1 Discussion: Objective 1

This objective, chiefly relating to subordinate research question 1, was addressed in the main by the findings of theme 1 and theme 3 informed by insights from political and local government studies, as summarised in Figure 12:

> *Ob1) How the local government context influences the employee voice of older employees, as interpreted by its principal stakeholders, considering its history, reorganizations and current position.*

Kaufman (2015a) classifies macro-level situational factors on EV (Figure 3) into economic, legal and social-cultural, later incorporating some organizational practices (Kaufman, 2020). In this research, although local government culture and public sector ethos (PSE) are sectoral contextual factors, individual council cultures operate at the meso-level. Consequently, the discussion moves from general macro-level factors, to regional factors, towards the periphery with the meso-level.

Corresponding with Kaufman's (2020) view, financial measures introduced by central government were significant to or repressive of EV. In an ageing workforce, state pension age (SPA) rises, local government pension revisions and poorer pension outcomes for women (Fasang et al, 2013), generally constrained the EV of pre-retirement older workers. The rhetoric around the removal of the default retirement age, including of trade unions, was of social justice, choice and protection against age discrimination (Wainwright et al, 2018). While the removal benefited workers over 65 years who chose to work on, it produced poorer outcomes for other older workers and their EV, as will be discussed in section 6.3.

The implications of the Equality Act 2010 were as for other workers, except that the capacity for intersectional discrimination increased with age, and is not protected by the

Act (3.3.4.1). As Blackham (2016) finds, policies addressing age discrimination based on the Act are insufficient, addressing individual level discrimination after it has occurred.

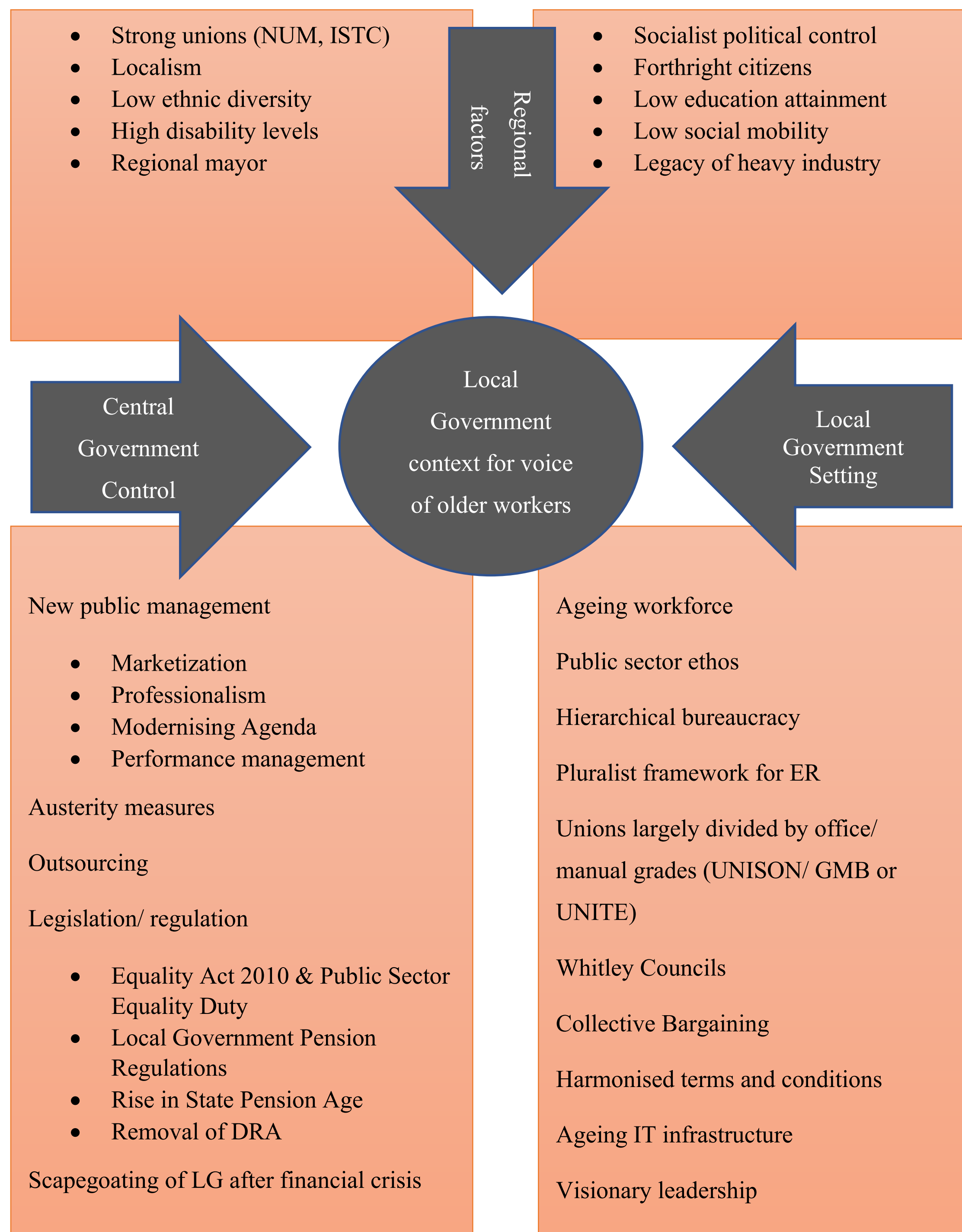


Figure 12: Findings from themes 1 and 3 contributing to objective 1

Even so, in this research E&D practice generally exceeded the legislative requirements and trade unions positively influenced these outcomes (Bennett, 2010; Richard & Sang, 2016). As with other protected characteristics, incorporating more age-related issues into the collective bargaining framework could further extend the benefit to older

workers (Hoque & Bacon, 2014), and be more influential than the partnership approach of at least three of the councils. For example, the CIPD participant contended that managers can manipulate equality impact assessments where trade unions do not have Kaufman and Taras' (2010) 'muscle' to challenge such behaviour.

Socio-cultural factors such as ageism and low educational attainment can affect older employee perceptions of their self-worth, subsequently reducing their EV behaviour (Porcellato et al, 2010). Alternatively, as Hyman (1997) recognises, trade unions can provide a voice for those older workers less able to represent themselves. Cunliffe (2001) explains that critical theorists must consider how the mechanisms of power are shaped by history. Correspondingly, factors particular to the region impacted on voice in more nuanced ways than was imagined at the onset. For example, the considerable historical influence of the NUM in the region negatively affected older worker perceptions of local government unions for those older participants with a connection to the mining industry. Conversely, it may have positively affected the older female perception of EV, due to campaigns such as 'Women Against Pit Closures', in a positive turn on Habermas' (1984) unconscious influences on the oppressed.

Historical resistance in the form of strikes, for example during the 1979 Winter of Discontent and the 1984 Democracy Day march (see 2.2.1), did not prevent ongoing anti-union legislation (see Table 2). New public management (NPM) and the repositioning of councils from providing to enabling organizations continued and, although contested, have prevailed and changed how councils operate. The fragile legal status of local government constrains its resistance to the more powerful central government (Gill-McLure, 2014). When combined with the other environmental factors, central government actions produced feelings of futility regarding EV. Equally, participants relayed that councils have become lean and agile, exhibiting the organizational resilience that has characterised local government (John, 2014). Nevertheless, participants regarded services as operating at the lowest sustainable level before becoming untenable, should further cuts be made.

6.1.1 The significance of the 'local' in local government

As summarised in Table 13, Cochrane's (2016) categories of 'local' were used to understand how the 'local' in local government affects EV generally. 'Local' as a policy target and 'local' as a place where people come together were significant categories to older worker EV, so are considered in more detail.

Interpretation of local	Key points for voice	Key respondents
Level of government within a state hierarchy	• Fragmented voice of local government • LGA as leadership voice • Multiple unions in context. • No overall voice of employer and employee • Regional mayor yet to have impact.	All HR directors. Councillor [A4] CEO [E5] Trade union participants [E3, D27, E37] Older manager [E20]
Geographic scale	• Multiple stakeholders at a local level, such as trade unions, community groups, outsourcing organizations, as contributors to local government democratic relations. • Agreements on E&D standards and trade union representation for outsourced employees	HR director [A1] HR adviser [A9] TUC participant [E3] Equality event Retired members forum
Policy target	• Employee consultation on town centre regeneration. • Uneven government funding of socially deprived areas e.g., social care deficit impacts working carers • Campaigning with trade unions on local issues.	HR Director [A1] Councillor [A4] Regional GMB representative [E37]
Place where people come together more or less naturally	• Employee identification with town. • Employee as ambassadors. For example, defence of council actions and concern for locality.	HR Director [A1], Councillor [A4], HR advisers [A8, C10, C13] Older workers x 7 (3 managers, 4 front line)
Anti-bureaucratic metaphor	• Devolution of some power to parish councils. • Direct EV approach in outsourced services	Councillor [A4], HR adviser [A9], TU representative [D29]
Competitive space	• Competition for grant funding. • Voice via regional mayor and employee suggestions. • Campaigning trade unions.	HR directors [A1, B2] Councillor [A4], GMB rep [E37]

Table 13: Applying Cochrane's (2016) meanings of 'local' to the research

Local as a policy target impacted older workers in respect of low funding by central government for social care in the region (ONS, 2018a, UNISON, 2017). This reduced the availability and motivation of working carers, many of whom are in the older demographic, regarding both union meetings and direct EV (Greene, 2015). This is significant because having a voice can reduce the isolation and alienation that can accompany caring (Conway et al, 2018).

Local 'as a place where people come together' promoted EV use for the many older workers who were also long-time residents, where an issue affecting their locality arose. Reflecting Kaufman's (2020, p.61) 'true' unitarist position, of "a common purpose, dedication and reciprocal commitment" rather than a dominating ideology, employees were consulted on the regeneration of town A in a constructive dialogue with their employer. Employee concern for their 'place' (town or council) and their propensity to speak out, or alternatively become silent in its defence, was much like that which Prouska and Psychogios (2018) encountered during the Greek economic crisis. For some older employees, remaining silent was a matter of self-preservation, of not criticising council operations lest they be outsourced. For others it was akin to Hirschman's (1970) view of loyalty and voice. Cochrane's place, policy and locality factors, combined to affect employee morale. For example, one outcome of austerity measures was more service level agreements. Older workers were dissatisfied by the lower specifications, for example, for grass mowing in the parks where their grandchildren played. The TUC participant [E3] commented that such workers join 'Friends of' groups to improve their environment without pay, highlighting the importance of place to such employees, and their voice as a citizen.

6.1.2 Cultural traditions of local government

Council cultures are influenced by a sectoral culture originating beyond their organizational boundary. The 'traditions' of local government of Orr and Vince (2009) framed the analysis of this cultural complexity (see Table 1, p.14). Orr and Vince advocate a reflexive interpretation of their traditions to disturb cultural assumptions regarding local government and their power bases. This confirmed that "local government is not a unified homogenous organizational entity" (p.655). Each of the 14 traditions of politics, organization and critique (Table 1) were evident in the data, but not all were relevant to EV. Of their traditions of politics, 'localism' overlapped with Cochrane's (2016) interpretations, but with a more territorial tone, as Clarke (1987) observed between councils before the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

The CEO participant [E3] observed that devolved body meetings had a “rats in a sack” mentality, with councils competing for position rather than cooperating. Likewise, an E&D manager [A8] commented on inter-council forums failing to agree on resourcing outcomes. That said, a notable exception was joint work on E&D policy, including for how diverse voices are heard. For example, a peer review between two councils in the research aimed to improve practice, although evidencing compliance with PSED may also have contributed to its success.

Democracy, the second political interpreting tradition (Orr & Vince, 2009), was associated with the community rather than the workforce. Despite most workers being residents, the workforce was the less influential voice. Party politics were significant to EV, for example, a reduction in facilities time was implemented by a Conservative council. However, a GMB representative identified that a shared labour party membership did not guarantee the councillor’s support. As John (2014) describes, council governance included cabinet systems and the scrutiny commissions introduced by The Local Government Act 2000, and a regional mayor had been recently elected. Participants did not comment on mayoralty, the CEO being more to the forefront of their minds and although the effects of democracy apply to all workers, the changes are more noticeable to older workers.

Of their traditions of organization (Orr and Vince, 2009), the significance of professionalism emerged in two ways for EV. Firstly, strongly correlating with Orr and Vince’s position, the GMB regional representative observed expert managers such as accountants or civil engineers, undermining councillors by using their expertise. Secondly HR decisions regarding E&D were based on HR assumptions rather than the views of diverse employees, including older workers, thus reinforcing the status quo. Both these factors act against the communicative rationality of Habermas (1984) in that participants are excluded because of hegemonic assumptions regarding the superiority of the expert. The second tradition of organization, that of regulation, pertains to citizens rather than workers so was not relevant to EV.

The management tradition, which had moved steadily away from classical public administration following the Bains Report (1972), was apparent in the widespread adoption of NPM principles [A4, E3, E5, E37]. In this research, performance management practices made some wary of speaking out; disciplinary warnings were considered as more likely, and some worried about how their competency was perceived because of their age. Orr and Vince (2009) connect visionary leadership with

delivering substantial change, which Marchington (2015) contends is facilitated by HR recruitment practice. For EV, the propensity of CEOs to cut through the hierarchy to garner employee opinion was surprisingly prevalent, and some older workers considered that their views were better acknowledged in this way. Alternatively, leaders who embody the vision and values of the organization may silence those who challenge those values (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017). The trade union assessment [E37] of such CEO-led EV mechanisms was of union marginalisation and power-play.

A further contributing tradition to EV was 'consumerism' and its associated customer-orientation (Orr &Vince, 2009) requiring older employees to meet customer expectations in new ways, reflecting private sector practice. Perceiving council residents as consumers rather than as democratic citizens, resonates with the emphasis on direct voice over collective mechanisms, and the self-seeking individualism that Dibben et al (2011) identify as damaging to democracy. In Council A (2016), this was reinforced through employee 'pledges' included in citizen-facing documentation requiring employees to always put the 'customer' first. Customer service orientation was incorporated into recruitment, reward and performance management processes. Korczynski (2014) argues that such control on worker behaviour is based on a premise that divergent views are deviant. Frontline and middle-managers were not immune to similar controls, reflecting Mowbray's (2018) findings. Concurring with Bryson (2008), consumerism was assimilated by some older workers, for example in deeming union activism as a poor return on their membership subscription. In contrast, the partnership tradition has its roots in the 1920s, and more recently in Blair Government policy of multiple stakeholder partnerships to deliver local services (Orr & Vince, 2009). As one older participant [B15] identified, the aim of private sector enterprises is to make profit rather than address employee concerns. Furthermore, for trade unions, organising was difficult across multiple organizational boundaries.

Orr and Vince's (2009) traditions of critique include a narrative of externally driven crisis. In this research, the narrative fuels perceptions that EV is futile and could be regarded as a form of normative control, liken to organizational values at the meso-level. Older workers started work in a settled and prosperous period (Hebson et al, 2003) and the current contrast further emphasises such futility. However, Orr and Vince (2009) maintain that this powerful narrative originated in the nineteenth century to manipulate employee expectation. Moving on through time, austerity is the latest such crisis and supposed reason for current wage restrictions. Furthermore, senior

manager [D27] identified that central government relied on unpaid overtime to deliver council services. The second tradition of critique, of 'fragmentation' (Orr and Vince, 2009), corresponds with the silo working hampering employee communication between departments, as identified by the CEO [E5] and the oldest manual worker [D30]. One council in the research could have avoided a serious incident, had EV flowed more effectively between departments[8].

Orr and Vince's (2009) tradition of 'centralisation' incorporates the coercive control of a central government seeking to reduce costs and concede little power to local government actors, as Gill-McLure (2014) alludes to. Centralisation schemes had some provision for representation, but the regional GMB representative observed the gaps and less favourable conditions that follow the expiry of the protective effects of TUPE legislation. The 'modernisation' tradition reflects a long running discourse that local government systems and practices are inferior to their private sector counterparts (Coffey & Thornley, 2014). A lack of investment in the ageing IT systems was a major barrier to progressing the mechanisms for EV. 'Modernisation' has by central government design, become synonymous with 'privatisation' (Gill-McLure, 2018), whereas trade unions have argued for modernisation based on public need, as contended by the retired members forum in the study.

The 14 traditions of Orr and Vince (2009), give little credit to employee contributions to local government culture. Schein's (2004) definition of culture, incorporates the passing on of 'learned assumptions' by existing members, and employees are certainly existing members in an employment context. As well as their contribution to the public sector ethos, older workers passed on behavioural expectations regarding direct EV, and the argument for trade unionism, to younger workers. In addition, Gill-McLure (2018, p. 16) identifies Whitleyism, with its pluralist assumptions and trade union acceptance, as 'synonymous' with public services.

Orr and Vince (2009) suggest their list of traditions should not become reified. Adding a tradition of 'pluralist employment relations' does not seem incommensurable with the local government studies field from which their research originates; local government managers manage, and have always managed, in a unionised context. It is a long-standing tradition that could be added to Orr and Vince's (2009) model to enhance its representation of the context. In this research, senior managers understood the value

[8] Detail not included to preserve anonymity

and challenges of trade unions as an embedded element of the status quo, including the two retiring HR Directors who had seven decades of local government experience between them. For those older workers that are vulnerable, or have little power, the trade unions provide a meaningful EV and source of organizational justice.

6.1.3 Summary of objective 1

In conclusion, the EV of older workers is situated within an open system consistent with Kaufman's (2015a) model. It is influenced by environmental factors such as the economy, regulation and national politics. From an economic perspective, austerity has provided the impetus for local government organizations to become enablers, rather than deliverers, of services. The result was blurred organizational boundaries, complicating familiar EV mechanisms, and disrupting union organising activities. The culture associated with NPM is performance driven and customer focused, encouraging direct forms of EV to the detriment of the trade union voice, supporting Stanton and Manning's (2013) conclusions. Additionally, from a legal perspective, the Equality Act 2010 has not lived up to its potential in protecting older workers, other than for direct age discrimination. Age equality impact assessments would be better sited within the collective bargaining framework, in agreement with Hoque and Bacon's (2014) assertions.

The history of employment relations in local government, and the geographical region of this research, is strongly associated with trade unionism. Organizational actors, such as HR directors and senior managers, recognised the 'strong voice' of the trade unions over the general narrative of decline. The magnitude of the influence of external factors on EV indicates that maintaining organizational justice and dignity for the older worker within a fair and equitable local government (Richards & Sang, 2016), requires the 'muscle' of a collective voice to survive (Bryson et al, 2017; Kaufman & Taras, 2010). Other local government actors, including leaders and managers, were often powerless to resist central government control, and in some circumstances joined forces with the trade unions to redress the balance of power. This in part answers research subordinate question 1:

> *Sq1) Does the local government context support or suppress a fair and equitable employee voice for older workers?*

This sub-question is considered more fully in the light of the organizational practices affecting EV discussed in relation to objective 2, which follows.

6.2 Discussion: Objective 2

The findings of themes 2 and 3 inform the discussion of this objective, as interpreted through the lens of employment relations and HRM studies:

> *Ob2) How management practice in local government affects employee voice, and whether HRM reinforces management hegemony and unitary agendas by shaping channels and opportunities for older workers to participate in EV.*

Adding to the discussion of external factors in the previous section, subordinate question 1 is reconsidered in terms of the organizational context for the older worker EV. Firstly, to establish the basis of the employment relationship, managerial hegemony and unitarism in councils are considered. This is followed by evaluation of the response of trade unions to hegemonic practice, leading into the question of whether HR are complicit in shaping EV to fit the managerial agenda.

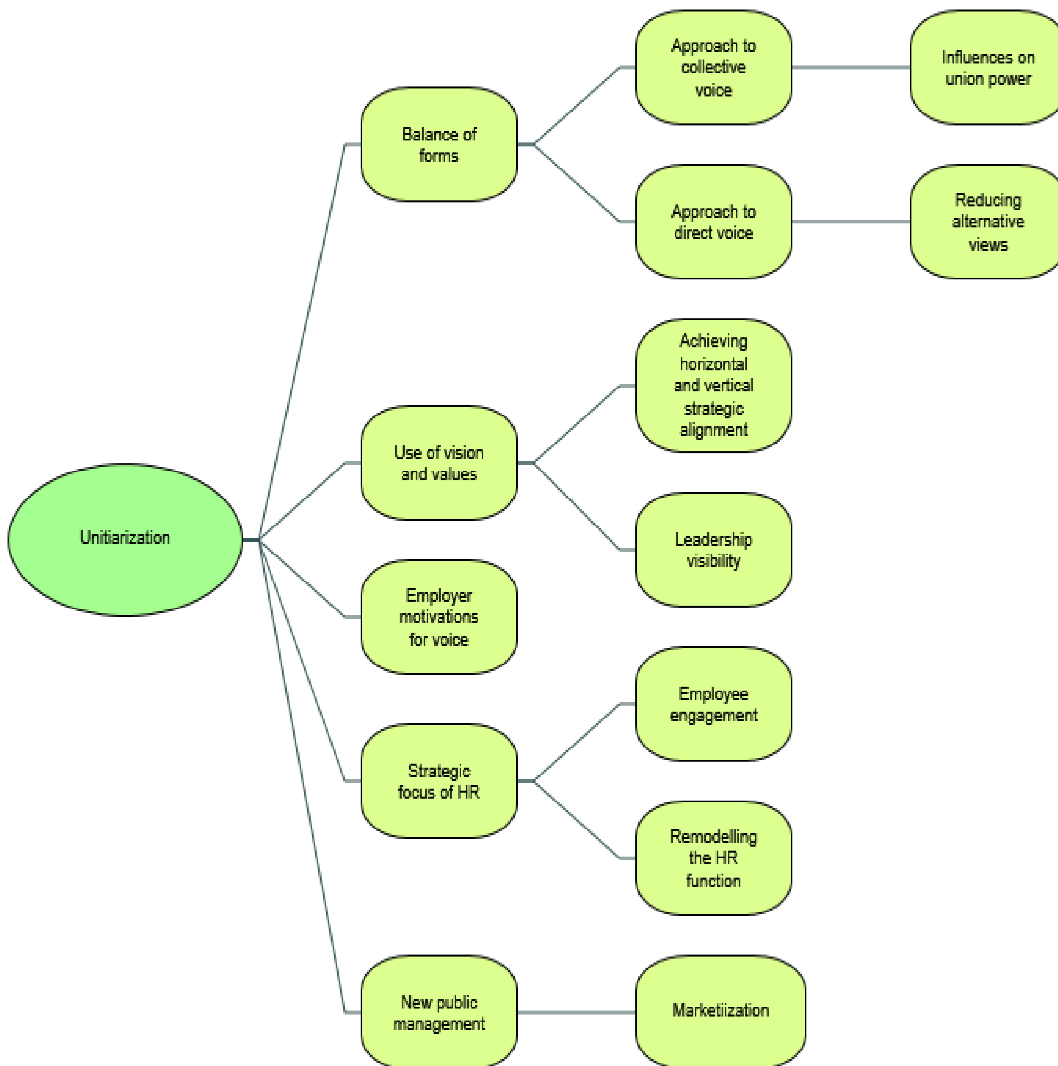


Figure 13: The integrative theme of unitarization (from NVivo analysis)

Unitarism emerged from several themes produced using template analysis (Figure 10). For example, vision and values were a feature of theme 2 and influences on union power were considered in theme 3. However, during the analysis, an integrated theme of 'unitarization' was identified as running throughout the data (Figure 13). In this section, unitarism is considered holistically as in the integrated theme.

6.2.1 Hegemony, unitarism and the right to manage

As Spicer and Böhm (2007) argue, management hegemony occurs where management axioms are perceived to represent the issues and concerns of all other organizational actors. This corresponds with Fox's (1966) concept of shared interests of employer and employee within the unitarist ER framework. As the literature suggests (Farnham, 2015; Pollitt, 1993; Truss, 2013), in synthesising the evidence of hegemony, the distinctive nature of local government management emerged. Older workers generally viewed line-managers as fair, however, in the worst-case scenarios, repressive managers constrained access to EV mechanisms by password protecting computers intended for general use.

As managers became more remote from the front line, hegemonic tendencies increased. The organizational response to middle managers who failed to communicate senior management team ideology or strategy was training. Grey and Mitev (1995) argue that training perpetuates a cycle of managerialism, consistent with Kuhn's (1970) position on consensus building. Management perspectives proffered by MBAs and the like, homogenise managerial practice and furnish managers with techniques in cultural control (Ogbor, 2001).

Management participants and older office workers used the words 'lean', 'smart' and 'agile' to explain organizational change mechanisms, signifying the influence of universalist techniques and technical rationality. These are unrelated to organizational context (Habermas, 1984), and reflect the modernising agenda associated with NPM. Techniques such as lean and six-sigma are known and accepted by professionals as 'the way', fuelled by the 'scientific' studies justifying their use (Budd, 2020; Kaufman, 2020; Ogbor, 2001). This may buoy up managerial hegemony and perceptions of superiority, which may account for the tendency to subvert alternative councillor perspectives in decision making, as identified in objective 1. Essentially, this hegemony operates against both the employer and employee. As Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) identify, such a hegemonic turn makes a genuine consensus unlikely, and undermines the authenticity of EV.

Alternatively, HR participants identified a dialectical conflict amongst other managers emanating from their union membership and diverging obligations as agents of the employer. Corresponding with Kaufman (2020 p.62) agency, in this research is the use of power to "initiate behaviours" to realise organizational objectives. Concurring with Pollitt (1993), although local government managers are empowered by hierarchical position to realise organizational objectives, they may also have a PSE that drives more altruistic actions. The HR director [B35] considered PSE to be strong in older managers of long tenure because their values were influenced by the sectoral culture of their early working lives. Conversely, and indicating the influence of his NPM ideology, the CEO participant regarded PSE as impeding his modernising agenda. Alternatively, PSE might be interpreted as a barrier to managerial hegemony in that what might seem to be instrumentally and technically rational may be less appropriate when social justice is accounted for (Habermas, 1984). The Grenfell Tower tragedy reminds us of the potential outcomes of deprivileging social justice in local government (Gill-McLure & Thörnqvist, 2018).

Pro-market HRM qualifications are also underpinned by unitarist assumptions, affording little accommodation for contextual difference (Dundon & Rafferty, 2018; Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017). That said, HR manager participants, as agents of management also experienced conflict. This was the outcome of tensions arising from their professional commitment to achieve 'better work and better working lives' (CIPD, 2018) and implementing the austerity efficiency measures likely to lead to work intensification. HR recruitment practices were increasingly aligned to organizational values, and as Ogbor (2001) suggests, where employees suppress their own ideals in favour of the organization, they become disempowered (see 6.2.2). For example, dismissing and re-engaging employees to change their terms and conditions was perceived by an HR manager as a 'black hole' for EV (Wilkinson et al, 2018). Additionally, the local government pension scheme reduced HR's ability to provide a dignified exit from the workforce for manual workers. In acting as the agent of management, HR then had little power to challenge other management thinking.

Marketization, performance management and competition were the manifestations of central government ideology, constraining management behaviour at the local level. Such constraints reflect the asymmetry of central and local government relations, as shared interests within central government diverge from those within local government, as Gill-McLure (2014) identifies. Central government view local government as their

agent in local affairs, implying a hierarchy of hegemonies with the unfortunate employee subjected to the effects of both. Returning to Habermasian principles, consensus between central government and the councils was limited in its rationality.

Although senior management participants were engaged with NPM principles, subcultures connected to their areas of responsibilities influenced their openness to EV. For example, those working in public health were alert to the positive effects of EV for mental health and disability. However, managers dictated how voice was heard and the issues taken up, as Bell et al (2011) indicate. In one service an older participant described a subculture of silence disguising poor practice, and in another EV had been systemically ignored resulting in a major incident. In the latter case, one participant felt that the EV of managers employed at that time but with no connection to the incident, was tainted.

6.2.2 Using vision and values to build employee compliance

Amongst the factors underpinning hegemony and unitarism, Alvesson and Deetz (2005) view organizational values and visions as impacting the critical reflection of employees. When managerial values become accepted as the employees own, employee consent to management action becomes rational and normalised (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011), so that conflict is suppressed. In this research, organizational values informed EV practice, performance expectations and the behaviour of employees. Values were co-created with employees in four of the councils, and by the CEO and senior leadership team in Council E (Council E, 2018), consistent with the more unitarist, entrepreneurial style of the CEO. The degree of employee involvement varied from very significant in Council A, to minimal in Council E and correspondingly, the use of values to align policy was also most developed in Council A. Consistent with definitions of unitarism such as Fox (1966), values were espoused to unify the objectives of managers and employees. Yet, as managers ultimately controlled the interpretation of values into policy, it is likely that the managerial agenda and hence the asymmetry of the employment relationship would prevail. This contrasts with Mor Barak's (2000) more pluralist view of organizational values that exclude difference where they relate to predefined norms, but are inclusive where the norms evolve in ongoing two-way communication with employees. As Budd (2020, p.76) clarifies, "one group's interests should never consistently dominate the other; instead, a balance should be sought". From a critical perspective, a corporate culture built on the values to which the employees contribute, is an effective means of self-regulation and gaining acceptance for their own repression (Alvesson & Deetz,

20011: Ogbor, 2001). In addition, of significance to local government is that it may constitute discriminatory practice in reflecting the norms of a particular group that may not be representative of the resident population.

Concurring with Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) assessment of unitarism, organizational leaders embodied the vision and values of the organizations. For example, the CEO of Council A was perceived by participants, other than the GMB representative, as a proud team player committed to 'straight talk' with employees, with high expectations of quality and service for citizens. The introduction of CEO-led town hall meetings in four of the five councils implies that direct EV is afforded strategic importance, underpinning unitarist objectives. As discussed, EV is unlikely to be acted on where it conflicts with the management agenda (Ramsay, 1977) and a Council D HR participant identified that meeting participants are more likely to self-censure than challenge leadership views. In Council A, the union was marginalised in being uninvited to the CEO meetings, reflecting the 'new unitarism' that Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) explain requires common values, rather than harmonious objectives.

Management led voice mechanisms promote fewer challenging issues (Donaghey et al, 2011; Hickland et al, 2020), and silence can be a management strategy. In this research, recruiting, selecting and training employees in preparation for management-led voice fora may reduce dissenting voices, thus reinforcing the management hegemony. This could be regarded as encouraging more effective meetings, or alternatively as indoctrinating employees so that only those issues significant to the values are voiced (Ogbor, 2001), thus maintaining the power of management (Lukes, 1982). Additionally, as Conley and Page (2018) identify, where organizations decide who is included, some marginalized workers will not be heard.

HR managers perceived that employee compliance with policies built on organizational values was rational and fair, because the employees had contributed to them. From a critical perspective, whether the values were created with beneficence or strategic advantage in mind, they are indicative of a hegemonic culture (Ogbor, 2001) and from a Habermasian perspective could be regarded as a form of unconscious control. Significantly, the regional GMB representative upheld that dissenting voices were supressed, and that dissenting managers were removed, reducing the critical voice and possible solutions to organizational issues (Martin et al, 2013). Critical theory resists the homogenization of cultural values, and in this research, union representatives were foremost in understanding and acting against this, however organising resistance was

hampered by workforce fragmentation and outsourcing (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011; Coffey & Thornley, 2014; Prowse & Prowse, 2007).

6.2.3 The trade union position in the study

The tradition of trade unionism within the pluralist local government context provided a means of resisting managerialism and unitarism. That said, most participants, including union representatives, engaged in a discourse of union decline. This was presented as "natural and self-evident", as an accepted reality (Alvesson & Deetz, 2005, p. 75), yet contrary to strong collective bargaining rights and recent membership increases in the public sector (BEIS, 2019). The regional TUC participant, agreeing with the article "Workers of the world, log on" (2018), considered that union memberships were undermined by the minimum wage and statutory sick pay. Correspondingly, the CEO participant [E5] argued that new strategies to revitalise trade unionism were required. Concurring with Dundon et al (2017), HR participants did not equate lower memberships with lower union influence, inferring that the unions remained as a strong representative EV.

The four main councils in the study were Labour led and trade unions were afforded reasonable recognition and facilities time by negotiated agreement. Older HR participants acknowledged the validity and utility of the trade unions. The three younger HR participants were more unitarist in their outlooks perceiving that the unions should be less involved strategically and more directly concerned with employees. A possible explanation is that these participants had achieved promotion by moving between councils, whereas the older HR managers had committed their working lives to their towns. They had built the long-term relationships with trade union convenors that facilitated communication, understanding and a more cooperative relationship. Cullinane and Dundon's (2014) conclusion that unitarism does not welcome trade unionism, infers that here, some alternative employment relations framework was evolving in the councils.

Concurring with the literature (Bryson et al, 2013), the phase three participants (figure 9) agreed that direct voice diminished the collective voice. Lower grievance rates and fewer JCC meetings in Council A may be indicative of unitarism, yet HR employment relations specialists had reservations regarding direct voice. Managers with little capacity for high volumes of direct EV voice may renege on promises, spreading discontent and cynicism among employees. HR employee relations specialists in all councils were respectful of unions, viewing them as a necessary nuisance, perhaps

having too much power. Unions were perceived as an effective means of grouping individual issues and institutionalizing conflict, as Beszter et al (2015) surmise. Certain union and HR concerns converged, for example common-good goals regarding service users, which Kaufman (2020) suggests may build mutuality through cooperation, partnership and genuinely shared values. A union membership residing where the employer provides a community service, implies that common objectives are likely regarding social cohesion and economic stability. Concurring with Simms (2015), the value of partnership working was acknowledged by both sides. The ER framework was close to neo-pluralism (Ackers, 2015) or the 'new pluralism' of Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) (see 3.1.3); a hopeful indicator that the trade unions and HR might work jointly to support the EV of older workers.

6.2.4 Human resource management, a support for managerial hegemony?

As Pritchard and Fear (2015) determined, the HR managers working closely with strategic players during austerity had sought to maintain their strategic position. All the councils had variants of Ulrich and Brockbank's (2005) three-legged stool model for HR service delivery (see 3.2.2). In line with Ulrich (2016), HR business partners were common place across the councils, although less so in Council D. Concurring with Marchington (2015), in positioning themselves strategically, HR's role as an employee champion was diminished. One HR manager saw values-led policies as constituting HR's advocacy and protection for employees, whereas embedding managerial values into employee behaviours is more of an indicator of hegemonic support (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011). The HR manager had absorbed the values as legitimate and good enough to protect the compliant employee. This resonates with Ogbor's (2001) view of organizational values as control, in this example at two levels in that to gain strategic importance, HR had 'strategized their own subordination' (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011, p. 88). Values were promoted as 'publicly held norms' promoting the interests of all organizational members. In this respect, HRM normatively supported unitarism by shaping employee interests to achieve the objectives of management (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017). HR advisers who might previously have been employee champions had transferred to E&D functions, implying the repression of more welfare driven HR advisers and changing stance on the EV.

Employee portals supplemented, and mostly supplanted transactional HR services, reducing HR contact with employees. Centres of expertise as described by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005), such as for employment relations, prioritised manager and trade

union issues. As Harris (2007) uncovered, HR had few resources to take on individual employee matters. For non-managerial participants, contact with HR was via email, one participant identifying that some accounts were out of date. In the same council, an HR manager described an HR triage style system for managers, giving weight to Kaufman's (2020) assertion that HRM is less interested in employee issues than with managers and organizational performance. HR advisers accepted this as necessary to the survival of HR, but was also indicative of support for the management position.

High-performance work systems were present in some form in all the councils, with EV being an integral component, as in Harley's (2014) findings. As Boxall (2012) observes, HPWS were interpreted variously, with Council A most consistently using organizational values as a 'golden thread' to achieve coherence between recruitment, selection, induction, performance management, training and reward systems. For example, role profiles associated with behavioural traits had replaced job descriptions and person specifications. An employee recruited in accordance with organizational values, may be less likely to speak out against them. The HPWS were different in emphasis, rather than basic assumptions. For example, HR advisers in Council C emphasised the importance of induction, while those in Council D emphasised performance management. Employee survey data informed strategy and practice, for example where poor communication was identified, training interventions were implemented. Space for EV was integrated into PDRs. Here, the emphasis was on task and training needs related to strategic goals, inferring the reification of employees into component skills and abilities (Islam, 2012). Resonating with Kaufman's (2020) view, where HR managers aspire to be strategic partners, as was the case in this research, the employee may become solely instrumental in achieving that aspiration.

More optimistically, management and HR participants connected EV with wellbeing. Wellbeing was approached jointly with the trade unions, indicating a softer form of HRM that does not entirely commodify employees (Storey, 1987) and one that went beyond reducing absenteeism. Such good practice included working with the MacMillan charity, to support employees with cancer in Council B. As Alvesson & Sköldberg (2009) advise, critical theorists should be open to the positive aspects of management, and the older participant who was living with cancer confirmed that she was consulted regularly and was heard. In Council D, the E&D participant explained how partnership working with trade unions had produced inducements to declare a disability. This included additional paid time off for doctor's appointments, but despite

this, in all the councils, disability was underreported. For older middle managers who lost their senior manager due to restructuring, being unheard was stressful despite mental health interventions, signifying that some initiatives were perhaps stronger on style than substance.

The EV mechanisms developed by HR were, in terms of Gennard et al's (2016) conceptual framework (Figure 4), at the unitary end of the continuum. Managers retained their prerogative, for example in deciding on the issues to address from employee survey data, or which articles should feature in a newsletter. Agreeing with Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), the unitarist framework accepts the asymmetry of employment relations, influencing whose voice is heard, the mechanisms available and which ideas are acted upon. Additionally, as Francis et al (2013) identify, the capacity of HR to meet their obligations to employees has been reduced by austerity. In contrast, by including the legitimate and accepted voice of trade unions, there are opportunities to prevent exploitation and unethical practices (Gill & Meyer, 2013). This supports the legitimacy of a framework such as new pluralism and the value of partnership working to balance out the hegemonic tendencies of management and so meet the commitment to improving working lives.

Kaufman (2020) advises that HPWS do not incorporate wider environmental factors such as the labour market, trade unions and, for councils, local community factors. However, the presence of market supplements for recruitment, and an innovative recruitment process for IT workers, indicate that the councils have some environmental awareness. Conversely, Kaufman's assertion that HRM should be managing better in terms of the planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling of human resources was clearly evidenced by the reactive strategies for their ageing workforces. In this research, organizational values may encourage inward-looking EV, particularly if EV mechanisms are designed around those organizational values. Islam's (2012) argument regarding the dehumanising reification of employees in respect of competencies could be extended to the reification of employees by their values, which if anything, is more sinister.

Employee participation was more associated with collective voice, except where leaders spoke directly with employees, and on occasion it was HR that was marginalised, as where employee suggestions bypassed the function. Moreover, surveys were a source of direct resistance by employees; completion rates were poor and suspicions high regarding their anonymity and intent, exacerbated by poor feedback and inaction

(Robinson & Shuck, 2019). As Greenwood and Van Buren (2017) advise, softer forms of HRM, including direct voice and values, are still unitarist in their intent. Although surveys formed part of the employee engagement strategy, a participant working on survey data opined that employees were more engaged with teams than the organization. This was consistent with older frontline participants use of EV, which generally did not go beyond their supervisor or team, and who had little direct involvement with HR.

6.2.5 Objective 2 summary

The organizational context for the EV of older workers was at least as turbulent as the external context for EV. There was evidence of a managerial hegemony based on professionalism and new public management views that was tempered by sharing a public service ethos with employees. The legitimacy of direct EV forms was accepted alongside trade unionism and there was some partnership working and cooperation. However, a creeping managerialism is suggested in that union representatives were excluded from certain forums. In a context where HR functions deal with the influence of neoliberalist employment practices on one hand, and on the other a historical tradition of pluralism and social justice, an adaptation had evolved. Rather than direct EV navigating the organization towards unitarism, employment relations had fallen inadvertently into new pluralism (Greenwood &Van Buren, 2017). New pluralism presents opportunities for HRM to encourage ethically valid employment practices, to challenge poor decision making, and to improve work and working lives as the CIPD (2018) advocates.

As workforce reductions continue, a harder approach to HRM based on creating value through further cost reduction may ensue. Hard HRM is anti-union, constraining EV to mechanisms such as involvement groups (Marchington, 2015), which may affect representation for vulnerable older workers. Kaufman (2020) perceives this type of EV is a component of a 'hollowed out' HPWS, reflecting Islam's (2012) perspective of worker exploitation, enabled by the reification of employee competencies to support a managerialist agenda. Signifying a hegemonic turn, values were used to align employee and employer objectives, and HPWS practices. Only one council was at the stage where this was well developed. A harder approach to HRM may engender reification of values, so that where employee values differ from those of a managerial hegemony, these are either re-engineered, or as the GMB representative alluded to, the employee is excluded.

Research subordinate question 1 asks how the local government context supports the EV of older employees. As considered in the discussion of objective 1, at the environmental level most of the impacts on the older worker EV were negative. At the organizational level, it was a mixed picture. Although the less pluralist context for the ER affected all employees, the emergent ER framework of new pluralism could support the EV of older employees more so than a unitarism. Flexible working, and partnership working with the unions was observed particularly in the area of equality and diversity. This could support the older worker EV, for example, by establishing working patterns and EV mechanisms that are more appropriate to older carers.

With respect to objective 2, HRM was observed to reinforce management hegemony through its aspirations to strategic significance, concurring with Marchington's (2015) perspective. At the time of the research, there was little in place to specifically encourage the voice of older workers, and a clear move to channel voice in line with the organizational values. New pluralism may enable the direct voice mechanisms that workers and managers find useful, but these can also be a control mechanism. HR cannot claim to be the champion of an inclusive workforce with diverse interests if they become the enabler of unitarism and homogenised values. Neither does this fit with the CIPD expectation of commitment to ethical practice and better working lives for employees (CIPD, 2018), as discussed further in relation to objective 3.

6.3 Discussion: Objective 3

This objective, as below, was addressed in the main by the findings of themes 4 and 5 (Figure 10) informed by the edicts of OB, intersectionality theory and organizational psychology:

> *Ob3) How older employees use EV, including the significance of potential barriers, enablers and their intersections to an effective EV. This incorporates how social group membership, current voice mechanisms (both collective and direct), and diversity policy apply.*

Kaufman (2020) refers to 'psychologicalisation', as the tendency of HRM scholars to attribute the macro-level effects on EV, to micro-level factors. Mitigating the tendency involved taking an overarching employment relations perspective, and critical approach to the interpretation of the findings. Although government policy was found to

influence older worker EV more so than individual factors, considering the micro-level factors revealed best whose voices were heard or silenced, to address sub-question 2.

> *Sq2) How do micro-level factors, individual characteristics and organizational factors intersect to influence the employee voice of the heterogeneous older workers of local government?*

Given that the central research question is '*In an ageing local government workforce, does employee voice support organizational justice and a better working life for older workers?',* exploring this objective was fundamental to the research conclusions. Nonetheless, without gaining understanding of the historical and contextual factors shaping EV, a critical evaluation was unlikely (Bell et al, 2011). As discussed, contemporary models of HRM have become weakened by their failure to incorporate their environmental complexity (Kaufman, 2020), and EV is similarly affected. In this research, austerity, changing workforce demographics and anti-union legislation cannot be relegated to background factors concerning their impact on the EV of older workers.

As the research privileges the employee standpoint, the discussion begins by considering what older workers regard as an effective voice, before reflecting on the barriers and enablers to their EV that could be overlooked if a purely ER position was taken. Secondly, the effects of individual variegation on EV, such as personality, tenure and cynicism, are discussed. The argument moves next to the effects of policies and practice on older workers as diverse individuals. As OB assumptions underpin the exploration of this objective, the discussion first relates to direct forms of EV before returning to the collective voice, which is more a feature of the overarching employment relations perspective.

6.3.1 The effective EV from an older worker perspective

Aside from feedback and action, the benefit of EV to older employees of being valued and having some control at work was universally acknowledged to improve working life. As Budd (2020) submits, control and recognition provide dignity and equity for any worker, but Eramo (2017) suggests this is more so for older workers. Older workers associated recognition with their direct EV, and protection with their collective EV. Moreover, corresponding with Islam (2012), older professional female participants articulated how having a direct voice contributed to their identity. Similarly, non-managerial HR advisers took a humanist perspective in suggesting that EV demonstrates that workers are more than a number to the organization. This echoes Islam's (2012) ethical stance on the employee as a person rather than a set of reified

knowledge, skills and abilities. Alternatively, a more unitarist older senior manager used EV instrumentally to build team identity and shared interests to improve and control team performance. The tangible aspects of recognition in this council included e-thankyou cards. These were awarded for good service aligned to the organizational values, including for EV, thus reinforcing values as a naturalised form of control.

Older workers raised complaints and grievances with line managers without trade union involvement, at least initially. Older participants had the skills and confidence to use EV in this way, sometimes to avoid the label of trouble-maker, and sometimes to avoid their issue being subsumed into a wider union agenda. Participants agreed that an effective EV supports good health and wellbeing at any age. Evidencing an OB perspective, older worker participants perceived that engaging in pro-social EV demonstrated commitment to their work, which increased their job satisfaction as Wood (2008) observes.

6.3.2 Heterogeneity of older workers and voice

Older workers are a particularly heterogeneous group because life experience can be added to whatever other characteristics they may have. Demonstrating the significance of cohort membership to voice is unlikely in a limited sample, but the findings were consistent with Macky et al (2008). In this research, compliant voice behaviour increased with age, from the more individualistic, management challenging participants in their 50s, to the rule-oriented participants in their 70s. The oldest participants expressed the usual frustration at structural barriers, but adhered to organizational processes. Their advanced age appeared to confer an advantage, perhaps due to their rarity or their uncomplaining pro-social silences (Bell et al, 2011). When they spoke up, they were listened to by their managers. Consistent with Macky et al (2008), these baby boomers were optimistic and cooperative; pro-social voice was their norm. From a critical perspective, these participants may have absorbed the asymmetry of the employment relationship because of a lifetime of exposure to it.

The 60 to 66-year-olds were more inclined to raise contentious issues, but also respected ‘rank’, using military metaphors to communicate their stance on EV, as ‘foot soldiers’ experiencing life on the frontline. Resonating with Morrison et al’s (2015) view of the influence of low power perceptions, belonging to a ‘low rank’ was a barrier to direct EV. Although these older workers had frontline knowledge beyond that of their managers, they were frequently unheard. As Organ (1996) advises, using military language reinforces the CEO as an all-powerful general, who accepts the casualties of

restructuring exercises and strategic implementations. Nonetheless, although valued by older office-based participants, CEO-led town hall meetings were perceived by some as a strategic sales-pitch.

The youngest cohort, in their 50s, were most likely to circumnavigate management layers, or seek alternative routes to secure a hearing. In this research, an unsuccessful public petition regarding a service closure, and a failed attempt by one unfazed participant to skip levels of management to secure a hearing, indicate a successful managerial hegemony, but also suggests the resilience of these older workers. The implication of cohort variation for EV is that mechanisms should be flexible enough to accommodate the differences.

Intersectionality theory was used instrumentally, rather than philosophically in the research, to establish the combinations of characteristics that were most significant to EV (Marcus & Fritzsche, 2015). The three female participants aged over 70 years provide an example of where such theory might apply. The societal expectations of female conformity in the 1950s that they experienced as young women may contribute to their compliance in using voice mechanisms. Intersectionality theory was a better fit with the research than double jeopardy as the intersections were of varying significance to EV. As McBride et al (2015) caution, the effects may be multiplicative rather than simply doubling. Intersectionality requires that similarities as well as differences in group membership are accommodated, though the timeframe of the research limited such analysis. Intersectional analysis indicated that with respect to age and EV, occupying a manual role was most significant in producing a barrier.

By the organizations' own admissions, manual workers in all the councils incurred the institutional barrier of limited access to computer systems, where a sizable number of voice mechanisms resided. Printed copies are not compatible with dirtier manual working environments, and take longer to navigate than documents with search features. This was a long-standing issue, inferring that where voice was concerned, some groups of employees were privileged over others, as Wainwright et al (2018) and Marchington (2015) discuss. Alternatively, concurring with Kaufman (2014b), older office workers occupying a senior position, or having high-value rare skills, were likely to be heard. Islam (2012) argues that such bargaining power is the outcome of reifying employee capital. For unskilled and manual workers, organising within a collective voice can address this imbalance of power.

Older manual workers expected that anything other than task-related issues were dealt with by managers, thus factoring out their EV on higher level issues when on occasions their knowledge was more relevant. They did not envisage how they could add value, for example, by attending a corporate meeting on mental health. Their exercise of EV was shallow (Donaghey et al, 2011) thus retaining the power of senior managers over more strategic matters. Additionally, manual workers were disinclined to attend corporate events. Their work attire instilled feelings of inferiority, liken to Bourdieu's theories (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) on appearance and power, representing a structural barrier to voice based on class. HR advisers and managers falsely assumed that manual workers were unable to handle IT based voice mechanisms. According to Sonderegger et al (2016), IT training should be age-appropriate to be effective and may require a different format to that for their younger peers. This may have implications under the Equality Act 2010 in terms of making reasonable adjustments for age. In this research, four older workers expressed how e-learning packages in their current guise were not effective for them, and as Phillipson (2014) also found, there was no evaluation of the training interventions for older workers. Additionally, HR viewed manual workers according to the reified skills, knowledge, abilities and capacities associated with their role, rather than by acknowledging their human agency and capacity (Islam, 2012).

A second structural barrier to the EV of manual workers, and to a lesser extent, office workers, was health. As Bacon and Hoque (2015) identify, the bodily deterioration caused by physical work or age induced silence in some, for fear of losing their jobs. Ill-health retirement options were few, implying dependency on low levels of state benefits on exiting their employment. In contrast, speaking up could improve the understanding of their options, as Porcellato et al (2010) uncovered. Kaufman (2020) views such abandonment as using workers instrumentally and as if "horses", relegating HRM to 'horse resource management'. This resonates with Islam's (2012) view of HPWS as disposing of unusable skills, rather than the worker, with no regard for their humanity. This does not sit well with CIPD (2018) espoused views of ethical practice, Schein's (1965) view that practices be not demeaning, Budd's (2004) worker dignity, or HR's aim of wider social legitimacy (Marchington 2015). Certainly, discarding manual workers once they have ceased to be of use resonates with the unfortunate fate of war horses following World War 1.

Concurring with Kaufman (2020), the work intensification associated with HPWS may worsen the physical and mental strain on an older worker. Additionally, HPWS do not

include protection for employees against poor managers. As Budd (2020) concludes, taking an industrial/ employment relations perspective is critical to confronting managerial obliviousness to the harmful effects of the employment relationship. In this research, older workers resisted taking individual issues to the union, whereas earlier intervention might have improved the outcome. Nonetheless, in a move subverting the managerial hegemony, rather than identify themselves with an issue, older office workers signposted the GMB regional representative to dubious management activities, as he went about his rounds.

A third factor intersecting with age and role to diminish EV, was disability, particularly invisible age-related disability. Gaining influence was more likely if the worker was an archetypal member of a single marginalised group (Marcus & Fritzsche, 2015), for example, surveys and forums were in place for disabled employees. In this research, office workers with visible disabilities were well accommodated and, if anything, had more of a voice than standard employees. Multiply diverse individuals were marginalised members within marginalised groups, supporting the formation of more generally inclusive groups, and trade union representation (Ackers, 2015). The other significant factor to EV was the precarity of the workers role. Agency workers had little power, being invisible to the organization and disinclined to join a trade union, as Marchington (2015) identifies. Where they also had multiple group membership, workers were perceived as an oddity or outlier (Marcus & Fritzsche, 2015).

The effect of gender and manual work was less obvious as the three female manual workers in the study were older than 63 years and healthy. Again, their rarity made them almost prized employees, highlighting the symbolic tokenism of their position (Marcus & Fritzsche, 2015). For example, a large poster of the older female street cleaner participant was positioned in a public building to challenge gender-based role perceptions. At a societal level, female retirement choices were negatively affected by the same financial implications of child rearing as the general UK workforce. As discussed previously, combining caring with working fell more to women (ONS, 2018a), although caring for spouses affected men also, and formed a barrier to attending union meetings outside of the working day. Further barriers to the collective EV of women are discussed in 6.3.5.

For some women workers, but to a lesser extent the manual workers, the effects of the menopause affected physical and mental wellbeing at work, with negative implications for EV. An unfortunate few triggered sickness absence management processes adding

to their anxiety and reducing the self-power perceptions that support EV (Morrison et al, 2015). Given that up to 70 percent of the council workforces were female, it seems remiss that only one of the councils provided any form of support. Consistent with Jack et al (2019), that senior managers were female (and menopausal) yet suffered in silence, was indicative of the stigmatisation associated with this life-stage. Despite this, such women had attained leadership positions where their voices could not be ignored. Gender was less of an issue for direct EV in this research than anticipated by Bell et al (2011), perhaps because of the large numbers of women employees and good representation in senior management.

Lastly, societal influences, rather than organizational influences, continued to affect those older LGBT workers who grew up in less tolerant times.

6.3.3 Individual variegation and employee voice

Individual variegation and its interrelatedness with other age-related factors generate a multitude of possibilities for EV. Of these, older participants considered that personality, tenure, confidence, cynicism and fear were significant contributors to their propensity to speak out.

a) Personality

In agreement with LePine and Van Dyne (2011), participants connected personality traits such as extraversion and introversion to voice. Extraverts were perceived as most likely to use EV, with two older extravert participants adding that age had improved their listening skills also. There was a surprisingly protective attitude towards introversion by older workers. This was accompanied by notions that introverts have good ideas, suggesting a cultural factor at play and influence of proverbs such as “An empty vessel makes the loudest sound”. Managers supposed that when an introvert spoke up, it would be worth listening to. Although Donaghey et al (2011) advise looking beyond the mechanism, they were significant to introverted employees, for example, large gatherings were a barrier. Of LePine and Van Dyne’s (2001) other personality traits, conscientiousness was a positive indicator of voice, coinciding with the pro-social voice of the oldest participants, or alternatively their silence where voice might create difficulties for managers. An older worker tendency was for advocacy and assisting other less confident employees to use their voice. For older managers, speaking out as an ambassador was viewed as a designated responsibility, so constituting a form of normative control (Müller, 2018).

b) Tenure and confidence

Length of tenure was viewed as more significant to EV than being older per se. Older workers often had more than 20 years' service and understood the organizational culture well. Using this knowledge, older workers could negotiate their way around EV mechanisms, understanding when and where their voice would be effective. Their longer exposure to the public sector ethos may be linked to conscientiousness as an antecedent to voice or silence, but this would require further confirmatory research to establish. Confidence was the most frequently mentioned attitudinal representation positively affecting EV, and was perceived to increase with age even for introverted individuals. Participants attributed this to lower personal risk, lower expectations regarding promotion and fewer financial commitments, such as a mortgage (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Confidence grew out of the knowledge and EV skills that develop over time. In this research, the regional tendency to be forthright added to age-related confidence to increase the propensity to speak out, including to counter age-discriminatory comments. However, some older workers were unhealthy and financially insecure. This initiated employee silence, as in quadrant 3 of Donaghey et al's (2011) ER model.

An alternative outcome of long tenure was cynicism, where previously disappointing experiences made employee silence the more likely outcome (Donaghey et al, 2011). This was open to misinterpretation, as a challenge to the management prerogative, or resistance to change, suggesting managerial intolerance of divergent interests. Ignoring the EV of workers who have learned from similar initiatives is an example of where a hegemony can be damaging to the organization. Around a third of the older participants, chiefly manual workers, expressed feelings of futility due to management intransigence regarding their suggestions. Concurring with Cullinane and Dundon (2006), the resulting lack of cooperation with EV may be attributable to perceptions of managerial breach of the psychological contract. Some older office participants were cynical regarding new direct EV mechanisms, suggesting they were 'old wine in new bottles' and no more likely to be effective than previous incarnations.

c) Fear, silence and the frontier of control.

Fear as a barrier to EV, or more likely as an enabler of employee silence, did not fit well into Donaghey et al's (2011) 'silence and the frontier of control' model. Fear might be attributed to a lack of trust, as in quadrant 3 (Figure 5). No party gained much ground by such silences, with employees potentially losing out on the benefits of interventions

developed with the unions. The psychological insecurities and low power perceptions of such older employees were better considered using OB theory (e.g., Morrison et al, 2015), yet the underlying reasons for fearful silence often originate in the domain of political studies and economics. Silence instigated by wider environmental factors such as central government austerity measures, meet at an alternative 'frontier' with the state. A further consideration, as explained by Orr and Vince (2009), is the persistent narrative of crisis and fragmentation in local government that predates the recession, and may constitute a clandestine form of employee control. Oppressive managers and sub-cultures of silence within departments, although less frequently reported, encourage only non-threatening forms of voice, concurring with quadrant 1 of Donaghey et al's model (2011) (Figure 5). Some employees felt coerced into completing the employee survey, while others chose to resist it by ignoring or spoiling their survey, exhibiting the deviant behaviour discussed by Van den Broek and Dundon (2016), and fitting with the silence acting against managers in quadrant 4. Conversely, the altruistic social-empathy silence of employees arising from the economic realities of local government benefited both employee and employer, sitting in the centre of Donaghey et al's (2011) frontier of control model, in that both parties sought to be silent.

6.3.4 Policy and practice impacting older workers and their EV

Kulik et al (2016) comment that organizational policies for diverse employees tend to focus on a target group. As Wainwright et al (2018) found, there were no specific policies addressing the ageing workforce other than for retirement, although some policies, as for cancer care, apply more as workers age. This is surprising given the state pension changes and the removal of the default retirement age in 2011, but reflects the general UK position of no overall strategy, and haphazard approach to regulatory reform for ageing workforces (Blackham, 2017). The central government agenda to keep older workers economically active was evident, in that older office workers reported recent promotions and new appointments for older colleagues. As an office worker, retirement and flexible working options were accessible, but for manual workers the outlook was less favourable. The outcome of this position may be social inequality, as Phillipson (2014) and Wainwright et al (2018) identify, with an accompanying reduction in the propensity to use EV. Age policy was reactive, for example, the unsustainable retiring of older employees en masse in the early days of austerity. Policies for working carers were under way, with inconsistent managerial discretion and Dependant's Leave (Employment Rights Act 1996) provision left to fill

the void. There were no plans to consider age-related conditions such as dementia, or to give these employees a voice.

All the organizations had E&D policies complying with the Equality Act 2010, but as Blackham (2016) cautions, policies based on the Act are insufficient. The intersectional discriminations combining with age are not yet recognised in law so are difficult to represent at an employment tribunal. Diversity reporting met the Public Sector Equality Duty and complied with the Equality Framework but some older participants perceived the compliance as tokenism rather than authentic commitment to the Duty, as Fredman (2011) uncovered. Conversely, the good practice of older employees went unrecognised, for example, older workers frequently mentored younger workers in using their EV, thus fostering the good relations required by the Duty. Policies such as for the right to request flexible working, although available to older workers had limitations. One participant responded that by working flexibly, he was not regarded as 'a proper worker' and was side-lined, so creating a barrier to his EV. Despite this, most older participants regarded councils as having good E&D policies that include provision for EV, but related these more to race, disability, gender and sexual orientation rather than age. This reinforces the argument that ageism is the most socially normalized form of prejudice (WHO, 2018) and supports Habermas' (1984) assertion that the oppressed may be unaware of their oppression.

For EV, equality groups based on protected characteristics, such as for disability, were declining in favour of employer-selected representative champions and larger inclusive groups for all diverse employees, such as the observed equality event in this research. Such inclusive groups may be emancipatory in accommodating intersecting characteristics. For example, an older, disabled, manual worker may be better represented in an inclusive group than in a single social category group, such as for disability. Where the decision of who is to be included is removed from the employer, the likelihood of marginalising workers is reduced (Conley & Page, 2018). As Beck et al (2019) discuss, if adequately resourced, self-help groups, such as that proposed by Council C to support menopausal women, are more sustainable and less dependent on managerial business case arguments for their survival.

The separation of E&D functions from corporate HR was puzzling given the move towards inclusivity. Inclusivity should be an embedded element of HR policy, inferring some degree of rhetoric over reality, or a lost opportunity. The increased size of E&D functions reflects what Greene and Kirton (2011) found in the civil service. In this

research, it perhaps signifies the increased responsibility for non-employee community issues, which had by two E&D managers' admissions, been their priority. In securing access to participants for this research, attending council sponsored community equality hubs for age and caring exposed useful knowledge that could transfer to the workplace. Union community groups and their retired member's forums also represent a rich seam of knowledge and experience. In an extension of Holgate's (2015) findings on community organising, bringing these groups together could build a better picture of older workers' issues. This could inform the development of age policy and the EV mechanisms required to raise their causes, resonating with Mor Barak's (2000) perspective of the value in going beyond the organizational boundary to further an authentically inclusive workplace.

Some organizational participants had poor views of older workers' abilities regarding IT, as discussed earlier (6.3.2). If EV mechanisms are to be sited on council intranets then appropriate training is needed to avoid their marginalisation. For manual workers, this is additional to resolving poor access and exposure to technology at work. As Kooij et al (2014) recognise, learning is better established as an ongoing feature of working life, implying that policies supporting older workers should be part of a wider life-stage based strategy. Organizational support to assist managers in understanding their older employees was scant, and little of the tailoring of HR practices that Kooij et al (2014) recommend to accommodate age was evident in the councils.

There was some evidence of an emerging interest in EV for older workers at the observed equality event and in the self-help group of Council C. Notwithstanding this, for some manual workers PDRs were the only formal direct EV they encountered, other than grievances. There was little evidence of efforts to otherwise involve them, conveying that their EV was less valued, except regarding tasks.

6.3.5 The collective voice of trade unions and older workers

Equality and diversity policies are more likely to be implemented where they are prioritised by negotiating officers within a collective bargaining agenda (Hoque and Bacon, 2014), as some are in local government. Developing inclusive practice with the trade unions would support a pluralist framework for inclusivity. Additionally, going beyond the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, would encourage councils to embrace difference as "the richness of a common humanity" (Islam, 2012, p.44). A potential conflict for unitarist HRM and organizational values, is that inclusivity

requires an identity blind approach to difference (Oswick & Noon, 2014), implying that all employees participate in decision making (Nishii, 2013), whatever their values.

Trade unions campaigned nationally on age issues, but here there was less evidence of action at the local level. This may be exacerbated by the lower number of union representatives. For example, and in agreement with union branch documentation, one older participant explained that disability representation was incorporated into equality representative roles, and in some cases also into the general representative's duties. For the most vulnerable older workers, such as those in the early stages of dementia whose numbers will undoubtably rise with the state pension age, trade unions provide a much-needed voice. Furthermore, unions offer protection for older manual workers who are struggling with their physical health, (Flynn, 2014). An employment relationship situated in new pluralism could facilitate an ethically driven partnership approach, to move the relative balance of bargaining power in favour of such diverse employees (see 6.2.5 and 3.1.3). From a Habermasian perspective, trade unions empower diverse older employees so that the relationship with the employer is more equal, thus closer to the ideal speech situation, so encouraging a rational consensus.

Ackers (2015) advocates that for trade unions, the emphasis should be more on common issues rather than on differences, reflecting the perspective of Islam (2012) and the inclusive approach. In this way, individuals who have multiple social group memberships can be represented together and so become less isolated. Trade unions are well placed to represent the issues of their older members. For example, UNISON and Wales TUC have produced guidance regarding the effects of the menopause, but again older female participants were mostly unaware of national level support. Of more concern for a context where more employees are female, is that the GMB was found to be institutionally sexist to the extent that women were deterred from participation (Syal, 2020). The EV of such women is likely to be considerably diminished, when a loss of confidence due to the menopause or anxiety arising from caring duties are factored in. As the CEO in the study advised, the unions should modernise their approach to support and reflect their membership.

Despite stereotypical assumptions regarding social media, and contrary to the findings of Holland et al (2016), although not claiming significant expertise, most older participants used Facebook. Criticism of the unions, even by long-term older members, highlights the need to reconnect with the older union membership. From the posters displayed in the union offices visited during the research, campaigning appeared to be

focused on younger employees. A Facebook-style social media platform may provide a useful vehicle for organising and supporting more passive older members. Concurring with Greene (2015), attention to meeting times and locations would assist working carers and those less confident with night-time outings, but institutional sexism may be discouraging female participation, as discussed.

6.3.6 Objective 3 summary

In answering subordinate research question 2, the intersection of age and a manual role combined to be most significant to EV at the individual level, with age-related disability creating an additional barrier. Corresponding with Phillipson (2014) these older employees were marginalised because of inequality associated with health, social class and role. As McBride et al (2015) suppose, the intersection of these factors produced effects greater than their sum, which suppress EV, or generates silence to remain 'under the radar'. Individual characteristics, including personality, impacted on EV, however, these were mediated by the availability of appropriate mechanisms, such as written formats and one-to-one meetings for introverts. Concurring with Holland et al (2017), low personal risk, high levels of trust and openness of managers influenced voice positively, and negatively where the opposite applied. Inclusion as an approach to managing diversity offered more diverse older workers opportunities for participation where there was no provision for age. At the time of the research, this was not fully developed so reliable conclusions could not be drawn. The collective voice of the trade union, although not perfect, remained as the form of EV best placed to support social justice and the interests of older employees. Nevertheless, most older workers were self-reliant, preferring to resolve and control their own issues where possible. There was room for improvement for unions in communicating with older employees, reducing sexism and accepting those direct forms of voice that enhance job satisfaction and wellbeing for older workers.

6.4 Summary of the discussion

As Alvesson & Deetz (2011) identify, critical research should consider the historical, cultural, political and economic context of a phenomenon. In this research, the external environment was a major influence on EV for all employees, disrupting and fragmenting organizational resources, boundaries, structures and processes. For older workers, central government strategy and legislation encompassing ageing at work appeared as uncoordinated and open to interpretation. The disproportionate effect on

older manual workers of the changes to the local government pension regulations sat neither comfortably with HR or the trade unions, but appeared to have no champion.

As a frame work for ER at the organizational level, something akin to the new pluralism of Greenwood and Van Buren (2016) was emerging. This fitted well with shared interests regarding communities and place, although other interests of employee and employer were divergent. A managerial hegemony was discernible, ideologically situated in NPM but tempered to some extent by a public sector ethos that managers shared with employees. Prioritising performance and the pressures of financial control had begun to encourage harder forms of HPWS that may use older workers more instrumentally (Kaufman, 2020), according to their knowledge, skills and abilities (Islam, 2012).

HRM was increasingly driven by unitarist values, adding weight to Kaufman and Taras' (2010) argument that where the issue to be voiced is contentious, the negotiating strength of the trade union adds muscle to voice. Older workers valued their trade unions for the protection of employment rights and collective bargaining, but despite most being union members and recent increases in union membership, there was a narrative of union decline. Managerial language and organizational values influenced employee views of what was possible, desirable and rational. Consequently, the trade union arguments that might engender the activism of older workers to claim an EV approximating to the ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1971) were diminished. Where older workers had influence on decision making, it was due to their acquired knowledge, their understanding of council culture, and for older workers in higher or professional positions, because of valuable or scarce skills.

At the individual level, the heterogeneity of older workers affected their EV according to factors such as role, health, cohort membership, personality and social group membership. It was length of tenure rather than age that imbued cynicism. These factors intersected with age to create a considerable disadvantage for manual, disabled workers. Developing the protection of the collective voice for these employees is likely to require union support at the national level. Individual older employees, valued the recognition and acknowledgement afforded by direct voice mechanisms, corresponding with the findings of Eramo (2017) and Islam (2012).

To achieve a better working life and organizational justice for older workers, consideration of the EV determinants at all of Wilkinson et al's (2018) levels is required. As Alvesson and Deetz (2011) explain, the relationships between levels are

complex and may not be immediately apparent. The benefits of EV are likely to be most fully realised within a planned, fair and consistent central government strategy for older workers. The next chapter considers the contributions of the research to knowledge, methodology and practice. The contribution of the subordinate questions to the main research question is presented, alongside limitations and possible avenues for future research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore, using critical theory, whether and to what extent organizational justice and a better working life for older workers is supported by EV. This chapter presents the contributions of the research to knowledge, methodology and practice. The chapter also concludes on how the two subordinate research questions support the central research question. Consequently, the lessons learnt and limitations identified in conducting the study are discussed, together with possible future directions and uses for the research. Finally, a section concerning reflections on reflexivity as encountered in conducting research in the critical tradition close both the chapter and the main body of the thesis.

The research sought to address the paucity of knowledge of the EV of older workers in local government. It was approached through interpretive evaluation of older worker perceptions of EV, the issues they faced in being heard, and the underlying reasons for the barriers and enablers they encounter. Consistent with knowledge created using critical theory, the research considered the historical context in which EV had developed (Ramsay, 1977), and sought to identify those with little power who may be less heard (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Jasperson, 2018). A qualitative, cross-paradigmatic, multi-level empirical and theoretical research design, as advocated by Wilkinson et al (2018), was used to build a rich picture of older worker EV. The intention was to uncover enablers and barriers to EV to encourage movement closer to the ideal speech situation of Habermas (1971, 2001), albeit in small steps, so to advance organizational justice and a better working life for older workers.

The next section presents the contributions of the research.

7.1 Contribution to knowledge

The three main contributions arise from the adaptation, or extension, of existing knowledge, firstly concerning the determinants of employee voice (Kaufman, 2015a), secondly the ageing workforce beyond 65 years (Lain & Loretto, 2016) and thirdly the traditions of local government (Orr & Vince, 2009).

7.1.1 Contribution to knowledge: Determinants of EV in the context

The principal contribution to knowledge of the research is summarised in Figure 14. The representation is adapted from Kaufman's (2015a) model of private-sector EV determinants (page 27), to accommodate the local government context and its older workers.

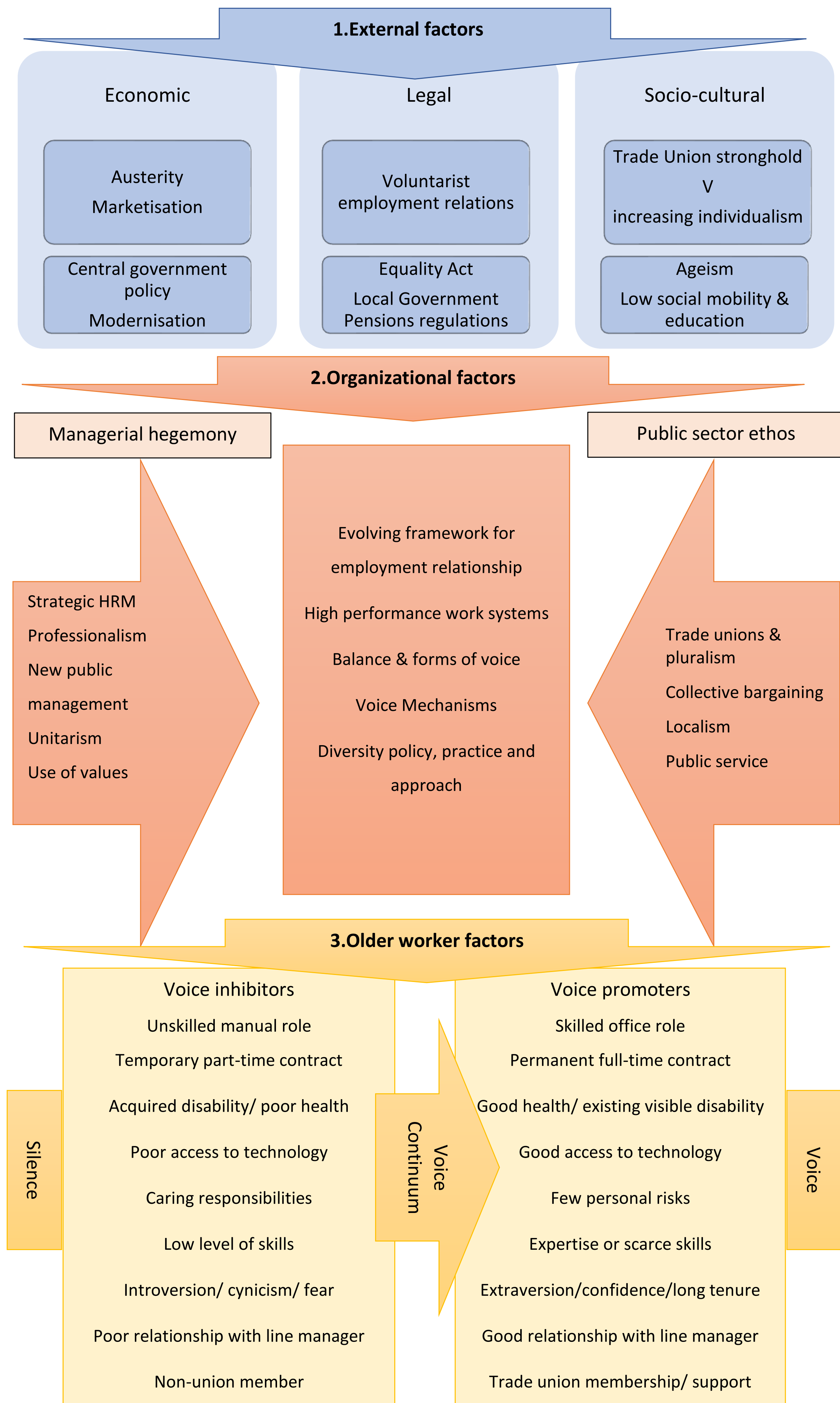


Figure 14: Determinants of the EV of older participants in the study

It is submitted with the caveat that a model is only ever "a severe abstraction of a concrete reality" (Kaufman, 2020, p.56), in that finer nuances of the reality are not exposed.

7.1.1.1 External factors determining EV

In Figure 14, the external factors significant to EV (part 1, illustrated at the top of the figure) are categorised here as in Kaufman's (2015a) model. These factors apply to all employees, whether it be the austerity cuts affecting the availability of voice mechanisms, or the historical regional culture of trade unionism. The lower of the two boxes in the economic, legal, socio-cultural categories have a greater influence on older employees. For example, the shift in central government policy to retain older workers (Phillipson, 2014), and low educational attainment (Porcellato et al, 2010; Sharp, 1984) negatively impact on their EV. Moreover, the ageism originating beyond the organizational boundary suppresses EV, for example, through ageist preferences for the views of younger workers (Kirton & Green, 2016). In the case of pension regulation changes, manual employees with age-related health concerns refrain from EV to protect their employment, diminishing both social and organizational justice for these older workers. Furthermore, central government strategy for the ageing workforce produces inconsistencies (Blackham, 2017) and pockets of disadvantage (Marchington, 2015). Consistent with Gill-McLure's (2014) argument, local government leaders resisted central government control, yet persisted in a narrative of crisis and fragmentation that induced perceptions of the futility of EV in participants. Arguably, such narratives constitute a means of repression and control, and an unwitting collusion with the higher managerial hegemony of central government.

7.1.1.2 Organizational factors impacting EV

The organizational and individual factors affecting EV are presented differently to Kaufman's (2015a) house shaped representation of the employment relationship. The central arrows in part 2 of Figure 14 represent the tensions on the employment relationship. Hegemonic managerial assumptions, consistent with the acceptance of new public management ideology are positioned on the left, with opposing public sector ethos factors on the right. Managerial hegemony was underpinned by assumptions of the superiority of professional ideology, to the point that councillors were sometimes kept in the dark. The recent case of the Cleckheaton councillors who were not informed of a coronavirus outbreak provides a timely example (Drury, 2020), supporting Orr and Vince's (2009) view of the hegemonic inclinations of professional officers.

Additionally, older participants replicated the terminology associated with managerial modernising agendas. Acceptance of the rationality of 'lean', 'agile' working, and the direct voice mechanisms that facilitate performance improvement implies some employees have absorbed the managerial discourse. This conflicts with Habermas' ideal speech situation (1971) and principle of communicative rationality (1984) in that older workers' perceptions are distorted by their acceptance of managerial perspectives, as Lukes (1982) argues. The use of values may further shape and constrain EV, furthered by appointing those leaders whose views correspond with organizational values and subsequently influence organizational strategies. Their recent introduction renders this conclusion closer to a hypothesis. However, in the process of aligning practices to values in the emergent HPWS, rewarding employees for 'living the values' provides evidence of this. Mor Barak (2000) points out that the unitarist use of values may exclude certain parties and viewpoints, unless this is mitigated by an ongoing dialogue with employees. In this research, even where the values are espoused to be employee-led, they emerge from a workforce that is unrepresentative of local community demographics, so are naturally discriminatory to some extent. The disproportionately large number of older workers should constitute an advantage, but as Purcell (2014b) discusses, values can be used as a form of normative control and brand management, including for EV.

For the collective voice, modernising agendas frustrated collective bargaining and the union voice by complicating organising activities, in agreement with Gill-McLure's (2018) findings. Neoliberalist and unitarist principles supporting the managerial hegemony acted against pluralist employment relations by offering a 'one team' façade to employees. In agreement with Budd (2020), aligning policies with strategy, in this research using values, infers the attribution of poor performance to poor policy rather than an impoverished employment relationship. The wholesale changes to employee terms and conditions, and citizen facing documentation having little mention of the workforce evidenced the rhetoric of the 'one team' management party line.

On the other hand, public sector ethos and localism tempered management perspectives of what a good organization and a fair EV look like, which motivated older workers to speak out. As Boehm et al (2014) and Shore et al (2018) find, the sense of belonging experienced by some older workers in CEO meetings evidences the significance of supportive leaders to an inclusive EV, as was witnessed at the observed equality event. Additionally, the inherent fairness, honesty and ethical assumptions that constitute the

public sector ethos (Hebson et al, 2003) were observed by HR participants to affect how managers listened to these employees. Managers were also subject to the influences of social justice and trade unionism that grew out of Whitleyism. Alliances formed between Labour councillors and trade unionists, and national trade union campaigns supported the council on issues of social justice, most recently regarding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on council funds (Unison, 2020). Similarly, unitarist HRM assumptions sometimes conflicted with HR adviser aspirations to achieve 'better work and better working lives' (CIPD, 2018). Concurring with Francis et al (2014), HPWS can only improve what managers choose to measure and do not necessarily improve the life of the employee.

The moral conflict arising between PSE and improving working lives, versus managerial hegemony and unitarism, concurs with Honneth's (1982) critique of the weakness of Habermas communicative rationality arising from such tensions. That said, pluralist employment relations, in this context with the support of councillors, have not diminished, they have evolved. The cultural embeddedness of trade unionism and PSE have pushed back managerial unitarism to facilitate a more cooperative framework of new pluralism. It is within this framework that the existing partnership working on E&D matters could extend further into developing inclusive EV mechanisms for heterogeneous older workers. The inclusive approach to managing diversity may better suit older workers whose heterogeneity does not fit neatly into a standard employee archetype or forum based on one protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

In line with HPWS developments, divergent interests are accepted in the new pluralism of Greenwood and Van Buren (2016), whereas divergent values are not. Illustrating how external factors impact on the employment relationship framework, this fits with a context where there are shared interests regarding community, as well as the workplace. Divergent interests were recognised as enhancing decision-making by individual employees and trade unions, but less so by managers where the employee's view did not fit the management agenda. Again, suggesting the interrelatedness of the levels, continuing macro-level effects of austerity are unfavourable to new pluralism, as time constraints and financial limitations may force managers to take a harder performance driven approach. The pressures on HRM may draw HR practice closer to the "hollowed out" form of HPWS that Kaufman (2020) signals has less concern for organizational justice.

7.1.1.3 Older worker factors affecting EV

Of the older worker factors, the significance of heterogeneity in older workers is that their need, use and disadvantage regarding EV varies according to their differences. Micro-level factors such as role, education, personality and social group membership intersect to affect their capacity to overcome barriers, or take to advantage of EV. These factors, summarised in Figure 14 (part 3), mostly operate along a continuum from silence to voice, even where at first sight it might not appear so. For example, although manual workers are disadvantaged, skilled manual workers spend more time in the depot, so have greater access to computers and managers than their community-based colleagues, and as Dundon et al (2017) report, may have more influence than some clerical workers.

Of the enablers to EV, an office role, the confidence associated with age, extraversion, a long tenure, being difficult to replace and working in the main corporate buildings conferred an advantage, as did a supportive line manager. Older workers of long tenure were able to negotiate barriers, but equally, poor feedback imbued cynicism and a preference for silence. Older workers preferred face-to-face voice mechanisms, yet there was little evidence of differentiated HR practices to accommodate ageing as Kooij et al (2014) recommend. OB contributors such as Kooij et al (2014) are clear on the value of ongoing training for older employees, which could reduce the disadvantage manual workers experience, increase their confidence in using IT, and so facilitate their EV. The effectiveness of such training could be increased by considering the older worker's learning style (Sonderegger, 2016), and where institutional barriers such as limited access to the council IT systems are removed.

In this research the intersection of age with a manual role and an age-acquired disability or poor health was most disadvantageous to EV. Structural barriers such as class and negative perceptions of age and capability, combined with institutional factors such as poor access to computer systems, to reduce the propensity and capacity to speak out. Other factors having additive effects were a temporary contract, or poor relationship with line managers. The indirect effects of caring affected more females, and the reduced confidence resulting from physical and mental symptoms of the menopause were a barrier to EV for some women. Memory lapses, hot flushes and fatigue are recognised but temporary manifestations, yet sickness absence policies did not acknowledge the "embodied gendered reality" (Jack et al, 2019, p. 123) of this life-stage. Nevertheless, gender was less of an issue than in some settings, and the

embeddedness of E&D policy sustained low levels of overt direct gender-based age discrimination.

7.1.2 Contribution to knowledge: EV in an extending upper age range

The research also contributes to the scant knowledge of workers and their EV as they grow older from aged 52 up to 75 years, extending the work on workers over 65 years of age of Lain and Loretto (2016). In addition to environmental and organizational factors, the older employees' propensity to use EV was the product of their varied life experience and individual characteristics. In agreement with Marcus and Fritzsche (2015), an inclusive EV strategy accommodating their differences is preferable to policies using 'older' as a target group. As workers moved through the older worker category, their preferences and the way they used their EV changed, indicating a 'moveable feast' as far as providing an effective EV is concerned. Those currently aged over 65 years are atypical. Future employees will have to wait longer for their state pension and may be more financially dependent on their work income, which may exacerbate the tendency to remain silent if their employment is threatened.

Although the current older workers of over 65 years were mostly working through choice, in future more of this age group will be working out of financial necessity, underlining that the context for EV is not static. Age related health factors, such as Alzheimer's disease are likely to be an increasing feature of the workplace. Work in the early stages of such illnesses may be possible and advantageous to the employee, but will create barriers to EV unless a pro-active approach is taken by leaders, government and trade unions. As Blackham (2017) and Kirton and Greene (2016) identify, a coherent vision for the ageing society is required. Without this vision, inclusive organizational practices for EV will be undermined, as Kaufman (2020) identifies. Furthermore, as Wilkinson et al (2018) find, those who are currently marginalised will continue to go unheard.

Ensuring an equitable EV and procedural justice for older workers requires that managers, unions and HR functions consult with older workers and their representatives to codetermine measures of policy and practice. In addition, as Kaufman (2020) recommends, rather than rely on their professional ideology, which is increasingly subject to unitarization, HR should plan for macro-level changes, such as further increases in the state pension age. For central government, in place of a multitude of reactive policies, a clear strategy is needed for older workers and their EV, as they age

at the very least up to the state pension age, which for younger workers is 68 years (at the time of writing).

7.1.3 Contribution to knowledge: An additional tradition

The contribution to knowledge incorporates Orr and Vince's (2009) view that their traditions of local government culture are open to modification. Accordingly, an additional tradition of pluralist employment relations is suggested. Trade unions have a long-standing presence and their distinct relationship with councillors, managers and employees is as much a part of local government culture as Orr and Vince's other traditions, for example, of mayoralty or professionalism. The activities of trade unions have significance for other traditions, for example, in the negotiation of the processes and structures of management. Public sector unions have a unique role and tradition of community service, which contribute to the public sector ethos (PSE) of justice, fairness and loyalty (Hebson et al, 2003), and the EV of older union members who often reside in that community. As such, trade unions contribute to the distinctiveness of local government culture.

7.2 Contribution to synthesis

The multilevel and multi paradigmatic approach taken was a response to the call of established academics in the field to address the paucity of this type of research (Kaufman, 2015, 2020; Wilkinson et al, 2018; Wilkinson et al, 2020). The underlying premises and assumptions of the paradigms contributing to the three levels at which the EV of older workers was considered are sometimes conflicting and incommensurable. However, maintaining an overarching employment relations perspective reduced possible tensions between the paradigms to promote coherence, whilst simultaneously facilitating synergistic interpretation through their alternative perspectives of EV. Using the lens of employment relations built an understanding of what other paradigms could reasonably contribute and what they could not. For example, the low self-power perceptions of Morrison et al (2015) were used to consider age-acquired disability and the effects on EV of the regulatory reforms of local government pensions. Although OB is more concerned with individual forms of voice and interpersonal forces at work (Budd, 2020), the low self-power perceptions of Morrison et al (2015) had relevance. Considering the intersections with age, for example, of manual work and acquired disability, supplemented ER perspectives of power and EV. Additionally, the research expanded on Marcus and Fritzsche (2015) use of intersectionality theory to evaluate

their impacts on EV using intersectional analysis as a technique rather than as an approach.

Ultimately, the ER perspective was privileged because the outcomes of EV on the employment relationship were central to the research question. For example, an inclusive collective voice can empower older workers to expediate a fair and just hearing, which is a reasonable conclusion in a context where the legitimacy of trade unions and collective bargaining is accepted. Such insight would be absent if local government studies, HRM, OB or ER had been adopted in isolation.

The approach was embedded at every stage of the research, from the formulation of the research objectives, to the two-part literature review and the multi-phased data gathering, wherein the knowledge gained from each phase was used to inform the next. The data analysis technique of template analysis was framed by a priori themes based on the levels and central concepts, focusing the findings so that they could be considered in terms of the paradigms where such data usually reside. Additionally, the reflexivity required by critical theory both supported the research design and was supported by the iterative development of the template. The discipline of the process was useful to a less experienced researcher in building the thesis, encouraging reflexivity, and developing a holistic understanding of the EV of older local government workers.

7.3 Contribution to practice

To quote Lewin (1943), "there is nothing as practical as a good theory", and in this spirit, short reports of practical insights will be offered to the participating organizations (in more scope and detail than presented here). Such action is supported by Comstock (1982) in advocating that critical theory should result in practical measures to encourage social justice. Alvesson and Deetz (2011) add that critical research should offer practical insight to enable change and reduce repression. As a 'pracademic' researcher (Kaufman, 2020), experience of implementing policy in the research region will facilitate understanding of what might be acceptable and implementable. At the risk of presenting a wish list, more support for manual workers to use their EV is advocated, supported by training that has been piloted and consulted on with older workers, in addition to better access to existing IT systems. Auditing that such measures are taking place would demonstrate organizational commitment to procedural justice and to hearing their voice, which need not be difficult for HR to achieve. Promoting the value of manual work within the organization could reduce the perceptions of inferiority

experienced by some manual workers, so encouraging their participation in corporate EV events. This is consistent with Johnson and Duberley's (2003) assertion that critical researchers must facilitate self-understanding in participants, so that actors are able to reconsider their issues in a new light. Using case studies to raise awareness of their contributions as frontline workers alongside those of office workers, would reduce the 'us and them' culture, so improving morale. The ensuing shared understanding and mutual support can empower older workers as a group and consequently reduce the marginalisation of their EV.

This study confirmed the significance of recognition to older workers, and how listening to their EV provides meaning and identity, supporting the good mental health essential to a better working life. In agreement with Islam (2012) and Kaufman (2020), regarding older workers as a unique and human resource supports the employment relationship and EV, rather than the reified bundle of knowledge, skills and abilities which does not. Organizational values and HPWS cannot substitute for fair pay and conditions, highlighting the need for a powerful collective voice within a pluralist ER framework. For the trade unions, better communication of national research, such as that regarding the menopause, could reconnect older workers with their unions, in addition to the potential benefits to the older individuals concerned.

In this research, GMB and UNITE memberships were associated with a manual role and UNISON more so with office workers, so were sometimes a part of the divide. This might suit a management hegemony from a divide and conquer perspective. Promoting the ways unions support each other regarding age, may build stronger working relations among older office and manual grade union members. As discussed, most older workers in this research were Facebook and smartphone users, so a similar platform may cultivate an online union community for older workers. Whatever platforms are developed, they should be assessed by older workers before their implementation, in the same way as organizational interventions. Retired member forums may have a role to play in encouraging more interaction, as well as sharing the benefit of their experiences in making their EV heard. Their talents are currently underutilised and could be used in mentoring union representatives to support older workers, or in building stronger relationships between older union members and community groups representing age concerns. From a critical perspective, this would encourage discourses around age which are distinct from those of management.

Of the HR policies impacting on EV, most significant to the older worker EV are those concerning the growing number of working carers, to enable sharing of their issues and ideas. Age-related health conditions will become more prevalent as working life extends. An EV for such employees and their carers may be of considerable value, and may constitute an adjustment for disability under the Equality Act 2010. All the councils in the research sample had good practice that could be adapted for this purpose, for example Council A's work on building access to the intranet for manual workers and Council B's work with Macmillan. As HR, managerial and older participants pointed out, formal inter-council forums tend to be prone to prevarication, so informal mechanisms at a lower level may better facilitate the sharing of good practice regarding age, such as was evidenced by the peer review process. Additionally, the knowledge acquired from council sponsored community groups for older adults, as attended in gaining access to participants in this research, may transfer to supporting older council employees. HR also underutilised employee survey data by omitting to utilise the age categories in the analysis. From the perspective of older worker participants, what they thought would improve their EV was simply that managers should listen more. A simple recommendation for HR is to ensure that their contact details are up to date.

7.4 The research questions

Within the overarching interpreting framework of employment relations, which assumes that employees are less powerful than employers, the central research question asks if EV supports older workers as below:

> *In an ageing local government workforce, does employee voice support organizational justice and a better working life for older workers?*

The answer is it does so inconsistently. There were examples of exemplary practice, for example, the equality forum and the EV mechanisms for employees living with cancer in Council B provided just and effective two-way communication to support their needs, but manual workers with other age-related health issues were marginalised. Where EV was effective, it provided recognition, a sense of identity and reassurance to older workers of their worth. This supported employee wellbeing, job satisfaction and in turn a better working life. Organizational justice was facilitated by a culture largely and visibly supporting equality and diversity. On paper this exceeded legal compliance but was subject to the external constraints, as set out in Figure 14. Subordinate question one (Sq1) asks, '*Does the local government context support or suppress a fair and*

equitable employee voice for older workers.' As older workers acquired more of the voice promoters listed in part 3 of Figure 14, support for their EV increased.

Although the councils were legally compliant regarding employment rights, it was the collective voice of the union and the power afforded by collective bargaining that most effectively sustained the ER of older employees. However, unions experienced marginalisation, furthered by the promotion of unitarist direct EV mechanisms and a general narrative of union decline, even where membership numbers were increasing (although not yet to former levels). As facilities time is dependent on membership numbers and not density, less time to address age related issues was available. For example, older workers were often unaware of national union guidance that a TU representative might otherwise signpost. By developing alternative channels, such as a Facebook style platform, which the older participants tended to use, awareness of union campaigns could be improved. Social media presents an efficient means for trade unions to reach older workers via smart phones, even where the employee does not have access to computers. In this research, only one older participant did not own a smartphone.

Older participants regarded HR as the agents of management. In its aspiration to strategic relevance, HR had become less visible to employees, with employee portals and emails replacing the preferred face to face communications. HR policies were formed around shared organizational values, including those that shaped and controlled EV. These were associated less with organizational justice than with performance and achieving coherence within HPWS. Although new pluralism assumes that shared values are desirable as a basis for cooperation, the marginalisation of the unions suggests their use in this research was a unitarist intervention. Even so, HR ensured compliance with legislation, policies such as grievance procedures, and respect for the legitimacy of trade unions. That said, policy for older workers, including those at a strategic-level, was reactive and had developed piecemeal. HR was generally held by older workers to be less employee-centric than previously, in part fuelled by unresolved trust issues around employee surveys, and the lack of visibility discussed previously. The exception was equality and diversity related EV policy where practice often exceeded the regulatory requirement, although socio-cultural factors such as ageism sometimes reduced their effectiveness.

The second subordinate research question considers the nature of the barriers and enablers to EV for older workers, as below:

Subordinate question two (Sq2): How do micro-level factors, individual characteristics and organizational factors intersect to influence the employee voice of the heterogeneous older workers of local government?

As discussed in relation to Figure 14, there are numerous combinations of characteristics and factors that intersect to affect EV to various extents. It was the older manual worker with an acquired disability that was most disadvantaged and the older, managerial worker based in the main corporate building that was most likely to be heard. However, older office workers with a visible, long term disability also were heard by using skills they had gained through self-advocacy regarding their disability.

In terms of this research as a multilevel study, as illustrated in Figure 14, the conclusion is that no one level can explain EV, or its contribution to the quality of working life and justice for older workers. In terms of the ideal speech situation of Habermas (1971) there were factors acting both for and against achieving a consensus at every level. By considering how the levels of factors of Wilkinson et al (2018) combine, a synergistic and critical understanding of EV was formed as complex, multifaceted and subject to the interrelatedness of the levels, concurring with Alvesson & Deetz (2011). In agreement with Kaufman (2020), psychological factors cannot explain the totality of EV behaviour in an era of resource constraints, overstretched pension funding, domineering management discourses and new public management. Equally, the direct EV that is compatible with PSE, the shared goals of older employees and managers, and the implications of local residency, is relevant. A 'win' for an older employee might be a better service for citizens, and participants consistently wanted a direct voice, which cannot be ignored.

7.5 Limitations of the research and future directions.

As a lone researcher conducting a qualitative study, the sample size was limited by the time constraints of the PhD programme, so it is accepted that the conclusions are not as generalisable as a larger, quantitative study might be. In this research, the aim was to build a rich, thick picture of the EV of older workers, so that other councils might identify common elements, and so have use for the findings (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

The considerable volume of literature to be reviewed in undertaking a multi-level cross paradigmatic approach was quite challenging, but ultimately will be useful to writing papers based on the same data set. Spreading the sample of older workers more evenly across the organizations would have been preferable. However, obtaining a mix of roles

was the priority, and was manageable as an independent researcher relying on the goodwill of individuals. A further constraint emerged from anonymising the participants. In some cases, job titles would have been useful to the reader, but without this protection, the generous and frank contributions of the participants would have been compromised. Also, a further constraint was that there were few BAME individuals in the older worker category in the councils sampled, but younger BAME employees attended the observed equality event. Three BAME employees contributed to the age breakout group (10 members), but their views were less about EV than performance management. This will change and as younger employees age, a higher proportion of BAME employees will enter the older worker category. A recommendation of the research is therefore to review the effectiveness of EV mechanisms on a regular basis to ensure they remain inclusive and relevant to this heterogeneous demographic.

As regards future directions for research, there remains a large data set to explore, and further evaluation on the implications of pension regulations for older workers could be undertaken. Additionally, building on Mowbray's (2018) work, a study on the tension between NPM and PSE in managers, taking into consideration their length of tenure and background, may reveal a more nuanced picture of their dilemma and support a more authentic EV for this group. Prior to commencing the research, the intention was to explore EV according to the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, rather than focusing on older workers and their heterogeneity. Armed with the knowledge gained from the PhD process, more work on cohort membership and voice, building on the work of Snape and Redman (2003), would make an interesting comparative study, using intersectionality theory more extensively to consider the effect of other characteristics on EV.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, councils will be considering how best to work with employees who are shielding, many of whom will be older, and hearing their voices will be a challenge. This is not unlike the circumstance of the employees undergoing cancer treatment with whom Council B maintained effective two-way communication, which may warrant a practice-based comparative study. The TUC (2020) have issued guidance on the effects of COVID-19 on those with protected characteristics, but this included very little guidance regarding older workers. As the TUC point out, such circumstances can amplify existing inequalities, so is a fertile area for further research. Additionally, Habermas' (1984) theories on technical rationality have significance in a pandemic where just-in-time supply chains fail and lean

techniques are of less import than organizational resilience. The organizational memory of older workers who worked through previous times when resilience was more of a priority may be of value. Equally, the EV of a workforce who have lived through the regional recession associated with the miners' strikes of the early 1970s and 1984 may provide useful insight for meeting the current economic and social challenges associated with COVID-19.

Finally, in agreement with Budd (2020), in conversations with fellow business school researchers, employment relations as a field, was consistently conflated with HRM. Moreover, HR practitioners at CIPD branch meetings, associated EV with HR and OB research. Unlike ER, these fields have their roots in unitarism and a management perspective of EV related to high performance and strategic advantage through people. A concern is that employment relations as a field may decline, like the employee champion role, and with it an authentic interest in raising organizational justice for older workers through their EV. Promoting the benefits of the field in sustaining a dignified working life for older workers may be a worthy future direction for this researcher.

7.6 Reflection on research reflexivity

The research was prompted by a long-held interest in the experiences of older workers, who are underrepresented in organizational research (Taylor et al, 2016). As Richard and Sang (2016) identify, in the two local government organizations I had worked for, achieving equality and diversity outcomes was prioritised. However, on leaving in 2008 to work in the education sector, central government efficiency targets and austerity measures were beginning to affect the employment relationship. Older workers were retired to reduce workforce numbers, and as chapter 2 uncovers, financial constraints and the pressure to outsource services continued. The possibility of the employee voice of the growing numbers of older workers in local government emerging from this situation unscathed was unlikely. Were this experienced and diverse group able to influence decision making, to freely express their voice and be listened to without constraint or prejudice? The most important voice in the research was therefore to be that of the older worker. The objective was to gain insight into their perceptions, and so ascertain how EV might enable an improvement in their working lives. Consequently, the findings were to privilege organizational justice for older workers over organizational performance from a managerial perspective, although the possibility of both was not excluded.

On studying the philosophical possibilities that might support such a project, critical theory's general emancipatory leanings and Habermas's (1971) ideal speech situation, whereby a consensus is sought through rational, undistorted argument, were a good fit with the research question. However, being wholly critical of management was not the aim, and as Alvesson and Deetz (2000) advise, whilst challenging managerial assumptions the critical approach should also be relevant to organizational practitioners. Older workers were to be regarded as a heterogenous and diverse group, thus it was envisaged that some older workers would have a powerful, influential voice, whereas others would be marginalised. Critical theory is concerned with power asymmetry and the structures of decision making, so was a natural choice.

In relation to the philosophical positioning (Figure 8, section 4.1.1.2), the ontological view taken was of a noumenal reality, that is one existing independently of human cognition. In this case, for example, the policies and mechanisms of employee voice were viewed as external to the actors in the research. However, taking the same example, from empirical observation of trade unionists, managers and older workers, their interpretation and sense making was of EV as a phenomenon. Their meanings of employee voice varied because their prior experiences and world view had filtered their perceptions. What was taken as warranted knowledge about employee voice was therefore subjective and socially constructed. What employees regarded as the truth about EV was less about correspondence with fact and more about the consensus reached with their union, work group, family, or even their manager.

As Johnson and Duberley (2003, p.1283) suggest, this ontological and epistemological amalgamation is consistent with a Kantian position in that "external reality is a 'thing in itself', which remains unknowable". My own perspectives were similarly assumed as shaped and organised by the experiences, discourses and a priori theories, and importantly for this research, were assumptions formed during my local government employment (see section 4.2). For a researcher taking a Kantian position, being reflexive involves being actively aware of those elements that impact on the research and knowledge creation, whether they be social, political, theoretical or linguistic in their origins (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Cunliffe (2003, p.1000) explains that there are benefits to such reflexivity; "by unsettling established ontology and research practices, we can begin to construct different and richer understandings of our context-sensitive, complex, uncertain, and indeterminate social experience." Although I accepted that a theory neutral observational language was unlikely, and had considered

my own position and values from the onset as expected of a critical theorist, the full impact of my own philosophy only unfolded as the research progressed. Similarly, my understanding of critical theory deepened over time, and it is acknowledged that this continues to be an ongoing process of development.

As the research progressed, I realised that prior to the PhD, the discourses of HRM had affected both my perceptions of management and capacity for critical reflection. Concepts such as employee engagement, with EV as a significant antecedent in most interpretations (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009), are largely presented as a 'win-win' situation for the employer and employee in HR literature. How could this happy outcome be exploitative or oppressive of the employee? My outlook was consistent with Budd's (2020) critique of HR assumptions, that poor policy rather than the employment relationship was the problem for EV. However, having lived through the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, I was aware of how politics affected the rationality of decision making. Additionally, at the micro-level, I had observed individual managers who were both oppressive to their subordinates and disinclined to listen. Through the lens of critical theory, I was given the tools to organize my thinking and analyse the oppression occurring at the three levels of Wilkinson et al (2018). As Alvesson and Deetz (2011) explain, critical studies consider wider oppressive influences, such as historical and economic factors. However, recognising those factors occurring at a local level is essential to understanding the phenomenon in its local context, and so was significant to the findings.

Synthesis in management research within the objective realism and epistemological subjectivism of critical theory required reflexivity at an epistemic level. According to Johnson and Duberley (2003, p.1289), epistemic reflexivity functions to "negate the world as an objectively accessible social reality and to denaturalise hegemonic accounts by exposing their modes of social organization and reproduction". As the research progressed, this was most apparent in the rise of unitarist direct EV mechanisms. Furthermore, organizational values were used to perpetuate and normalise the management discourse associated with modernisation and professionalism. Before taking a critical approach, I did not consider how the ongoing narrative of crisis in local government explained by Orr and Vince (2009) might constitute a form of control. As Alvesson and Deetz (2005) suggest, such narratives reduced the critical reflection of employees, alongside my own.

Gradually, the wider oppressive influences became clearer, but this was not a linear progression. For example, the plight of the manual worker might be attributed more to class than job-type, and could have moved the study towards labour process theory. Another form of reflexivity arose to facilitate the solution to the conundrum. Haynes (2012) suggestion to consider emotional reflexivity, that is of my own emotional attachment to the research, exposed that I had become over invested in the plight of manual workers. This was because of my enduring concern for the life chances of school friends who were expected to leave their education to work in mining. There were older participants occupying clerical positions who could be classified as working class and whose voices I was in danger of deprivileging, as Spence (2017) cautions against. These participants had different perspectives of EV, suggesting that some aspect of their role was more significant than class. Through the lens of critical theory, central government policy for older workers, specifically the disproportionate effect of pension regulations on manual workers, was more significant to EV than the discomfort manual workers experienced because of their appearance. As concluded in chapter 4, the epistemological position of critical theory is that knowledge is valid only where a democratic agreement is reached regarding its legitimacy (Gill & Johnson, 2010). For EV, it would be unlikely that a manual worker in ill-health could contribute an EV to such an agreement, where the fear of losing their job and relying on low levels of benefits threatens. The research found that EV in this setting can be shaped by the management agenda rather than emerging from an ideal speech situation, so the knowledge which emerges is similarly distorted, in agreement with Gill & Johnson (2010).

For my own philosophy, remaining vigilant to a priori assumptions, values, political position and life experiences became almost overwhelming and contributed to the PhD menace of the 'imposter syndrome'. Acknowledging all my political, social, cultural, etc. biases to an adequate level appeared as an insurmountable task. Balance was restored through minding Haynes (2012) caution against 'navel gazing', that is focusing the research too heavily on the researcher, rather than on generating thoughtful, insightful and interesting research. Epistemic reflexivity 'reframes the management researcher's self-knowledge' (Johnson & Duberley, 2003, p.1291). However, situating reflexivity in relation to the integrity, approach and possibilities for the research was a reassurance that reflexivity, although important, is not 'the research' in itself. Johnson an Duberley (2003) thoughts on how epistemic reflexivity supports the emergence of the researcher's ethical priorities were also helpful, for example, in promoting the

discourse of older workers concerning the quality of their work and the value of 'place' and community, that ran counter to the management discourse of financial performance and efficiency. It was a matter of ethical priority to produce recommendations to empower these older workers in some way, and to make these recommendations available to those in a position to facilitate change, and thereby move EV closer to Habermas's ideal speech situation. I do not have the power or resources to change the world through critical theory, but I can encourage an incremental change to improve the working life of older workers in the research.

Although I judged critical theory to be the best way of answering this research question, and I would choose it again, I accept that it is not the only way of considering the world, for example, medical research often necessitates a more positivist approach. That said, having researched in this way, I am more likely to question, for example, whether a particular piece of medical research favours a particular sponsor or group, and assess the underlying assumptions of the paradigm and researcher from which such research emerges. I have also accepted how conforming to the conventions of a field or an academic body might constrain epistemic reflexivity, for example in taking Guba and Lincolns (1994) perspective of validity, or by adopting a particular thesis format. It may be a cliché to say that critical theory and its epistemic reflexivity have taken me on a journey, but it is indeed the case; I am more aware of oppression and more inclined to point it out (perhaps it is the confidence that comes with age!). Rather than dwell on the personal limitations uncovered by critical theory, I recognise the development of my understanding. I draw comfort from Alvesson and Deetz (2011) discussion of interviews in critical studies as I was naturally aware of language games and quite prepared for the interviewee as a 'politically conscious actor'. I remain optimistic, like Habermas, and continue to see the power of a rational argument in supporting the possibility of change.

References

Aaltio, I., Salminen, H. M. & Koponen, S. (2014). Ageing employees and human resource management – evidence of gender-sensitivity. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *33*(2), 160-176. https://doi.org/10.1108/edi-10-2011-0076

Ackers, P. (2010). An industrial relations perspective on employee participation. In Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P.J., Marchington, M. & Lewin, D. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of employee participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Ackers, P. (2014). Rethinking the employment relationship: a neo-pluralist critique of British industrial relations orthodoxy. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management: Ideas at Work, 25*(18), 2608–2625. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.667429

Ackers, P. (2015). Trade unions as professional associations. In Johnson, S. & Ackers, P. (Eds.). *Finding a voice at work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Adler, P., Forbes, L. & Willmott, H. (2007). Critical Management Studies. *Academy of Management Annals*, *1*, 119-179. https://doi.org/10.5465/078559808

Alvesson, M. & Ashcraft, K.L. (2009). Critical Management and Organization Research. In Buchanan, D.A. & Bryman, A., (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods.* (pp 61-75). London: SAGE.

Alvesson, M. & Deetz, S.A. (2000). *Doing Critical Management Research*, London: Sage

Alvesson, M. & Deetz, S.A. (2005). Critical theory and postmodernism. In Grey, C. & Wilmott, H (Eds.) *Critical management studies: A reader*: Oxford: Oxford University Press

Alvesson, M. & Deetz, S.A. (2011). *Doing Critical Management Research,* London: Sage

Alvesson, M. & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.

Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. London: Sage Publications.

Alvesson, M. & Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE.

Alvesson, M. & Willmott, H. (2002). Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual. *Journal of Management Studies, 39*(5), 619–644. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00305

Alzheimer's Society. (2016). *Living with dementia: Employment* [leaflet]: Alzheimer's Society. Retrieved from https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/Employment.pdf

Amin-Smith, M., Choo, M., Phillips, D., Glover, G., Lucas, L., Goldsworthy, J. & Jones, N. (2017). *The local vantage: how views of local government finance vary across councils*, London: The Institute for Fiscal Studies retrieved from https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/comms/R131.pdf

Andrews, E. (2018). *Carillion collapse highlights the need to change the way we manage public services*, London: The Institute for Government. Retrieved from https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/carillion-collapse-highlights-need-change-way-we-manage-public-services

Andrews, R. & Ashworth, R. (2015). Representation and Inclusion in Public Organizations: Evidence from the U.K., *Civil Service*, *75*(2), 279. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12308

Appannah, A. & Biggs, S. (2015). Age-Friendly Organizations: The Role of Organizational Culture and the Participation of Older Workers. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *29* (1), 37-51, https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2014.993943

Ardill, J. (1984, March 29). Franchise 'erosion' fear unites marchers. *The Guardian,* p. 26

Austin, A. & Heyes, J. (2020). *Supporting working carers: How employees and employers can benefit.* London: CIPD. Retrieved from http://circle.group.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/8008-Supporting-working-carers_WEB-1.pdf

Bach, S. (2016). Deprivileging the public sector workforce: Austerity, fragmentation and service withdrawal in Britain. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 27*(1), 11-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304615627950

Bach, S., & Bordogna, L. (2011). Varieties of new public management or alternative models? The reform of public service employment relations in industrialized democracies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *22(*11), 2281–2294. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.584391

Bach, S. & Bordogna, L. (2013). Reframing public service employment relations: The impact of economic crisis and the new EU economic governance. *The European Journal of Industrial Relations, 19*(4), 279-294. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959680113505031

Bach, S. & Bordogna, L. (2016). The transformation of public service employment relations? Emerging from the crisis. In Bach, S. & Bordogna, L. (Eds.). *Public Service Management and Employment Relations in Europe: Emerging from the Crisis.* (pp. 1-28). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315724096

Bach, S. & Stroleny, A. (2014). Restructuring UK local government employment relations: Pay determination and employee participation in tough times. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 20*(3), 343-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258914535546

Bacon, N. & Hoque, K. (2015). The influence of trade union Disability Champions on employer disability policy and practice. *Human Resource Management Journal, 25*(2), 233–249. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12060

Bains, M. (1972). *The new local authorities: management and structure [The Bains Report]*, London: HMSO

Bal, P.M. & Lange, A.H. (2015). From flexibility human resource management to employee engagement and perceived job performance across the lifespan: A multisample study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 88*, 126-154._https://doi.org/10.1111/JOOP.12082

Balnave, N. Barnes, A. MacMillan, C. & Thornthwaite, L. (2014). E-voice: how network and media technologies are shaping employee voice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Barney, J. & Wright, P. (1998.). On Becoming a Strategic Partner: The Role of Human Resources in Gaining Competitive Advantage. *Human Resource Management, 37*(1), 31–46. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-050X(199821)37:13.0.CO;2-W

Barchiesi, F. (2014) Conflict, Order and Change. In Wilkinson, A., Wood, G., & Deeg, R. (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of employment relations: comparative employment systems*. Oxford University Press.

Barry, M. & Wilkinson, A. (2016). Pro-Social or Pro-Management: A Critique of the Conception of Employee Voice as a Pro-Social Behaviour within Organizational Behaviour. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *54*(2), 261-284. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12114

Bashshur, M. & Oc, B. (2015). When Voice Matters: A Multilevel Review of the Impact of Voice in Organizations, *Journal of Management*, *41* (5), 1530-1554. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314558302

Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo. (*2nd ed.), London: Sage.

Beck, V., Brewis, J. & Davies, A. (2019). Women's experiences of menopause at work and performance management. *Organization*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419883386

Bell, E. & Bryman, A. (2007). The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis, *British Journal of Management*, *18*(1): 63-77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00487.x

Bell, M.P., Ozbilgin, M.F., Beauregard, A. & Surgevil, O. (2011). Voice, Silence and Diversity in 21st Century Organizations: Strategies for Inclusion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Employees, *Human Resource Management, January–February 2011, 50* (1),131 – 146. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00487.x

Bennett, T. (2010). Employee voice initiatives in the public sector: views from the workplace. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 23*(5), 444–455. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513551011058475

Beszter, P., Ackers, P. & Hislop, D. (2015). Understanding continuity in public sector HRM through neo-institutional theory: why national collective bargaining has survived in English local government. *Human Resource Management Journal, 25*(3), 364–381. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12051

Bevir, M., & Rhodes, R. (2003). *Interpreting British Governance*. London: Routledge

Bhaskar, R. (2008). *A realist theory of science* (Rev. ed.). London: Routledge.

Bintliff, E. (2011, January 11). BBC guilty of age discrimination, *Financial Times*. Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/6121407c-1d8a-11e0-a163-00144feab49a

Blackham, A. (2016). Reflexive change? A quantitative review of the impact of the Equality Act 2010 on age equality measures in organizations. *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 16(2-3), 122–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229116655650

Blackham, A. (2017). Addressing the ageing workforce: a critical examination of legal policy objectives and values in the United Kingdom. *Ageing & Society, 37*(7), 1362–1393. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X16000313

Blumer, H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review, 9*(1), 3–10. https://doi.org/10.2307/2088165

Blyton, P. & Turnbull, P. (2004). *The dynamics of employee relations, Management, work and organizations*. (3rd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boehm, S., Kunze, F. & Bruch, H. (2014). Spotlight on Age-Diversity Climate: The Impact of Age-Inclusive HR Practices on Firm-Level Outcomes. *Personnel Psychology, 67*(3), 667–704. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1562678354/

Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinction a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.

Boxall, P. (2012). High-performance work systems: what, why, how and for whom? *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 50*(2), 169–186. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-7941.2011.00012.x

Boxall, P. (2014). The future of employment relations from the perspective of human resource management. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *56*(4), 578-593. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185614527980

Boxall, P. & Macky, K. (2014). High- involvement work processes: work intensification and employee well-being. *Work, Employment and Society, 28*(6), 963–984. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017013512714

Boxall, P. & Purcell, J. (2010). An HRM perspective on employee participation. In Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P., Marchington, M. and Lewin, D (2010) *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Boys, J. (2019). *MEGATRENDS Ageing gracefully: the opportunities of an older workforce*, London: CIPD retrieved from https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/megatrends-ageing-gracefully-the-opportunities-of-an-older-workforce-1_tcm18-64897.pdf

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bridgen, P. & Meyer, T. (2013). Fair Cuts? The Impact of British Public Service Pension Reform on Workers in the Main Occupations. *Social Policy and Society, 12*(1), 105–122. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746412000541

Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). *Inter Views: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Brinsfield, C.T. (2014). Employee voice and silence in organizational behaviour. In: Wilkinson, A, Donaghey, J, Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 114–132

Brooks, J., McCluskey, S., Turley, E. & King, N. (2015). The Utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*(2), 202–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.955224

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bryson, A. (2008). Union Free-riding in Britain and New Zealand. *Journal of Industrial Relations, 50*(1), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185607085692

Bryson, A., Willman, P., Gomez, R. & Kretschmer, T. (2013). The Comparative Advantage of Non-Union Voice in Britain, 1980–2004. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, *52*(Supp. 1), 194–220. https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12001

Bryson, A., Freeman, R., Gomez, R. & Willman, P. (2017). The Twin Track Model of Employee Voice: An Anglo-American Perspective on Union Decline and the Rise of Alternative Forms of Voice. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/2062079015/

Budd, J. (2004). *Employment with a Human Face: Balancing Efficiency, Equity and Voice*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

Budd, J.W. (2005). *Labor Relations: Striking a Balance*. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin

Budd, J. (2014). The future of employee voice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Budd, J.W. (2020). The psychologization of employment relations, alternative models of the employment relationship, and the OB turn. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *30*(1).73–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12274

Budd, J.W. & Bhave, D. (2008). Values, Ideologies, and Frames of Reference in Industrial Relations. In Blyton, P. Bacon, N., Fiorito, J. & Heery, E. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Industrial Relations.*: London. Sage

Budd, J.W., Gollan, P. & Wilkinson A. (2010). New Approaches to Employee Voice and Participation in Organizations, *Human Relations, 63*(3), 303-310. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726709348938

Burris, E., Rockmann, K. & Kimmons, Y. (2017). The Value of Voice to Managers: Employee Identification and the Content of Voice. *Academy of Management Journal, 60*(6), 2099–2125. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0320

Burt, E. (2017, 18 December). Government may scrap Working Time Regulations, reports claim, *People Management Magazine.* Retrieved from http://www2.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2017/12/18/government-may-scrap-working-time-regulations-reports-claim.aspx

Cabinet Office. (2019). *Public-sector trade union facility time data*, Statistical dataset. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/public-sector-trade-union-facility-time-data

Carbado, D., Crenshaw, K., Mays, V. & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality. *Du Bois Review, 10*(2), 303-312. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X13000349

Carmichael F., Hulme C., Porcellato L., Ingham B., Prashar A. (2011). *Ageism and Age Discrimination: The Experiences and Perceptions of Older Employees*. In Parry E., Tyson S. (Eds.). Managing an Age-Diverse Workforce. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230299115_8

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2015). *Diversity in the workplace: an overview*. Factsheet, London: CIPD

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2018). *New Profession Map*. Retrieved from https://peopleprofession.cipd.org/profession-map

Clarke, A. (1987). *The rise and fall of the socialist republic.* Sheffield: Sheaf Publishing

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2018). Using thematic analysis in counselling and psychotherapy research: A critical reflection. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 18*(2), 107–110. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12165

Clarke, N., Willis, M., Barnes, J., Caddick, N., Cromby, J., Mcdermott, H. & Wiltshire, G. (2015). Analytical Pluralism. In Qualitative Research: A Meta-Study. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*(2), 182–201. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.948980

Cochrane, A. (2016). Thinking about the 'Local' of Local Government: A Brief History of Invention and Reinvention. *Local Government Studies*, 42(6), 907-915. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2016.1228530

Coffey, A., Holbrook, B. & Atkinson, P. (1996). Qualitative Data Analysis: Technologies and Representations, *Sociological Research Online*, 2. Retrieved from www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/1/4.html

Coffey, D. & Thornley, C. (2014). Shock, awe and continuity: Mrs Thatcher's legacy for the public sector. *Industrial Relations Journal, 45*(3), 195-213. https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12050

Cole, E. (2009). Intersectionality and Research in Psychology. *American Psychologist, 64*(3), 170–180. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014564

Colquitt, R. & Rodell, J. (2011). Justice, trust, and trustworthiness: a longitudinal analysis integrating three theoretical perspectives. Academy of Management Journal, 54(6), 1183–1206. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.0572

Comstock, D.E. (1982). A method for critical research. In E. Bredo and W. Feinburg (eds.). *Knowledge and values in educational research*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Conley, H., & Page, M. (2018). The Good, the Not So Good and the Ugly: Gender Equality, Equal Pay and Austerity in English Local Government. *Work, Employment and Society, 32*(4), 789–805. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018768207

Conway, E., Monks, K., Fu, N., Alfes, K. & Bailey, K. (2018). Reimagining alienation within a relational framework: evidence from the public sector in Ireland and the UK. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 1–22.* https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1460859

Cook, H, Mackenzie, R. & Forde, C. (2016). HRM and Performance: The vulnerability of soft HRM practices during recession and retrenchment. *Human Resource Management Journal,* 26 (4). pp. 557-571. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12122

Corley, K.G. & Gioia, D.A. (2011). Building theory about theory building: what constitutes a theoretical contribution? *The Academy of Management Review, 36*(1), 12–32. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.55662499

Cox, A., Marchington, M. & Suter, J. (2009). Employee involvement and participation: Developing the concept of institutional embeddedness using WERS2004. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 20*(10), 2150-2168. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190903178104

Cox, A., Zagelmeyer, S. & Marchington, M. (2006). Embedding employee involvement and participation at work. *Human Resource Management Journal, 16*(3), 250-267. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2006.00017.x

Creed, W. E. D. (2003). Voice lessons: Tempered radicalism and the use of voice and silence. *Journal of Management Studies, 40*(6), 1503–1536. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00389

Creswell, J. & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches,* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

Cridland, J. (2017). *Independent Review of the State Pension Age: Interim Report Smoothing the Transition, Final Report*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611460/independent-review-of-the-state-pension-age-smoothing-the-transition.pdf

Cullinane, N. & Donaghey, J. (2014). Employee Silence. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Cullinane, N. & Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews: IJMR, 8*(2), 113–129. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2006.00123.x

Cullinane, N. & Dundon, T. (2014). Unitarism and employer resistance to trade unionism. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(18), 2573-2590. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.667428

Cumberland, D., Alagaraja, M., Shuck, B. & Kerrick, S. (2018). Organizational Social Capital: Ties Between HRD, Employee Voice, and CEOs. *Human Resource Development Review*, *17*(2), 199–221. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318772488

Cunliffe, A. (2003). Reflexive Inquiry in Organizational Research: Questions and Possibilities. *Human Relations* (New York), 56(8), 983–1003. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267030568004

Cunliffe, A. L. (2011). Crafting qualitative research: Morgan and Smircich 30 Years On. *Organizational Research Methods*, *14*(4), 647–673. http://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110373658

Dabirian, Kietzmann, & Diba. (2017). A great place to work!? Understanding crowdsourced employer branding. *Business Horizons*, *60*(2), 197-205. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.11.005

Delanoë, D., Hajri, S., Bachelot, A., Mahfoudh Draoui, D., Hassoun, D., Marsicano, E., & Ringa, V. (2012). Class, gender and culture in the experience of menopause. A comparative survey in Tunisia and France. *Social Science & Medicine, 75*(2), 401–409. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.02.051

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). California: SAGE.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. (2019). *Trade Union Membership, 2018.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/trade-union-statistics-2018

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2013). *The 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS)*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2011-workplace-employment-relations-study-wers

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2015). *2010 to 2015 government policy: labour market reform*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-labour-market-reform/2010-to-2015-government-policy-labour-market-reform

Detert, J. & Burris, E. (2007). Leadership Behaviour and Employee Voice: Is the Door Really Open? *The Academy of Management Journal, 50*(4), 869–884. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.26279183

Detert, J. & Edmondson, A. (2011). Implicit voice theories: taken-for-granted rules of self-censorship at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 54*(3), 461-488. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2011.61967925

Dibben, P. & James (2007). Is 'Modern' Necessarily Better? In Dibben, P., James, P., Roper, I. & Wood, G. (Eds.). *Modernising work in public services: Redefining roles and relationships in Britain's changing workplace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dibben, P. Klerk, G. & Wood, G. (2011). *Employment Relations: A Critical and International Approach*. London: CIPD

Döbrich, C., Wollersheim, J., Welpe, I.,M. & Spörrle, M. (2014). Debiasing age discrimination in HR decisions. *Int. J. of Human Resources Development and Management, 14* (4), 219–241. https://doi:10.1504/IJHRDM.2014.069352

Donaghey, J., Cullinane, N. Dundon, T. & Wilkinson, A. (2011). Reconceptualising employee silence: Problems and prognosis. *Work, Employment and Society, 25*(1), 51-67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017010389239

Drury, C. (2020, June 19). Why weren't we told? Anger in Yorkshire town at centre of coronavirus outbreak kept secret by council. *Independent.* Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-yorkshire-cleckheaton-outbreak-meat-packing-plant-factory-a9576396.html

Duberley, J., Johnson, P. & Cassell, C. (2012). Philosophies underpinning qualitative research. In Symon, G., & Cassell, C. (Eds.). *Qualitative organizational research core methods and current challenges*. London: SAGE.

Dundon, T. & Rafferty, A. (2018). The (potential) demise of HRM? *Human Resource Management Journal, 28*(3), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.1219

Dundon, T, Wilkinson A., Marchington M. & Ackers P. (2004a). Patterns of Employee Voice: Case Studies from the UK and Republic of Ireland. *Journal of Industrial Relations, 46*(3):298–322. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-1856.2004.00143.x

Dundon, T., Wilkinson A., Marchington M. & Ackers P. (2004b). The Meanings and Purpose of Employee Voice. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 15*(6):1149–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190410001677359

Dundon, T., Martinez L., M., Howcroft, D., Hughes, E., Keizer, A. & Walden, R. (2017). *Power dynamics in work and employment relationships: the capacity for employee influence*: *Research Report*, London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Retrieved from www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/job-quality-value-creation/power-employee-influence

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P.R. (2015). *Management and Business Research* (5th ed.). London: Sage

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., Jackson, P. & Jaspersen, L. (2018). *Management & business research* (6th ed.). London: SAGE.

Elcock, H. (1996). Local Government. In Farnham, D. and Horton, S. (Eds.) *Managing the new public services*. Chippenham: Macmillan

Eramo, L. (2017). Mending the generation gap. *Journal of AHIMA, 88*(9), 26–29. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1929034950/

Eyerman, R. & Shipway, D. (1981). Habermas on work and culture. *Theory and Society*, *10(*4), 547–566. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00182158

Farnham, D. (2015). *The changing faces of employment relations; global, comparative and theoretical perspectives*. London: Palgrave

Farnham, D. (2015). *Human Resource Management in Context: Insights, Strategy and Solutions* (4th ed.). London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Farnham, D. & Giles, L. (1996). People Management and Employment Relations. In

Farnham, D. & Horton, S. (1996). *Managing the new public services* (Eds.). Chippenham: Macmillan

Fasang, A., Aisenbrey, S. & Schömann, K. (2013). Women's Retirement Income in Germany and Britain. *European Sociological Review, 29*(5), 968–980. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcs075

Flynn, M. (2014). *Representing an ageing workforce: Challenges and opportunities for trade unions.* London: TUC

Flynn, M., Upchurch, M., Muller-Camen, M., Schroeder, H., Lee, M., Sargent, L., … Zikic, J. (2013). Trade union responses to ageing workforces in the UK and Germany. *Human Relations, 66*(1), 45–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712464801

Flynn, N., Leach, S. & Vielba, C.(1985*). Abolition or reform? The Metropolitan Counties and the GLC.* London: Allen & Unwin.

Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (2005). The Interview. From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (3rd ed.). London: Sage

Forester, J. (2013). On the theory and practice of critical pragmatism: Deliberative practice and creative negotiations. *Planning Theory*, *12*(1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095212448750

Forester, J. (1993). *Critical Theory, Public Policy and Planning Practice*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press

Fox, A. (1966). "Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations," *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations Research Papers 3*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Francis, H., Ramdhony, A., Reddington, M. & Staines, H. (2013). Opening spaces for conversational practice: a conduit for effective engagement strategies and productive

working arrangements. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*(14), 2713–2740. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.781530

Francis, H., Parkes, C., & Reddington, M. (2014). E-HR and international HRM: a critical perspective on the discursive framing of e-HR. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(10), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.870309

Fredman, S. (2011). The Public Sector Equality Duty. *Industrial Law Journal, 40*(4), 405–427. https://doi.org/10.1093/indlaw/dwr019

Freeman, R.B. & Medoff, J. (1984). *What Do Unions Do*? New York: Basic Books

Freeman, R. (2005). What Do Unions Do? - The 2004 M-Brane Stringtwister Edition., *Journal of Labor Research*, *26*(4), 641-668. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-005-1003-7

French, J.R.E, Jr., & Raven, B.H. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150-167). Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.

Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and Method (G. Barden and J. Cumming. Trans*). Berkley: University of California Press

Gall, G. (2004). British employer resistance to trade union recognition. *Human Resource Management Journal, 14*(2), 36–53. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2004.tb00118.x

Gennard, J., Judge, G., Bennett, T. & Saundry, R. (2016). *Managing employment relations* (6th ed.). London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Gill, J. & Johnson, P. (2010). *Research methods for manager*s (4th ed.). London: SAGE

Gill, C. & Meyer, D. (2013). Union presence, employee relations and high-performance work practices. *Personnel Review, 42*(5), 508–528. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-07-2011-0117

Gill-Mclure, W. (2018). Adaptation, evolution and survival? The political economy of Whitleyism and public service industrial relations in the U.K. 1917-present. *Labor History*, *59*(1), 15–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2017.1375579

Gill-McLure, W. (2014). The politics of managerial reform in UK local government: A study of control, conflict and resistance 1880s to present. *Labor History*, *55*(3), 365–388 https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2014.913417

Gill-Mclure, W. & Thörnqvist, C. (2018). Reconstructing resistance and renewal in public service unionism in the twenty-first century: lessons from a century of war and peace. *Labor History, 59*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2017.1375572

Glanzberg, M. "Truth", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (winter 2016 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/truth/

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter.

GMB. (n.d.). *GMB union guide: Women's Health & Safety*. Retrieved from https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/HS_women.pdf

GMB. (2018). *About retired life members*. Retrieved from http://www.gmb.org.uk/about/retired-life-members

Golden-Biddle, K. & Locke, K.D. (1997). *Composing Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Gollan, P. & Xu, Y. (2015). Re-engagement with the employee participation debate: Beyond the case of contested and captured terrain. *Work, Employment & Society*, *29*(2), NP1-NP13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014522722

Gray, D.E. (2017). *Doing Research in the Business World*. London: Sage

Greenberg, J. (1990). Organizational Justice: Yesterday, Today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management, 16*(2), 399–432. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639001600208

Greene, A. (2015). Voice and workforce diversity. In Johnson, S. & Ackers, P. (2015). *Finding a voice at work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Greene, A. & Kirton, G. (2011). Diversity management meets downsizing: the case of a government department. *Employee Relations., 33*(1), 22–39. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425451111091636

Greenwood, M. & Van Buren, H. (2017). Ideology in HRM Scholarship: Interrogating the Ideological Performativity of "New Unitarism.", *Journal of Business Ethics*, *142*(4), 663–678. https://doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3084-z

Grey, C. & Mitev, N. (1995). Management education: a polemic, *Management Learning, 26*(1), 73-90. https://doi.org/10.1177/135050769502600105

Griffiths, A., MacLennan, S. & Hassard, J. (2013). Menopause and work: An electronic survey of employees' attitudes in the UK. *Maturitas*, *76*(2), 155–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2013.07.005

Grimshaw, D., Johnson, M., Marino, S. & Rubery, J. (2017). Towards more disorganised decentralisation? Collective bargaining in the public sector under pay restraint. *Industrial Relations Journal, 48*(1), 22-41. https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12166

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y. (2005). Controversies, Contradictions, Confluences. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Guest, D. (1999). Human Resource Management: The Workers Verdict, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *9* (3), 5-25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.1999.tb00200.x

Guest, D. (2011). Human resource management and performance: Still searching for some answers. (Report). *Human Resource Management Journal, 21*(1), 3. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2010.00164.x

Guest, D.E. (2015). Voice and Employee Engagement. In Johnson, S. & Ackers, P. (2015). Finding a voice at work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Guillaume, Y., Dawson, J., Woods, S., Sacramento, C. & West, M. (2013). Getting diversity at work to work: What we know and what we still don't know. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 86*(2), 123–141. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12009

Guillaume, C. & Kirton, G. (2020). Challenges and pitfalls for workplace unionism in a restructured public service. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 41*(1), 212–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X17697377

Habermas, J. (1971/2001). Reflections on the linguistic foundations of sociology: The Christian Gauss Lectures (Princeton University, February-March 1971). In Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction, (B. Fultner trans.)*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. 1–103. [German, 1984b, chap. 1]

Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1*. Boston: Beacon Press

Habermas, J. (1990). A review of Gadamer's Truth and Method (F.R. Dallmayr and T. McCarthy, Trans.). In Ormiston, G.L. and Schrift, A. D. (Eds), *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, p.213-244. Albany, N.Y: SUNY Press.

Hall, M. & Purcell, J. (2012). *Consultation at work: regulation and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hanlon, G. (2018). The First Neo-Liberal Science: Management and Neo-Liberalism. Sociology (Oxford), 52(2), 298–315. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038516655260

Hardy, C., Griffiths, A. & Hunter, M. (2017). What do working menopausal women want? A qualitative investigation into women's perspectives on employer and line manager support. *Maturitas*, *101*, 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2017.04.011

Harley, B. (2014). High performance work systems and employee voice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Harris, L. (2007). The changing nature of the HR function in UK local government and its role as "employee champion." *Employee Relations, 30*(1), 34–47. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425450810835400

Harris, T., Hodge, L. & Phillips, D. (2019). *English local government funding: trends and challenges in 2019 and beyond*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Retrieved from https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14563

Hastings, A., Bailey, N., Bramley, G. & Gannon, M. (2017). Austerity urbanism in England: The "regressive redistribution" of local government services and the impact on the poor and marginalised. *Environment and Planning*., *49*(9), 2007–2024. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x17714797

Hastings, A., Bailey, N., Gannon, M., Besemer, K. & Bramley, G. (2015). Coping with the Cuts? The Management of the Worst Financial Settlement in Living Memory. *Local Government Studies, 41*(4), 601–621. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2015.1036987

Hauff, S., Alewell, D. & Hansen, N.K. (2014). 'HRM systems between control and commitment: occurrence, characteristics and effects on HRM outcomes and firm performance'. *Human Resource Management Journal, 24*(4), 424–441. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12054

Hay, C. (2009). The Winter of Discontent Thirty Years On. *Political Quarterly, 80*(4), 545-552. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.2009.02052.x

Haynes, K. (2012). Reflexivity in qualitative research. In Symon, G. and Cassell, C. (Eds.) *Qualitative Organizational Research.* London: Sage

Hebson, G., Grimshaw, D. & Marchington, M. (2003). PPPs and the Changing Public Sector Ethos: Case-Study Evidence from the Health and Local Authority Sectors. *Work, Employment & Society*, *17*(3), 481–501. https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170030173005

Heery, E. (2015). 'Frames of reference and worker participation'. In S. Johnstone & P. Ackers (eds), *Finding a Voice at Work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations*, pp. 21–43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heffernan, M. & Dundon, T. (2016). Cross-level effects of high-performance work systems (HPWS) and employee well-being: the mediating effect of organizational justice. *Human Resource Management Journal, 26*(2), 211–231. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12095

Hesse, M. (1978*). Habermas' Consensus Theory of Truth*. PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association, 1978, 373-396. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/192479

Hickland, E., Cullinane, N., Dobbins, T., Dundon, T. & Donaghey, J. (2020). Employer silencing in a context of voice regulations: Case studies of non-compliance. *Human Resource Management Journal, 30(1),* 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12285

Hirschman, A., O. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press

Hocking, C. (2017). Occupational justice as social justice: The moral claim for inclusion. *Journal of Occupational Science, 24*(1), 29–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2017.1294016

Holgate, J. (2015). Community organising in the UK: A "new" approach for trade unions? *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 36*(3), 431–455. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X13511275

Holland, P. (2014). Employers and voice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, U SA: Edward Elgar

Holland, P., Cooper, B. & Hecker, R. (2016). Use of social media at work: a new form of employee voice? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management: The Impact of Technology on Work in the 21st Century: Exploring the Smart and Dark Side, 27*(21), 2621–2634. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1227867

Holland, P., Cooper, B. & Sheehan, C. (2017). Employee Voice, Supervisor Support, and Engagement: The Mediating Role of Trust. (Report). *Human Resource Management (Wiley)*, *56(*6), 915–929. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21809

Honneth, A. (1982). Work and Instrumental Action: On the Normative Basis of Critical Theory. *Thesis Eleven, 5-6*(1), 162–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368200500112

Hood, C. (1998). The art of the state culture, rhetoric, and public management. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hoque, K. & Bacon, N. (2014). Unions, joint regulation and workplace equality policy and practice in Britain: evidence from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey. *Work, Employment & Society, 28*(2), 265–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017012460320

Hudson, M. (2012). *The experience of discrimination on multiple grounds: Research paper*. London: ACAS. Retrieved from http://m.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/3/0112_Multidiscrim_Hudson-accessible-version-Apr-2012.pdf

Hyman, J. & Mason, B. (1995). *Managing Employee Involvement and Participation*. London: Sage

Hyman, R. (1989). *The political economy of industrial relations*. London: Macmillan

Hyman, R. (1997). The future of employee representation, *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 35*(3), 309-336. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8543.00057

Hyman, R. (2015). Making voice effective: Imagining trade union responses to an era of post-industrial democracy. In Johnstone, S. and Ackers, P (Eds.) *Finding a voice at work? New perspectives on employment relations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

International Labour Organization (2017). *What age means for the labour force*. Retrieved from http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/audio/WCMS_358943/lang--en/index.htm

Ironside, M. & Seifert, R. (2002). *Facing up to Thatcherism: The History of NALGO 1979-1993*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

Islam, G. (2012). Recognition, Reification, and Practices of Forgetting: Ethical Implications of Human Resource Management. *Journal of Business Ethics, 111(1),* 37–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1433-0

Jack, G., Riach, K., Bariola, E., Bell, E., Meriläinen, S., Taylor, S. & Tienari, J. (2019). Temporality and gendered agency: Menopausal subjectivities in women's work. *Human Relations, 72(*1), 122–143. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718767739

Jackson, S., Schuler, R., S. & Jiang, K. (2014). An Aspirational Framework for Strategic Human Resource Management. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 1-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2014.872335

Jaehrling, K., Johnson, M., Larsen, T., Refslund, B., Grimshaw, D., Alberti, G., … Umney, C. (2018). Tackling Precarious Work in Public Supply Chains: A Comparison of Local Government Procurement Policies in Denmark, Germany and the UK. *Work, Employment and Society, 32(3)*, 546–563. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018758216

Jeffries, J. Morretta, A. & Just, A. (2017). *A Chronology of Labour Law 1979 -2017,* Liverpool: IES. Retrieved from http://www.ier.org.uk/resources/chronology-labour-law-1979-2017

Jenkins, S. (2018, Jan 4). Will neglect drive Yorkshire to a Catalan-style revolt? *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/04/yorkshire-devolution-local-government-sajid-javid

Jin, M., Lee, J. & Lee, M. (2017). Does leadership matter in diversity management? Assessing the relative impact of diversity policy and inclusive leadership in the public sector. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 38*(2), 303–319. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-07-2015-0151

John, P. (2014). The Great Survivor: The Persistence and Resilience of English Local Government. *Local Government Studies*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2014.891984

Johnson, P., Buehring, A., Cassell, C & Simon, G. (2006). Evaluating qualitative management research: towards a contingent criteriology, *International Journal of Management Reviews, 8*(3), 131-156. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2006.00124.x

Johnson, P. & Clark, M. (2006*). Business and management research methodologies. Vol.1, Recent methodological debates and disputes in business and management research* (Sage library in business and management). London: SAGE.

Johnson, P. & Duberley, J. (2000). *Understanding management research: An introduction to epistemology*. London: Sage

Johnson, P., & Duberley, J. (2003). Reflexivity in Management Research. *Journal of Management Studies, 40*(5), 1279–1303. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00380

Johnson, P., Wood, G., Brewster, C. & Brookes, M. (2009). The Rise of Post-Bureaucracy. *International Sociology: Journal of the International Sociological Association*., *24*(1), 37-61. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580908100246

Johnstone, S. (2015). The case for workplace partnership. In S. Johnstone & P. Ackers (Eds), *Finding a Voice at Work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations*, pp. 21–43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kaine, S. (2014) Union Voice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Kakkar, H., Tangirala, S., Srivastava, N., Kamdar, D. & Chen, G. (2016). The Dispositional Antecedents of Promotive and Prohibitive Voice. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 101*(9), 1342–1351. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000130

Kaufman, B. (2014a). Employee voice before Hirschman: its early history, conceptualization and practice. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Kaufman, B. (2014b). Explaining Breadth and Depth of Employee Voice across Firms: A Voice Factor Demand Model. *Journal of Labor Research., 35*(3), 296-319. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-014-9185-5

Kaufman, B. (2015a). Theorising determinants of employee voice: An integrative model across disciplines and levels of analysis. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *25*(1), 19-40. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12056

Kaufman, B. (2015b). The RBV theory foundation of strategic HRM: critical flaws, problems for research and practice, and an alternative economics paradigm. *Human Resource Management Journal, 25*(4), 516–540. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12085

Kaufman, B. (2020). The real problem: The deadly combination of psychologisation, scientism, and normative promotionalism takes strategic human resource management down a 30-year dead end. *Human Resource Management Journal,30*(1), 49-72. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12278

Kaufman, B. E. & Taras, D.G. (2010). Employee Participation Through Non-union Forms of Employee Representation. In Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P., Marchington, M. & Lewin, D. (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kincheloe, J. & McLaren, P. L. (1998). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds). *The landscape of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Sage.

Kincheloe, J. & McLaren, P. L. (2005). Rethinking Theory and Research. In Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

King, N. (2012). Doing template analysis. In Symon, G., & Cassell, C. (Eds.). *Qualitative organizational research core methods and current challenges*. Los Angeles, [Calif.]: SAGE. pp. 426-450

King, N. & Brooks, J. (2017). *Template analysis for business and management students*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Kirton, G, & Greene, A. M. (2006). The discourse of diversity in unionised contexts: views from trade union equality officers. *Personnel Review, 35*(4), 431–448. https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480610670599

Kirton, G., & Greene, A. (2016). *The dynamics of managing diversity: a critical approach,* (4th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.

Klaas, B.,Olson-Buchanan, J. & Ward, A-K. (2012). The Determinants of Alternative Forms of Workplace Voice. *Journal of Management*, *38*(1), 314-345. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920631142382

Klandermans, B. (1986). Psychology and trade union participation: Joining, acting, quitting. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 59*(3), 189–204. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1986.tb00224.x

Knoll, M. & Redman, T. (2016). Does the Presence of Voice Imply the Absence of Silence? The Necessity to Consider Employees' Affective Attachment and Job Engagement. *Human Resource Management, 55*(5), 829-844. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21744

Kooij, D., Jansen, P., Dikkers, J. & De Lange, A. (2014). Managing aging workers: a mixed methods study on bundles of HR practices for aging workers. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(15), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.872169

Korczynski, M. (2013). The customer in the sociology of work: different ways of going beyond the management–worker dyad. *Work, Employment and Society, 27*(6), NP1–NP7. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017012464424

Korff, J., Biemann, T. & Voelpel, S. (2017). Differentiating HR systems' impact: moderating effects of age on the HR system–work outcome association. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 38*(3), 415–438. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2130

Krueger, R., A. & Casey, M., A. (2009). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California, Sage

Krings, F., Sczesny, S. & Kluge, A. (2011). Stereotypical Inferences as Mediators of Age Discrimination: The Role of Competence and Warmth. (Report*). British Journal of Management, 22*(2), 187–201. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2010.00721.x

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.) Chicago: Chicago University Press

Kulik, C., Perera, S. & Cregan, C. (2016). Engage Me: The Mature-Age Worker and Stereotype Threat. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(6), 2132–2156. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0564

Lain, D. & Loretto, W. (2016). Managing employees beyond age 65: From the margins to the mainstream? *Employee Relations*, 38(5), 646-664. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-04-2015-0062

Lain, D. & Phillipson, C. (2019). Extended Work Lives and the Rediscovery of the "Disadvantaged" Older Worker. *Generations, 43*(3), 71–77. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/2329172262/

Langbein, L. & Stazyk, E. (2018). The Anatomy of Retention in the U.S. Federal Government: Exit, Voice, or Money? *International Public Management Journal, 21*(1), 33–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2017.1325806

Lawrence, F., McIntyre, N. & Kirk, A. (2020, June 21). Labour councils in England hit harder by austerity than Tory areas. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jun/21/exclusive-labour-councils-in-england-hit-harder-by-austerity-than-tory-areas

Leach, R., & Barnett, N. (1997). The new public management and the local government review. *Local Government Studies: Local Government Reorganization: The Review and Its Aftermath*, *23*(3), 39–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003939708433875

Legge, K. (1995). *Human resource management: Rhetoric's and realities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Legge, K. (2001). Silver bullet or spent round? Assessing the meaning of the "High commitment management" / performance relationship. In Storey, J. (Ed.), HRM - *A Critical Text*, (2nd ed.). London: Thompson Learning

Leisink, P. & Knies, E. (2011). Line managers' support for older workers. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22*(9), 1902–1917. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.573969

Lepine, J. Van Dyne, L. & Murphy, K. (2001). Voice and Cooperative Behavior as Contrasting Forms of Contextual Performance: Evidence of Differential Relationships with Big Five Personality Characteristics and Cognitive Ability. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 326–336. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.2.326

Lewin, D. (2014). Individual voice: grievance and other procedures. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Lewin, K. (1943). Psychology and the Process of Group Living. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 17*(1), 113–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1943.9712269

Lewis, D. & Sargeant, M. (2017). *Employment Law: The Essentials,* (14th ed.). London: CIPD

Lewis, D. & Vandekerckhove, W. (2016). Trade Unions and the Whistleblowing Process in the UK: An Opportunity for Strategic Expansion? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(4), 835–845. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3015-z

Liff, S. (1997) Two routes to managing diversity: Individual differences or group characteristics, *Employee Relations*, *19* (1), 11-26. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425459710163552

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage

Local Government Association. (2019). *Equality Framework for Local Government*. Retrieved from https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/equality-frameworks/equality-framework-local-government

Local Government Association. (2018). *What is Devolution?* Retrieved from https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/what-devolution

Local Government Association. (2017). *Council tax and business rates*. Retrieved from https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/finance-and-business-rates/local-taxation-council-tax-and-business-rates

Local Government Association. (2018). *Great people for growing places: A consultation on the strategy for the local government workforce*. Retrieved from https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.86%20Great%20people%20for%20growing%20places_LGA%20March%202018.pdf

Local Government Association (2020) LGA data pack: Local government workforce summary data. Retrieved from https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Workforce%20infographic%20-%20local%20government%20workforce%20summary%20data%20-%20Final%20September%202020.pdf

Local Government Information Unit. (2020). *Local government facts and figures*. Retrieved from https://lgiu.org/local-government-facts-and-figures-england/#section-3

Lockwood, B. & Porcelli, F. (2013). Incentive Schemes for Local Government: Theory and Evidence from Comprehensive Performance Assessment in England. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 5(3), 254-286. https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.5.3.254

Long, R., Foster, D. & Adcock, A. (2016). *Educational attainment in Yorkshire and the Humber: Debate pack*, (Number CDP 2016/0076), London: House of Commons Library. Retrieved from https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk>documents>CDP-2016-0076

Loretto, W. & Vickerstaff, S. (2011) The relationship between Gender and Age. In Parry, E. & Tyson, S. (Eds.) *Managing an age diverse workforce:* London: Palgrave MacMillan

Lub, X., Bal, P., Blomme, R. & Schalk, R. (2016). One job, one deal… or not: do generations respond differently to psychological contract fulfilment? *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(6), 653–680. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1035304

Lv, Z. & Xu, T. (2018). Psychological contract breach, high-performance work system and engagement: the mediated effect of person-organization fit. The International *Journal of Human Resource Management, 29*(7), 1257–1284. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1194873

Lukes, S. (1982). *Of gods and demons: Habermas and practical reason*. In J.B. Thompson and D. Held (eds.). Habermas: Critical Debates. London: Macmillan

Lukes, S. (2005*). Power: a radical view* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan

Macky, K., Gardner, D. & Forsyth, S. (2008). Generational differences at work: Introduction and overview. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23*(8), 857-861. http://dx.doi.org.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/10.1108/02683940810904358

MacLeod, D. & Clarke. N (2009). *Engaging for Success: Enhancing Performance Through Employee Engagement.* London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A., Ackers, P. & Goodman, J. (1993). The Influence of Managerial Relations on Waves of Employee Involvement. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 31*(4), 553-576. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.1993.tb00413.x

Marchington. M. & Wilkinson, A. (2009). Direct participation and involvement. In Bach, S., (ed.). *Managing human resources: Personnel management in transition* (4th. ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Marchington, M. (2015). Human resource management (HRM): Too busy looking up to see where it is going longer term. *Human resource management review*, *25*(2), 176–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.01.007

Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A, Donnelly, R. & Kynighou., A. (2016). *Human Resource Management at Work* (6th ed). London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Marcus, J. & Fritzsche, B. (2015). One size doesn't fit all: Toward a theory on the intersectional salience of ageism at work. *Organizational Psychology Review, 5*(2), 168–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386614556015

Marsden, D. (2013). Individual Voice in Employment Relationships: A Comparison under Different Forms of Workplace Representation. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society, 52*(Supp. 1), 221–258. https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12002

Marsden, D & Canibano, A. (2010). An economic perspective on employee participation. In Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P., Marchington, M. and Lewin, D. (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin, G., Parry, E. & Flowers, P. (2015). Do social media enhance constructive employee voice all the time or just some of the time? *Human Resource Management Journal, 25*(4), 541–562. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12081

McBride, A., Hebson, G. & Holgate, J. (2015). Intersectionality: are we taking enough notice in the field of work and employment relations? *Work, Employment & Society, 29*(2), 331–341. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014538337

McCarthy, J., Heraty, N., Cross, C. & Cleveland, J. (2014). Who is considered an 'older worker'? Extending our conceptualisation of 'older' from an organizational decision maker perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal, 24*(4), 374-393. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12041

McFadden, C. & Crowley-Henry, M. (2018). "My People": the potential of LGBT employee networks in reducing stigmatization and providing voice. *The International*

Journal of Human Resource Management: Voices Unheard? 29(5), 1056–1081. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1335339

McLean, I., Haubrich, D. & Gutiérrez-Romero, R. (2007). The Perils and Pitfalls of Performance Measurement: The CPA Regime for Local Authorities in England. *Public Money & Management, 27*(2), 111–118. https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1467-9302.2007.00566.x

Michon, F. (1992). The institutional forms of work and employment. In Castro, A., Méhaut, P. and Rubery, J. (Eds.). *International integration and labour market organization*. London: Academic Press

Miles, M., Huberman, A. & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Miller, J. & Glassner, B. (2011). The "Inside and the Outside: Finding Realities in Interviews. In Silverman, D. (Ed.). *Qualitative Research*, London: Sage

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018). *Local Government Financial Statistics England No.28 2018.* Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723999/Local_Government_Finance_Statistics_2018_publication_Web_Accessible.pdf

Moore, S. & Tailby, S. (2015). The changing face of employment relations: equality and diversity. *Employee Relations*, *37*(6), 705–719. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-06-2015-0115

Mor Barak, M. (2000.). The Inclusive Workplace: An Ecosystems Approach to Diversity Management. *Social Work, 45*(4), 339–353. https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/45.4.339

Morgan, G. & Smircich, L. (1980). The Case for Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*, *5*(4). 491–500. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1980.4288947

Morris, J. & Farrell, C. (2007). The 'post-bureaucratic' public sector organization. New organizational forms and HRM in ten UK public sector organizations. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 18*(9), 1575-1588. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190701570544

Morrison, E. (2011). Employee Voice Behavior: Integration and Directions for Future Research. *The Academy of Management Annals, 5*(1), 373-412. https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2011.574506

Morrison, E. (2014). Employee Voice and Silence. Annual Review of Organizational *Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1*(1), 173–197. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091328

Morrison, E., See, K. & Pan, C. (2015). An Approach-Inhibition Model of Employee Silence: The Joint Effects of Personal Sense of Power and Target Openness. *Personnel Psychology, 68*(3), 547–580. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12087

Mowbray, P. (2018). Giving a voice to managers: forging the desire line through the creation of informal employee voice channels and productive resistance. *The*

International Journal of Human Resource Management, *29*(5), 941–969. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.139655

Müller, M. (2018). "Brandspeak": Metaphors and the rhetorical construction of internal branding. *Organization, 25*(1), 42–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508417710831

Newman, I. (2014). *Reclaiming Local Democracy: A Progressive Future for Local Government*. Bristol: Policy Press

Nikolaou, I., Vakola, M. & Bourantas, D. (2008). Who speaks up at work? Dispositional influences on employees' voice behavior. *Personnel Review, 37*(6), 666–679. https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480810906892

Nishii, L. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(6), 1754–1774. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0823

Office for National Statistics. (2018a). Living longer - how our population is changing and why it matters: October 2018. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2018-08-13#how-is-the-uk-population-changing

Office for National Statistics. (2018b). Dataset:X01 Regional labour market: Estimates of employment by age, December 2018. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/regionalemploymentbyagex01

Office for National Statistics. (2018c). Dataset: Population projections for local authorities: Table 2, May 2018. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2

Office for National Statistics. (2019a). *Public sector employment, UK: September 2019.* Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/publicsectoremployment/september2019

Office for National Statistics. (2019b). Labour disputes in the UK: 2018, Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/workplacedisputesandworkingconditions/articles/labourdisputes/2018#toc

Ogbor, J. (2001). Critical theory and the hegemony of corporate culture. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *14*(6), 590–608. https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810110408015

Ogden, K. & Phillips, D. (2020). *COVID-19 and English council funding: how are budgets being hit in 2020–21?* IFS Report R174. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Retrieved from https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R-174-COVID-19%20and%20English-council-funding-how-are-budgets-being-hit-in-2020%E2%80%9321.pdf

Organ, D. (1996). The editor's chair. (comments on the continuing use of military metaphors in business management). *Business Horizons*, *39*(5), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0007-6813(96)90059-2

Orr, K. & Vince, R. (2009). Traditions of local government. *Public Administration*, 87(3), 655-677. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2009.01770.x

Oswick, C. & Noon, M. (2014). Discourses of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion: Trenchant Formulations or Transient Fashions? *British Journal of Management, 25*(1), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2012.00830.x

Pasha-Robinson (2017, June 17). Grenfell Tower fire: MPs attack Kensington council for failure to spend £270m reserves on housing, *The Independent Online,* retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grenfell-tower-royal-borough-kensington-chelsea-council-stockpiled-274m-despite-warnings-residents-a7795411.html

Patmore, G. (2010). A legal perspective on employee participation. In Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P.J., Marchington, M. & Lewin, D. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of employee participation*. Oxford University Press: Oxford

Pendleton, A. & Winterton, J. (1993). *Public Enterprise in Transition. Industrial Relations in State and Privatized Corporations.* London: Routledge

Phillippi, J. & Lauderdale, J. (2018). A Guide to Field Notes for Qualitative Research: Context and Conversation. *Qualitative Health Research, 28*(3), 381–388. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317697102

Phillips, D. (2020) *Is austerity over? The 2020 Spending Review and the outlook for local government funding,* Presentation. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies. Retrieved from https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14683

Phillipson, C. (2014.). "Fuller" or "extended" working lives: a critical commentary. *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults, 15*(4), 237–240. https://doi.org/10.1108/QAOA-09-2014-0017

Phillipson, C., Shepherd, S., Robinson, M. & Vickerstaff, S. (2018). Uncertain Futures: Organizational Influences on the Transition from Work to Retirement. *Social Policy and Society*, *18*(3), 335–350. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746418000180

Phillipson, C., Vickerstaff, S. & Lain, D. (2016). Achieving fuller working lives: labour market and policy issues in the United Kingdom. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 51*(2), 187–203,249–250. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2016.tb00373.x

Plimmer, G. (2018, February 10). Council outsourcing falls out of favour; Local government. Privatised services; Austerity, poor standards and political change prompt return to in-house solutions. (News). *The Financial Times.* Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/983c4598-0d88-11e8-839d-41ca06376bf2

Pohler, D. & Luchak A. (2014a). Balancing efficiency, equity and voice: the impact of unions and high –involvement work practices on work outcomes, *ILR Review,* 67(4), 1063-1094. https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793914546295

Pohler, D., M. & Luchak, A. (2014b). The missing employee in employee voice research. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds*.). Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Pollitt, C. (1993). *Managerialism and the public services: Cuts or cultural change in the 1990s?* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Business.

Porcellato, L., Carmichael, F., Hulme, C., Ingham, B. & Prashar, A. (2010). Giving older workers a voice: constraints on the employment of older people in the North West of England. *Work, Employment & Society, 24*(1), 85–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017009353659

Posthuma, R. & Campion, M. (2009). Age Stereotypes in the Workplace: Common Stereotypes, Moderators, and Future Research Directions†. *Journal of Management, 35*(1), 158–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308318617

Prasad, P. (2018). *Crafting Qualitative Research, beyond positivist traditions*, Abingdon: Routledge

Prasad, A. & Prasad, P. (2002). The Coming of Age of Interpretive Organizational Research. *Organizational Research Methods, 5*(1), 4–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428102005001002

Pritchard, K. & Fear, W. (2015). Credibility lost: attempting to reclaim an expert identity in an HR professional context. *Human Resource Management Journal, 25(*3), 348–363. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12068

Prostate Cancer UK (2018). *Living with prostate cancer, practical things.* [Leaflet]. Retrieved from https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information/living-with-prostate-cancer/practical-things

Prouska, R. & Psychogios, A. (2018). Do not say a word! Conceptualizing employee silence in a long-term crisis context. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management: Voices Unheard? 29*(5), 885–914. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1212913

Prowse, P. & Fells, R. (2016). The living wage - policy and practice. *Industrial Relations Journal, 47*(2), 144–162. https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12132

Prowse, P. & Prowse J. (2007). Is there still a public sector model of employment relations in the United Kingdom? *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 20*(1), 48-62. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550710722706

Prowse, J., Prowse, P. & Perrett, R. (2020). Women take care and men take charge': The case of leadership and gender in the Public and Commercial Services Union. *Economic and Industrial Democracy.* 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X20943682

Purcell, J. (2014a). Time to focus on employee voice as a prime antecedent of engagement: Rediscovering the black box. In D. Robinson & J Gifford, (Eds.) *The Future of Engagement Thought Piece Collection*, 1, 21-26. London: CIPD

Purcell. (2014b). Employee voice and engagement in Truss, C., Delbridge, R., Alfes, K, Shantz, A. & Soane, E. (Eds.) *Employee engagement in theory and practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Purcell, J. & Hutchinson, S. (2007). Front-line managers as agents in the HRM-performance causal chain: Theory, analysis and evidence. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *17*(1), 3-20. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2007.00022.x

Purcell, J., Kinnie, N., Hutchinson, S., Rayton, B. & Swart, J. (2003). *Understanding the People and Performance Link: Unlocking the Black Box*. London: CIPD.

Rabionet, S. E. (2009). How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: An ongoing and continuous journey. *The Qualitative Report, 16*(2), 563-566.Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR16-2/rabionet.pdf

Ramsay, H. (1977). Cycles of Control: Worker Participation in Sociological and Historical Perspective. *Sociology, 11*(3), 481-506. https://doi.org/10.1177/003803857701100304

Reed, J. (2017, March,15). Barnsley MPs call for withdrawal of Meadowhall HS2 route. *The Yorkshire Post,* retrieved from https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/barnsley-mps-call-for-withdrawal-of-meadowhall-hs2-route-1-8440186

Rescher, N. (2004). *Value Matters: Studies in Axiology.* Lancaster: Gazelle Books

Riach, K (2011). Situating age(in) equality within the paradigm and practices of diversity management. In Parry, E & Tyson, S. (Eds.) *Managing an age diverse workforce.* London: Palgrave MacMillan

Richards, J. & Sang, K. (2016). Trade unions as employment facilitators. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27*(14), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1126334

Roberson, Q. (2006). Disentangling the Meanings of Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, *31*(2), 212–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601104273064

Robinson, R. & Shuck, B. (2019). A Penny for Your Thoughts: Exploring Experiences of Engagement, Voice, and Silence. *Journal of Organizational Psychology, 19*(4), 121–135. https://doi.org/10.33423/jop.v19i4.2298

Roch, S. & Shanock, L. (2006). Organizational Justice in an Exchange Framework: Clarifying Organizational Justice Distinctions. *Journal of Management, 32*(2), 299–322. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305280115

Rollinson, D. & Dundon, T (2011). Understanding Employment Relations. London: McGraw-Hill Higher Education

Rousseau, D. (2003). Extending the Psychology of the Psychological Contract: A Reply to Putting Psychology Back into Psychological Contracts, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *12* (3), 229-238. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492603256339

Ryan, G. & Bernard, H. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes. *Field Methods, 15*(1), 85–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X02239569

Ryen, A. (2011). Ethics and Qualitative Research. In Silverman, D. (Ed.) *Qualitative Research*. London: Sage

Rubery, J. & Urwin, P. (2011). Bringing the employer back in: why social care needs a standard employment relationship. *Human Resource Management Journal, 21*(2), 122–137. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2010.00138.x

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed). London: Sage

Sargeant, M. (2011). *Age discrimination: ageism in employment and service provision.* Farnham: Gower.

Sartre, J. P. (1967). *Critique de la raison Dialectique: Vol 1.* Paris: Gallimard

Sasse, T., Guerin, B., Nickson, S., O'Brien, M., Pope, T & Davies, N. (2019*). Government outsourcing: What has worked and what needs reform?* London: Institute for Government retrieved from https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/government-outsourcing-reform-WEB.pdf

Saunders, M. (2012). Choosing research participants in Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (Eds.), *Qualitative organizational research core methods and current challenges*. Los Angeles: Sage

Saunders, M. & Lewis, P. (2012). *Doing research in business and management: an essential guide to planning your project*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Schuler, R. (1986). Fostering and facilitating entrepreneurship in organizations: Implications for organization structure and human resource management practices. *Human Resource Management, 25*(4), 607–629. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930250408

Schein, E. H. (1965). *Organizational Psychology.* Englewood Cliffs, N: Prentice-Hall

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schlosser, F. & Zolin, R. (2012). Hearing voice and silence during stressful economic times. *Employee Relations*, *34*(5), 555–573. https://doi:10.1108/01425451211248569

Schmelzer, P. (2011). Income development of older people: Consequences of pensions reforms and unstable careers in the UK. In Blossfeld, H., Bullchholz, S. & Kurz, K. (Eds.) *Aging populations, globalization and the labor market; comparing late working life and retirement in modern societies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Seale, C (2011). Secondary analysis of qualitative data in Silverman, D. (ed) *Qualitative research issues of theory, method and practice* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Sharp, E. (1984). "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" in the Context of Local Government Problems. *Political Research Quarterly, 37*(1), 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591298403700106

Sheehan, C., Cooper, B., Holland, P. & De Cieri, H. (2007). The relationship between HRM avenues of political influence and perceived organizational performance. *Human Resource Management, 46*(4), 611-629. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20184

Shore, L., Cleveland, J. & Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review, 28*(2), 176–189. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003

Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research.* (4th ed.). London: Sage

Simms, M. (2015). Union organizing as an alternative to partnership. In S. Johnstone & P. Ackers (Eds.). *Finding a Voice at Work: New Perspectives on Employment Relations*, pp. 127–153. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinkovics, R.R. & Alfoldi, E. A. (2012). Facilitating the interaction between theory and data in qualitative research using CAQDAS. In Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (Eds). *Qualitative organizational research core methods and current challenges*. Los Angeles: Sage

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research*. London: Sage.

Snape, E. & Redman, T. (2003). Too old or too young? The impact of perceived age discrimination. *Human Resource Management Journal, 13*(1), 78–89. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2003.tb00085.x

Social mobility & Child Poverty Commission. (2016). *The social mobility index*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496103/Social_Mobility_Index.pdf

Sonderegger, A., Schmutz, S. & Sauer, J. (2016). The influence of age in usability testing. *Applied Ergonomics, 52*, 291–300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2015.06.012

Spence, D. (2017). Supervising for Robust Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Reflexive Engagement Within Horizons of Understanding. *Qualitative Health Research, 27*(6), 836–842. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316637824

Spicer, A. & Böhm, S. (2007). Moving Management: Theorizing Struggles against the Hegemony of Management. *Organization Studies, 28(11)*, 1667–1698. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606082219

Spoor, A. (1967) *White Collar Union: 60 years of NALGO*. London: Heinemann

Stanton, P. & Manning, K. (2013). High performance work systems, performance management and employee participation in the public sector. In Burke, R.J., Noblet, A.J. and Cooper, C.L. (Eds.) *Human Resource Management in the Public Sector*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Storey, J. (1987). Developments in the management of human resources: an interim report' Warwick Papers in Industrial relations, 17*, Industrial Relations Research Unit*: Warwick: The University of Warwick

Syal, R. (2020, September 3) GMB union institutionally sexist, inquiry finds. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/03/gmb-union-institutionally-sexist-inquiry-finds

Syed, J. (2014). Diversity Management and Missing Voices. In Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (2012). *Qualitative organizational research core methods and current challenges*. Los Angeles: Sage

Tangirala, S., & Ramanujam, R. (2008). Employee silence on critical work issues: the cross-level effects of procedural justice climate. *Personnel Psychology*, *61*(1), 37-68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00105.x

Taylor, P., Loretto, W., Marshall, V., Earl, C. & Phillipson, C. (2016). The Older Worker: Identifying a Critical Research Agenda. *Social Policy and Society*, *15*(4), 675-689. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746416000221

Thompson, N. (2007). From Hayek to New Labour: The changing Ideology of Public Sector Provision. In Dibben, P., James, P., Roper, I. & Wood, G. (Eds.). *Modernising work in public services: Redefining roles and relationships in Britain's changing workplace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thompson, P. (2011). The trouble with HRM. *Human Resource Management Journal, 21*(4), 355–367. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2011.00180.x

Timming, A. (2009). WERS the validity? a critique of the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey of employees. *Work, Employment & Society*, *23*(3), 561–570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017009337070

Thornthwaite, L., Balnave, N. & Barnes, A. (2018). Unions and social media: Prospects for gender inclusion. *Gender, Work & Organization, 25*(4), 401–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.

Town-hall meeting (2017). In Heery, E., & Noon, M. *Dictionary of Human Resource Management*. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191827822.001.0001/acref-9780191827822-e-2205

Townsend, K. & Wilkinson, A. (2014). Guest Editors' Note: Time to Reconnect the Silos? Similarities and Differences in Employment Relations and Human Resources. *Human Resource Management, 53*(2), 203–210. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21601

Trade Union Congress. (2013). *Supporting Women through the menopause. Guidance for union representatives*, Retrieved from https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC_menopause_0.pdf

Trade Union Congress. (2014). *Age immaterial women over 50 Report*. Retrieved from https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Age_Immaterial_Women_Over_50_Report_2014_LR.pdf

Trade Union Congress. (2019). *TUC General Council Members*. Retrieved from https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/tuc-general-council-members

Trade Union Congress. (2020). *TUC response to inquiry on Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics.* Retrieved from https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/tuc-response-inquiry-coronavirus-covid-19-and-impact-people-protected

Tomprou, M., Rousseau, D. & Hansen, S. (2015). The psychological contracts of violation victims: A post-violation model. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 36*(4), 561–581. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1997

Troth, A. & Guest, D. (2020). The case for psychology in human resource management research. *Human Resource Management Journal, 30(1)*, 34–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12237

Truss, C. (2013). The distinctiveness of human resource management in the public sector. In Burke, R., Noblet, A. and Cooper, C. (Eds.). *Human resource management in the public sector (New horizons in management)*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Truss, C., Delbridge, R., Alfes, K, Shantz, A. & Soane, E. (2014). *Employee engagement in theory and practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ulrich, D. (2016). HR at a crossroads. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 54(2)*, 148–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12104

Ulrich, D. & Brockbank, W. (2005). *The HR value proposition*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School.

UNISON. (2012). *The menopause & work: A guide for UNISON safety reps*. Retrieved from https://southwest.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/sites/4/2018/08/The-menopause-and-work-A-UNISON-Guide.pdf

UNISON. (2016). *Trade Union Side of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services: England, Wales and Northern Ireland: NJC Pay Claim 2016-2017*. Retrieved from https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/08/NJC-Pay-Claim-2016-17_FINAL.pdf

UNISON. (2017). *Save Care Now!* Retrieved from http://www.savecarenow.org.uk/

UNISON. (2019). *The menopause is a workplace issue: guidance and model policy.* Retrieved from https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/25831.pdf

UNISON. (2020). *Coronavirus guidance for local government workers: Local government funding*. Retrieved from https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/local-government/coronavirus-guidance-local-government-workers/

UNITE. (2018). *Building solidarity between the generations*. Retrieved from https://unitetheunion.org/why-join/membership-types/retired-members/

Urick, M., Hollensbe, E. & Fairhurst, G. (2017). Differences in Understanding Generation in the Workforce. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 15*(3), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2017.1329583

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2017). *Age Discrimination*. Retrieved from https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/age.cfm

Van Den Broek, D. & Dundon, T. (2012). (Still) Up to No Good: Reconfiguring Worker Resistance and Misbehaviour in an Increasingly Unorganized World. *Relations Industrielles, 67*(1), 97–121. https://doi.org/10.7202/1008197ar

Van Dijk, H., van Engen, M. & Paauwe, J. (2012). Reframing the Business Case for Diversity: A Values and Virtues Perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics, 111*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1434-z

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S. & Botero, I.C. (2003). Conceptualizing employee silence and employee voice as multidimensional constructs, *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(6) 1359-92. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00384

Van Wanrooy, B., Bewley, H., Bryson, A. Forth, J., Freeth, S., Stokes, L. & Wood, S. (2013). *Employment relations in the shadow of recession findings from the 2011 workplace employment relations study.* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vasconcelos, A. (2015). Older workers: some critical societal and organizational challenges. *Journal of Management Development, 34*(3), 352–372. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-02-2013-0034

Wainwright, D., Crawford, J., Loretto, W., Phillipson, C., Robinson, M., Shepherd, S., … Weyman, A. (2018). Extending working life and the management of change. Is the workplace ready for the ageing worker? *Ageing and Society*, 07.05.2018, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X18000569

Wales TUC. (2017). The menopause: a workplace issue. A report of a Wales TUC survey investigating the menopause in the workplace. Retrieved from https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Menopause%20survey%20report%20FINAL_0.pdf

Wallas, G. (1908). English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act (Book Review). *The Economic Journal*, 18(70), 272-277. https://doi.org/10.2307/2220706

Wang, W. & Seifert, R. (2018). BAME Staff and Public Service Motivation: The Mediating Role of Perceived Fairness in English Local Government. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *161*(3), 653–664. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3953-8

Warner, M. (2010). The Future of Local Government: Twenty-First-Century Challenges. *Public Administration Review, 70*(S1), s145–s147. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02257.x

Webb, S. & Webb B. (1894). *The History of Trade Unionism*, London: Longmans

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of economic and social organization*. (Trans. AM Henderson and Talcott Parsons). New York: Oxford University Press.

West, W. (1973). Local Government Act 1972. *The Modern Law Review, 36*(4), 412-417.

White, M. (2018). Do unions protect older employees' pay? *Industrial Relations Journal, 49*(5)*,* 1-20, https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12234

White, M. & Smeaton, D. (2016). Older British employees' declining attitudes over 20 years and across classes. *Human Relations, 69*(8), 1619–1641. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715618765

Whittaker, S. & Marchington, M. (2003). Devolving HR responsibility to the line. Employee Relations, 25(3), 245–261. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425450310475847

Wilkinson, A., Barry, M. & Morrison, E. (2020). Toward an integration of research on employee voice. *Human Resource Management Review, 30*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2018.12.001

Wilkinson, A. Donaghey, J., Dundon, T. & Freeman, R.B. (2014). *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar

Wilkinson, A. & Fay, C (2011). Guest Editors' Note: New Times for Employee Voice, *Human Resource Management*, *50* (1), 65-74. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20411

Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P., Kalfa, S., & Xu, Y. (2018). Voices unheard: employee voice in the new century. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29(*5), 711–724. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.142734

World Health Organization (2018). *Ageing and life course*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/ageing/ageism/en/

Wong, W., Blazey, L., Sullivan, J., Zheltoukhova,K., Albert, A. & Reid,B (2010). *Understanding the Deal: Placing the employee at the heart of the employment relationship.* Lancaster: The Work Foundation, Lancaster University. Retrieved from https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/understanding-the-deal-placing-the-employee-at-the-heart-of-the-employment-relationship

Wood, S. (2008). Job characteristics, employee voice and well-being in Britain. *Industrial Relations Journal, 39*(2), 153–168. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2338.2007.00482.x

Workers of the world, log on! (2018, Nov 17). *The Economist*, 429, 24-26. Retrieved from https://hallam.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.hallam.idm.oclc.org/docview/2134243988?accountid=13827

Wright, T., Conley, H. & Moore, S. (2011). Addressing Discrimination in the Workplace on Multiple Grounds: The Experience of Trade Union Equality Representatives. *Industrial Law Journal, 40*(4), 460–465. https://doi.org/10.1093/indlaw/dwr025

Yang, Y. & Konrad, A. (2011). Diversity and organizational innovation: The role of employee involvement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 32*(8), 1062–1083. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.724

Zacher, H. Kooij, D. & Beier, M. (2017). Active aging at work. *Organizational Dynamics*. *47*(1), 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.08.001

Appendices

Appendix 1: Samples of interview documentation

1. Participant information sheet HR Director
2. Participant consent form
3. Interview guide – Councillor
4. Interview guide – HR Director
5. Interview guide – GMB regional representative
6. Interview guide – Older employee

Sheffield Hallam University

Employee voice in Local Government, PhD research

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your interest in my research. Before you decide whether to take part, please take time to read the following information about why I am researching this area and how your data will be stored and used. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information about any aspect of the research. My contact details and those of the research supervisory team are at the bottom of the sheet.

Thank you for reading this.

Background of this study.

Local Government is experiencing a turbulent period of change affecting councillors, managers and employees alike. In addition to funding changes by central government, the local government workforce is ageing. Modifications to state and occupational pension provisions are likely to result in employees working until later in their lives. In the past, local government leadership has encouraged a healthy exchange of views with employees via trade unions and directly with the individual. There are many positive examples of how local government ensured that diverse employees have had their say, however structural, functional and demographic changes may impact on the effectiveness of the channels and processes for employee voice.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study sets out to explore the employee voice of older workers in local government. Given the recent evidence of leading employment relations organizations, including ACAS, the Involvement and Participation Association and CIPD, that a strong employee voice encourages employee engagement in older employees, the research will focus on how this can be usefully facilitated. The aim of this is to encourage performance improvement for the organization and a positive work experience for the older employee. The perceptions of the older employees themselves regarding employee voice are of particular significance to the research; the knowledge and skills accumulated by this group are frequently cited as valuable thus I am setting out to establish if they are speaking out or lasting out until their retirement and why this might be so?

Why have you asked me to take part?

You have been asked to participate because of your central role in HR and employment relations in local government during the ongoing period of change. In being relatively new to your role as Director in this council, your ideas and knowledge of how people management strategies and practices can support the success of the council are valuable to the research. Should you agree to take part, your interview will be focused on the current changes in local government, their impact on HRM, on managers, employees and employee voice.

What will happen to the information collected in the study?
The information collected will be securely stored within the University. It will be analysed carefully in accordance with a research design approved by the supervisory team responsible guiding the research and will respect the recommendations of the ethics committee (approval reference SBS-258). You and the organization will be anonymous in both the collected data and in the thesis.

All information collected for the study will be stored safely and securely in password protected computer files and any consent forms will be stored in locked drawers within University offices.

Contacts for further information
If you would like further clarification of any of the above information or have questions you would like to ask at any time, please contact one of us using the details below.

Jean Goodwin
Doctoral Researcher
Sheffield Hallam University

jean.goodwin@shu.student.ac.uk

Professor Peter Prowse
Director of Studies
Sheffield Hallam University

Dr Anthony Bennett

Supervisor

Sheffield Hallam University

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Employee Voice and Older Local Government Workers: Speaking out or Lasting Out

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

		YES	NO
1.	I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.	☐	☐
2.	My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3.	I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4.	I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
5.	I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
6.	I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. The use of your words in the form of direct quotes will be used solely for the purpose of this study.	☐	☐

Participant's Signature: __________________________________ Date: ___________

Participant's Name (Printed): _____________________________________

Contact details:

____

Researcher's Signature: ____

Researcher's contact details:

Jean Goodwin Chartered MCIPD, MSc, FHEA
Doctoral Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University
E-mail: jean.goodwin@student.shu.ac.uk

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Interview schedule checklist: Councillor A4
Introduction: <u>Assurances</u> 1. If not comfortable with questioning or any aspect of the interview please make me aware, questions can be removed or reworded or I can leave at any time. An explanation is not required. 2. A copy of the transcript will be provided for approval. 3. Data will be stored safely and used in accordance with SHU policy and Data Protection Act 1998 4. Explain how the information provided will be used and that organizations and persons will be anonymised in the thesis. <u>Purpose of research</u> Evaluating the significance of employee voice to older, and older diverse, local government employees (to facilitate a fair contribution to working life and just outcomes for the employee) <u>Definition of older employee</u> The choice of 52 years has been taken in recognition that biological, psychosocial, functional, organizational and lifespan ages may differ between individuals. 52 years is a mean value calculated from the combination of these aspects taken from other research. <u>Initial research areas</u> 1. The local government context for the employee voice of older employees from the perspectives of the principal stakeholders, considering its history and reorganizations. 2. The role of HRM and HR functions in reinforcing asymmetrical power relations through shaping employee voice channels for older local government employees.

3. The location and intersections of potential barriers and enablers to employee voice as being more societally, organizationally or individually situated in older employees.

4. How current voice mechanisms and diversity policy interrelate to influence the employee voice of older employees with respect to their age and other ways in which they may be diverse.

Area of interest	Data required	Possible issues/ discussion points
1. Most significant changes in employment relations.	Perception from Councillor perspective.	Relationship with central government. State as a model employer. Brexit and EU legislation. Impact of austerity Local government marketization (performance management, CCT, Best Value, CPA). Relationship with trade unions of constituent labour party. Effects of outsourcing and temporary employment. Working with other agencies Working with communities, explain why – funding passing from LG to community groups and opportunities re Holgate) What kind of voice do these groups have? Proposals for devolution?
2. Voice in local government.	Organizational perspective?	What do you think is seen as the purpose of employee voice? Do you think that being a resident in addition to

	Human resource management	being an employee influences the way employees contribute at work? (Different to working in the private sector?). Function or role responsible for an employee voice for older employees. Viewed positively or negatively within LG organizations? Impact of direct voice on collective representation Direct voice as a management tool? Distinctiveness of HR in public sector. Relationship with councillors
3. Diverse older employees	Councillor role Contribution of older workers Workforce diversity over time? Attitude of others to age.	Is there a Councillor with special responsibility for equality and diversity? Does the council communicate directly with employees? Knowledge, skills, experience, a special role for older employees? Do many become Councillors after retirement? Do older workers have a different view of public sector values? Cohort expectations (e.g. around retirement age) Change in ethnic mix. Are there special interest groups who meet with the Council.

	A heterogeneous group? LGA	Younger workers, Line managers. Stereotyping. Supportive cultures? Multiple diversity. Does having other protected characteristics affect propensity to use voice? Is there a national strategy? How does this cascade to the local level? Do older employees contribute to the strategy?
4. Use of voice mechanisms e.g. Digital media, meetings, one to ones, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, working groups, employee reps, TU reps, Partnership groups, JCC, employee forums, team meetings, employee member on board, Quality circle, appraisal	Usefulness of new methods Significance of mechanism for older and diverse workers voices Perception of older employee desire for voice Individual propensity Thoughts on deliberate silence and organizational factors	Social media and difficult to reach groups. Preferences. Is there a difference between temporary and permanent staff? Career aspirations, biding time or no interest Are there factors which make an individual more likely to contribute? For older and older diverse employees. Employee or management led.
5. Developments	Anything in the pipeline	Social media Supporting employees through change Survey, turnover, achievement
Closing interview	Brief summary Thank you	

	Give timescale for transcript. Ask permission to make contact if there are further developments	

Interview schedule checklist: HR Director B35

Introduction:

Assurances

- If not comfortable with questioning or any aspect of the interview please make me aware, questions can be removed or reworded or I can leave at any time. An explanation is not required.
- A copy of the transcript will be provided for approval.
- Data will be stored safely and used in accordance with SHU policy and Data Protection Act 1998
- Explain how information provided will be used and that organizations and persons will be anonymised in the thesis.

Purpose of research

Evaluating the significance of employee voice to older, and older diverse, local government employees. (to enable productive contribution to working life and just outcomes for the employee)

Definition of employee voice

The ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners

Definition of older employee

The choice of 52 years has been taken in recognition that biological, psychosocial, functional, organizational and lifespan ages may differ between individuals. 52 years is a mean value calculated from the combination of these aspects taken from other research.

Initial research questions

1.How is the employee voice of older and older diverse employees managed in local government organizations?

2.Have changes in HRM practice impacted differently on older employees and older diverse employees than on other groups?
3.Are the potential barriers to using employee voice more individually or organizationally situated in older and older diverse employees?
4.How do differing collective and direct voice mechanisms affect the participation of older and older diverse employees?

Area of interest	Data required	Possible issues/ discussion points
1. Most significant changes in employment relations during time in local government HR?	Perception of changes at a senior level	Impact of austerity ICT CCT, Best Value, CPA Role of the trade unions Relationship with central government. Relationship with councillors Other causes of change, Brexit? Precarious work Working with other LAs Personnel v HRM – bundles of policies HPWS Moral compass?
2. Work force changes. Older and diverse older employees	More or less older employees now? Workforce diversity over time? Attitude to age Is there a strategy specifically aimed at older employees? Are older workers regarded as a heterogeneous group?	Many over 65s? Expectations around retirement age. Younger workers, Line managers Does an E and D officer deal with any aspect of voice? Part of HR?
3. Meaning of voice	What does it mean to an HR Director?	Is voice seen as a positive or negative concept? Value to employers – improved performance, honesty, trust

	What is the view on organization's perspective? View on line managers' Perspective?	Value to self – justice, fulfilment, wellbeing, identity, human right, mental health Is there room for voice? Management tool? Management prerogative
4. Range of voice mechanisms e.g. Digital media, meetings, one to ones, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, working groups, employee reps, TU reps, Partnership groups, JCC, employee forums, team meetings, employee member on board, Quality circle, appraisal	Importance of voice to organization. Significance of older and diverse workers voices Has approach to voice changed in the past few years? Role of collective and individual voice mechanisms.	Any employee input to policy? Knowledge, skills experience How, why, story? Impact of reorganization. Cultural change. Relationship with trade unions (e.g. partnership during JE) Balance between individual and collective voice – connection to marketization? Range of mechanisms and prominence. Any use of new technology? Any examples?
5. Use of voice mechanisms	Perception of employee desire for voice Individual propensity	What do they talk about? Contribution, grievances, Are there factors which make an individual more likely to contribute

	Thoughts on deliberate silence Impact of managerial style Impact of structure and structural change Impact of culture	For older and older diverse employees
6. Impact of voice on commitment of older/ diverse employees	Effect on employees Performance impacts Perceptual impacts Employee impacts Barriers to voice	Role in times of change Effect of mechanisms, do they have a preference? Motivating, belonging, justice Turnover, achievement rates Managers views at different levels. Any examples of employee contributions and channels chosen Structural, physical, societal
7.Developments	Anything in the pipeline Future management objectives for voice Linking to performance? Future legislation and Brexit	Social media Survey, turnover, achievement Consultation and information.
Closing interview	Brief summary Thank you	

	Give timescale for transcript. Ask permission to make contact if there are further developments	

Interview schedule checklist: E37 Regional union representative

Introduction:

Assurances

1.If not comfortable with questioning or any aspect of the interview please make me aware, questions can be removed or reworded or I can leave at any time. An explanation is not required.

2.A copy of the transcript will be provided for approval.

3.Data will be stored safely and used in accordance with SHU policy and Data Protection Act 1998

4.Explain how the information provided will be used and that organizations and persons will be anonymised in the thesis.

Purpose of research

Evaluating the significance of employee voice to older, and older diverse, local government employees (to facilitate a fair contribution to working life and just outcomes for the employee)

Definition of employee voice

The ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners

Definition of older employee

The choice of 52 years has been taken in recognition that biological, psychosocial, functional, organizational and lifespan ages may differ between individuals. 52 years is a mean value calculated from the combination of these aspects taken from other research.

Initial research areas

1.The local government context for the employee voice of older employees from the perspectives of the principal stakeholders, in light of its history and reorganizations.

2.The role of HRM and HR functions in reinforcing asymmetrical power relations through shaping employee voice channels for older local government employees.

3.The location and intersections of potential barriers and enablers to employee voice as being more societally, organizationally or individually situated in older employees.

4.How current voice mechanisms and diversity policy interrelate to influence the employee voice of older employees with respect to their age and other ways in which they may be diverse.

Area of interest	Data required	Possible issues/ discussion points
1. Most significant changes in employment relations.	Perception from GMB perspective. Tenure – did you see? Level of organization	Own role Impact of austerity Local government marketization (performance management, CCT, Best Value, CPA). Role of human resource management. Relationship with councillors and council labour party. Precarious work/ outsourcing (consultation under TUPE) Working with other agencies Working with communities, TU membership possible (explain why – funding passing from LG to community groups and opportunities re Holgate)

		Militancy and power. Recruitment
2. Purpose of employee voice	Perception from an employee perspective.	Value to employers – improved performance, honesty, trust Value to self – justice, fulfilment, wellbeing, identity, human right, mental health If a manager – what is the value of listening to employees
3. Voice in local government.	Organizational perspective?	Viewed positively or negatively within LG organizations? Impact of direct voice on collective representation Effects of restructuring
	Human resource management	Direct voice as a management tool? Distinctiveness of HR in public sector. Relationship with TUs e.g. partnership working, and changes since reorganization. Voice as an element of HPWS HR as moral compass or reinforcer of state of play.
4. Diverse older employees	More or less older employees now as TU members?	Many over 65s? Do older employees attend TU meetings or seek to be active? Do they choose to be reps?
	Contribution of older workers	Knowledge, skills, experience, and reasonable adjustments from TU perspective. Is union guidance fully valued?
	Workforce diversity over time?	Cohort expectations (e.g. around retirement age) Change in ethnic mix.

	Attitude of others to age. A heterogeneous group? GMB strategy for older employees?	Promising number of TU membership in black employees. Younger workers, Line managers. Stereotyping. Supportive cultures? Mention role in recruiting TU members. Multiple diversity. Does having other protected characteristics affect propensity to use voice? How does TUC engage with older workers? Is there an equality forum at a national/ regional level? Is there a national strategy? How does this cascade to the local level? Do older members contribute to the strategy? Do TUs contribute to LG equality policy?
5. Use of voice mechanisms e.g., Digital media, meetings, one to ones, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, working groups, employee reps, TU reps, Partnership groups, JCC, employee forums, team meetings, employee member on board, Quality circle, appraisal	Usefulness of new methods Significance of mechanism for older and diverse workers voices Perception of older employee desire for voice Individual propensity Thoughts on deliberate silence and organizational factors	Social media and difficult to reach groups. Usefulness for TUs Preferences. Age champions? Impact of reorganization on established mechanisms such as JCCs Career aspirations, biding time or no interest Are there factors which make an individual more likely to contribute? For older and older diverse employees. Employee or management led.

6. Developments	Anything in the pipeline. Way forward for Tus and future TU objectives for voice	Social media?
Closing interview	Brief summary Thank you Give timescale for transcript if wanted. Ask permission to make contact if there are further developments	

Interview schedule checklist: B21 Older worker

Introduction:

Assurances

1. If not comfortable with questioning or any aspect of the interview please make me aware, questions can be removed or reworded or I can leave at any time. An explanation is not required.
2. A copy of the transcript will be provided for approval.
3. Data will be stored safely and used in accordance with SHU policy and Data Protection Act 1998
4. Explain how the information provided will be used and that organizations and persons will be anonymised in the thesis.

Purpose of research

Evaluating the significance of employee voice to older, and older diverse, local government employees (to facilitate a fair contribution to working life and just outcomes for the employee)

Definition of employee voice

The ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners

Definition of older employee

The choice of 52 years has been taken in recognition that biological, psychosocial, functional, organizational and lifespan ages may differ between individuals. 52 years is a mean value calculated from the combination of these aspects taken from other research.

Initial research areas

1. The local government context for the employee voice of older employees from the perspectives of the principal stakeholders, considering its history and reorganizations.

2. The role of HRM and HR functions in reinforcing asymmetrical power relations through shaping employee voice channels for older local government employees.

3. The location and intersections of potential barriers and enablers to employee voice as being more societally, organizationally or individually situated in older employees.

4. How current voice mechanisms and diversity policy interrelate to influence the employee voice of older employees with respect to their age and other ways in which they may be diverse.

Area of interest	Data required	Possible issues/ discussion points
1. Own role –general introduction	Place in organization Does it relate to voice in anyway?	Tenure Change in context over the years? Does role expect or provide a voice for others? Does role affect propensity to speak out?
2. Purpose of employee voice	Perception from an employee perspective.	Value to employers – improved performance, honesty, trust? Value to self – justice, fulfilment, wellbeing, identity, human right, mental health? If a manager – what is the value of listening to employees
3. Voice in own role	Feeling listened to in role and as a person. Support in current situation Do others actively seek views? Are these views acted on?	Evidence of value. Like to offer views? Kept in the loop, consulted or involved? TU support? Managers, leaders, union. Influence on own work and wider issues Effect of austerity, cuts, reorganization, outsourcing

4. Voice in local government.	Organizational perspective Stakeholders Distinctiveness of working in public sector. Effects of outsourcing Role of Human Resources	Voice viewed positively or negatively in council. Collective voice. TUs & other representation Senior management team and Chief Exec - visible to employees? Who leads voice strategy, HR, CEO, Union? Do outside stakeholders have an influence? Public sector ethos? Impact of austerity. Has this affected your ability to influence decision making? How does this impact on you as an individual? Who promotes good practice regarding equality and diversity to you? Does your current circumstance make you more sensitive to E&D issues, including for yourself?
5. Diverse older employees	View on who should have a voice and at what level Contribution of older workers Older worker v younger worker motivation Level of comfort in speaking out?	Everyone? Knowledge, skills, experience. Need for reasonable adjustments Career aspirations, biding time or no interest? More or less inclined to speak out than when younger. Individual propensity. Factors which make an individual more likely to

	Other barriers/ enablers to older workers using their voice	contribute. Personality (e.g. openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism), background, caring responsibilities (TU meetings)
	Differences for manual employees	Multiple diversity. Does having other protected characteristics affect propensity to use voice? Physical difference over time.
	Culture and attitude of others to age	Do people keep quiet about disability that comes with age? Do physical demands become harder to meet?
	Workforce diversity over time?	Colleague support. Younger workers, managers, society in general. Stereotyping e.g. training/ ability to use IT, physical decline. Has (any) age caused you to feel at a disadvantage at work?
	TU representatives	Cohort expectations (e.g. around retirement age). Older workforce generally? More diverse workforce generally Are TU reps diverse? Is there an equality rep?

6. Use of voice mechanisms e.g., Digital media, meetings, one to ones, suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, working groups, employee reps, TU reps, Partnership groups, JCC, employee forums, team meetings, employee member on board, Quality circle, appraisal	How would you raise an idea or an issue with others in the organization? Usefulness of new methods Do you think the means of getting your voice across affects what you say? Significance of mechanism for older and diverse workers voices Thoughts on deliberate silence and organizational factors	Familiarity with mechanisms. Read list Prevalence and priority. Collective and direct. Has the role of TUs changed? Social media and difficult to reach groups. Carers. Impact of direct methods on collective representation Preferences. Role of social media? Anonymity (significance to diverse employees). Preferences of older workers. Impact of reorganization on established mechanisms such TU meetings. For older and older diverse employees. Causes of silence. Employee or management led.
7.Developments	Anything in the pipeline or any issue you think is important that we haven't discussed. If you could put one thing in place to help older workers, what would it be?	
Closing interview	Brief summary Thank you Give timescale for transcript. Ask permission to make contact if there are further developments **Do not forget the consent form**.	

Appendix 2: Samples from NVivo database

1. Sample memos 4.8.18 and 9.9.18
2. Sample of codebook from first cycle of coding
3. Screen print of node structure detailing 'Significance of age to EV' node
4. NVivo map of Theme 3: Local Government EV regimes
5. Descriptive coding sample showing transcript excerpts regarding mental health
6. Screen print of coding structure showing position of Mental Health node

1. Sample memos recorded on NVivo database

4 August 2018

This is harder than it looks! Having read all the transcripts through I am returning to my first interview to begin coding. I have used broad descriptive coding to categorise the text to aid more detailed work on the perceptions of this participant on the voice of older workers in the context.

I notice that the participant emphasises the struggle in getting her voice heard as a woman and how this has become improved over the years. She is proud of her achievements and of how the organization has progressed.

On coding the text, I am surprised how little of the content is to do with traditional HR (outside of employee relations). The participant focused on organizational development and design, and the language of marketization emerges from the text.

I am beginning to think about values and vision as a form of control and wonder if it is an outcome or means of reinforcing a hegemonistic culture and a direct replacement for what feels to be the more pluralistic public sector ethos

Having done the initial coding on this script, I am going to re-read what I have written in the literature review to relate the content back to theory. I have deliberately adopted this ordering strategy so that I could focus on the participant's voice.

9 September 2018

Having reached the end of the first cycle of coding to construct the inventory of major nodes, I have begun to read the text in isolation from the interview and interviewee. For example, I have read what the participants have said about HRM. Although the participants are discussing the same thing, they have contrasting interpretations and their thoughts may not be based on the same underlying assumptions about HRM. This is easier to see when it is alongside text on the same subject but the facility to quickly return to the original transcript for context using NVivo is helpful.

I can see that I will need to recode or code within the broad categories to achieve any depth of analysis. Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) description of eclectic and theoretical analysis fits well with the approach I have taken to interviewing my participants. For me, the role of theoretical reading is not about definitive theoretical concepts. Blumer (1954, p.7) views of sensitizing concepts is quoted by B&K and has provided a useful articulation of my own thoughts. "it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look." An example of this here is in adapting Kaufman's (2015a) ER model of voice

determinants to explore the local government and Gennard et al's (2016) model for considering the depth, breadth and influence of employee voice. Underlying all of this is guidance of Habermas's optimism on the possibility of ideal speech and communicative rationality, tempered by Hegel's belief that it takes 3 attempts to get things right. I relate this to Facebook and the likes in the interventions that are ongoing to restore an ethical rationality to the contributions of participants.

Although challenging, I had considered the theoretical perspective from the onset probably because of the MRes course lectures and my own learning style as a theorist so will continue along these lines. It is time for a pause for thought, discussions with my supervisors and more reading.

2. Sample of codebook from first cycle of coding

Name	Description
Age	Parent node for content relating to age. Given as a separate category from other characteristics of diversity due to significance to the research question
Ageing workforce	Workforce demographic changes over time and impact from an organizational perspective
Contribution	Characteristics, qualities and roles that older workers can contribute to the organization and their colleagues
Older worker voice	Perceptions of voice including personal changes in attitude, views on who is listening and preferred mechanisms
Stereotyping and discrimination	Examples of discrimination and also examples non-discriminatory practice. Self-imposed discrimination and frustrations because of other people's attitude to age
Working for longer	Items to do with working for longer as an older person, that is, as it affects the individual
Younger workers	Older worker views of younger workers. Value of relationship
Context	Parent node covering the issues affecting local government as an entity and the effects on individuals and organizations
Change	General comments about change or change and voice

Name	Description
Employee view	Views of older workers about the success or otherwise of change and the effect on workloads
Funding change outcomes	Impact of funding cuts, ways of alleviating service pressures. Implications for staff wellbeing, short termism
Organizational Design	Reorganization and organizational development, functional flexibility, new delivery models, redundancy, job evaluation. Includes references to other councils where employee has worked there previously
Outsourcing	Examples and effects of outsourcing on organization and individuals. Voice and outsourced employees
Culture	Perceptions of culture around voice within the research organizations, the regions they are sited in and the effects of other industries on attitude to voice
Leadership	General node for leadership and management attitudes. Includes councillor, senior manager and line manager perspectives. Also, employee perceptions of managers and leadership.
Marketization	Introduction and outcomes of adopting private sector practices. Evidence of and attitude to these
Public sector ethos	Views and examples of existence of an ethos of serving the community
Diversity	Parent node, that is Indexing category including all aspects of diversity except age

Name	Description
Disability	Visible and invisible. Experience of disability from a disabled and non-disabled perspective
Gender issues	Matters relating to gender. Policy, voice and opportunities
Individual variegation	Differences other than protected characteristics due to individual personality, background and experience

3. Screenprint of node structure showing detail of 'Significance of age to EV' node

Template analysis version of older workers.nvp - NVivo Pro

DATA ANALYZE QUERY EXPLORE LAYOUT VIEW

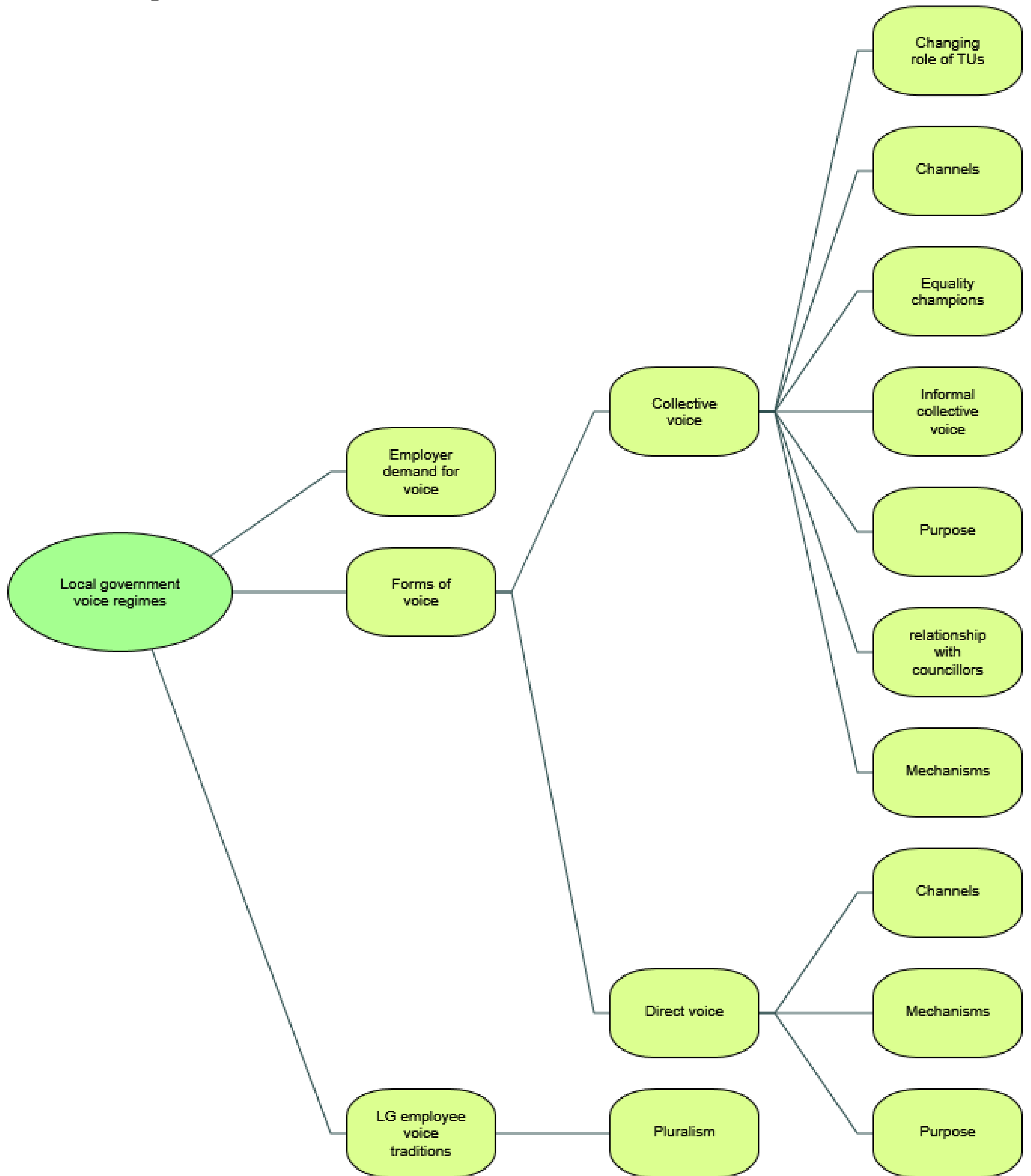
ies Edit Paste Cut Copy Merge Clipboard Format Paragraph Reset Settings Styles Select PDF Selection Text Region Editing Find Insert Replace Delete ABC Spellir Proofi

Look for Search In Nodes Find Now Clear Advanced Find

Nodes

Name	Sources	References
Older employee perceptions of EV	0	0
Significance of age to EV as an individual	1	1
Individual variegation and EV	1	1
Generational difference within age	1	1
working beyond 65	14	30
Personality	4	5
Emotional or attitudinal representations	0	0
introversion	18	26
Serial voicers	3	4
Tendency for advocacy	7	9
Voice preferences	12	16
Union membership	3	3
Last resort	2	2
Tenure	7	15
Personal ageism and other discrimination	2	2
Intersection with other ways of being diverse	10	11
Contract type	1	1
Disability	15	20
Age related	5	6
Visibility	2	2
Gender issues	9	14
Race	9	17
Role	14	24
Sexual orientation	1	1
Stereotyping	23	32
Ageism and younger workers	8	9
Ageism of other older managers and workers	2	2
Self discrimination and denial	7	8

4. NVivo map of theme 3



5. Descriptive coding sample showing transcript excerpts for mental health node

Please note

- First highlighted line shows the source of the data, either employee or organizational, the transcript code and the percentage of the transcript covered by the data fragment.
- Second highlighted line shows whether it is the first reference from a source or whether it is the second, or above, from the same source.
- Italicised text indicates that the researcher is speaking.
- Plain text indicates the participant is speaking.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\A4HA23 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.99% Coverage

there's more people that are stressed now. Whatever that means. Stressed. If, as a result of speaking to someone, you get things off your chest, you get information that you perhaps might not know, to clarify things that might causing you anxiety or, or other sources of stress, got to be a good thing.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\B4AH15 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.72% Coverage

Would you say that it helps your mental health?

Yes definitely. Physical illness you can always do a great deal about but sometimes people get up and they don't feel valued so they don't want to go to work. It can come out as sickness and ends up on people's sickness record.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\B4HA21 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.20% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.20% Coverage

Of course, it is it's absolutely essential.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\C4AH13 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.41% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.41% Coverage

if you don't feel valued you can get fed up and it's easy to end up in a downward spiral. Mental health is very important.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D3FA34 transcript> - § 2 references coded [2.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.79% Coverage

do you think it helps you to be more at peace with yourself if you can speak up and you know where to go to voice something?

I don't think, although we're looking at mental health, I don't think we've done enough yet. I mean we've got things like the 24-hour counselling helpline and things that you know the HR equality officer has put together, but I think actually, the one to one with managers, I'm not quite sure whether people are comfortable yet to share things, certain managers that you can, but there's certain ones that you wouldn't. I get that it's a mixed bag.

Reference 2 - 1.13% Coverage

I mean, I'm a manager as well, I line manage six people just in an acting capacity and I hope that I personally, do listen and you know will take into account what people say and I say different, but I try to anyway. I understand what it's like you know if you're mental health is affected so, you know, I try to treat people how I'd like to be treated myself.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA18 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.67% Coverage

It doesn't do you any good to hold things in, if you have something to say it's got to be said. If you have a problem you have to get it out in the open.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA26 Transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

Yes. And do you think it keeps you mentally well?

We wouldn't be back here if we were mentally well not for another minute, would we? (laugh) Yeah, I suppose it does.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA27 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

And mental health?

I think that mental health has a lot of things to it; I think having a voice is part of that, yes. It helps with your self-esteem as well if you're contributing.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA29 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.45%

Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.45% Coverage

Yeah, it gives you a good mind. Your mind stays intact. Cos if you followed everything they said, you'd end up brain dead. Know what I mean.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA30 Transcript> - § 1 reference coded [1.00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.00% Coverage

Yeah.

I think here though, you do have support and with mental issues. In this actual building.

That's emphasised is it?

I think that there's a quiet space, you know, where if things are getting topside of you, but I've forgotten where it is, but it's like a quiet room, or you know, so, if you've got a problem or I do think you can get counselling if you suffer with anxiety and things like that.

<Internals\\Employee perspectives\\D4HA33 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.58% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.58% Coverage

So, you think that having a voice and being listened to helps your personal wellbeing?

Yeah, it would. Yeah, cos you're not getting yourself stressed. I, bottle, I bottle stuff up really and then when I explode, I explode.

<Internals\\Organizational practice\\B3FA36 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.52% Coverage

from an employee's point of view do you think that it impacts on their wellbeing having a voice.

I do, absolutely do yeah. In terms of mental health and building things up and feeling supported, yeah I absolutely do.

<Internals\\Organizational practice\\C3GA19 transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.65% Coverage

It makes them feel part of a bigger whole and feel part of a family if there is somebody there to respond on this or that, so yes I do.

6. Screen print of coding structure showing position of Mental Health node

Nodes

- Nodes
  - Second cycle coding
  - Special items
- Cases
- Relationships
- Node Matrices

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders

Look for | Search In | Nodes | Find Now

Nodes

Name

- Significance of age to EV as an individual
- Older employee perceptions of EV
  - Value of voice
    - To older employee
      - Wellbeing
        - Mental health
      - Opportunity to contribue
    - To employer
  - Enablers
  - Basis for using EV
  - Barriers
  - Attitude to voice
- Local government employee voice
- LG contextual influences
- Evolving employee voice through HRM

Appendix 3: Steps to analysis

Template analysis generally, but not prescriptively, follows a sequence of steps which for this research were as illustrated in Figure 15. The structured approach assists in providing a clear audit trail as discussed. Although the figure suggests a linear process, iteration occurs in refining the template, so that the template evolves over time throughout the analysis (King & Brooks, 2017).

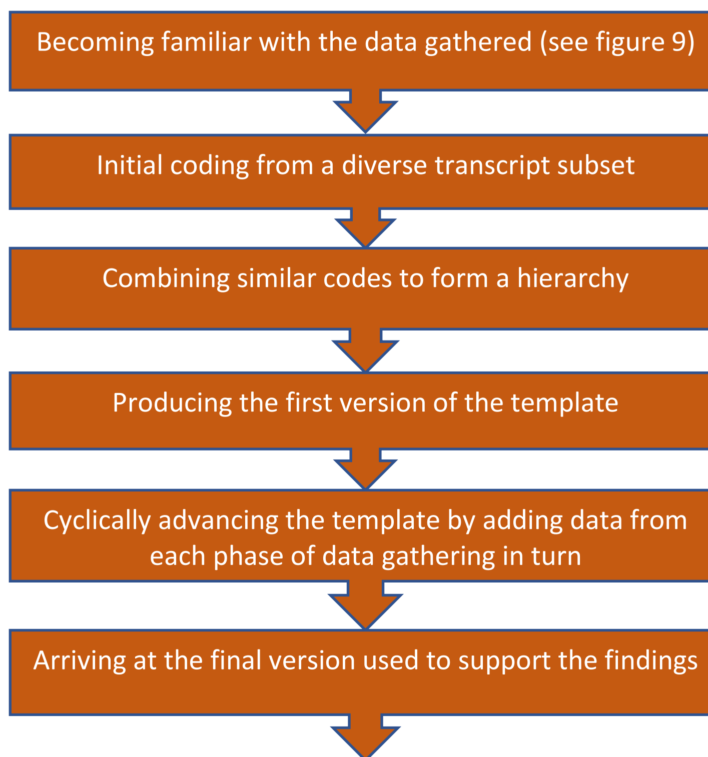


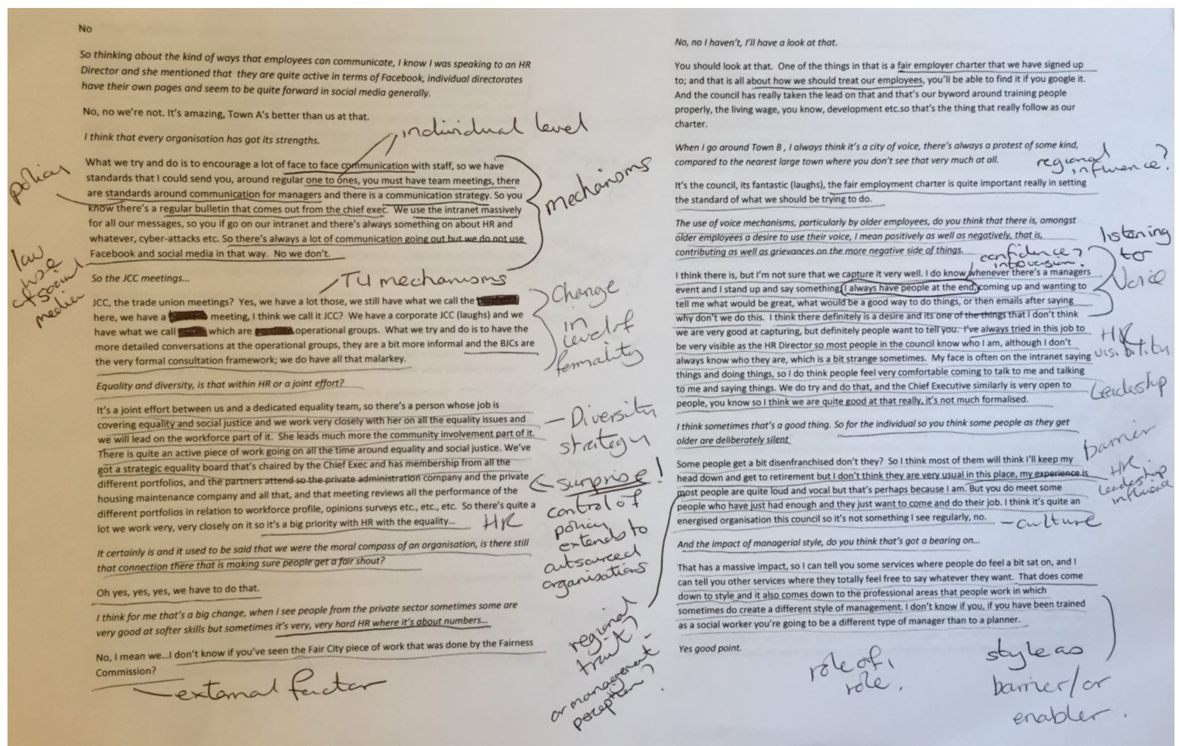
Figure 15: Appendix 3 - Steps in template analysis in this research (adapted from Kings & Brooks, 2017)

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

Although not all of what is said during an interview is useful (Bryman & Bell, 2015), the act of verbatim transcription encourages familiarity with the data. Using NVivo makes it relatively simple to identify the source of a quotation, thus easing contextualisation to clarify what was intended. Field notes taken at the time of interview were not transcribed; the original writing was legible and could be read alongside the interview transcripts. The notes were my own thoughts and impressions, whereas the CAQDAS database was assigned to participant data.

Template analysis differs from other forms of thematic analysis, in that a subset of the data is coded to produce an initial template, which is then added to and amended as other transcripts are introduced (Brooks et al, 2015). At the familiarisation stage, suitable transcripts for the initial analysis were identified, based on their heterogeneity

and data gathering phase. The purpose of this was to develop an initial template that would be generally useful rather than one suitable for only certain participants, which are clumsy to use and amend for other groups (King & Brooks, 2017).



No

So thinking about the kind of ways that employees can communicate, I know I was speaking to an HR Director and she mentioned that they are quite active in terms of Facebook, individual directorates have their own pages and seem to be quite forward in social media generally.

No, no we're not. It's amazing, Town A's better than us at that.

I think that every organisation has got its strengths.

What we try and do is to encourage a lot of face to face communication with staff, so we have standards that I could send you, around regular one to ones, you must have team meetings, there are standards around communication for managers and there is a communication strategy. So you know there's a regular bulletin that comes out from the chief exec. We use the intranet massively for all our messages, so you if go on our intranet and there's always something on about HR and whatever, cyber-attacks etc. So there's always a lot of communication going out but we do not use Facebook and social media in that way. No we don't.

So the JCC meetings...

JCC, the trade union meetings? Yes, we have a lot those, we still have what we call the ████ here, we have a ████ meeting, I think we call it JCC? We have a corporate JCC (laughs) and we have what we call ████ which are ████ operational groups. What we try and do is to have the more detailed conversations at the operational groups, they are a bit more informal and the BJCs are the very formal consultation framework; we do have all that malarkey.

Equality and diversity, is that within HR or a joint effort?

It's a joint effort between us and a dedicated equality team, so there's a person whose job is covering equality and social justice and we work very closely with her on all the equality issues and we will lead on the workforce part of it. She leads much more the community involvement part of it. There is quite an active piece of work going on all the time around equality and social justice. We've got a strategic equality board that's chaired by the Chief Exec and has membership from all the different portfolios, and the partners attend so the private administration company and the private housing maintenance company and all that, and that meeting reviews all the performance of the different portfolios in relation to workforce profile, opinions surveys etc., etc., etc. So there's quite a lot we work very, very closely on it so it's a big priority with HR with the equality...

It certainly is and it used to be said that we were the moral compass of an organisation, is there still that connection there that is making sure people get a fair shout?

Oh yes, yes, yes, we have to do that.

I think for me that's a big change, when I see people from the private sector sometimes some are very good at softer skills but sometimes it's very, very hard HR where it's about numbers...

No, I mean we...I don't know if you've seen the Fair City piece of work that was done by the Fairness Commission?

No, no I haven't, I'll have a look at that.

You should look at that. One of the things in that is a fair employer charter that we have signed up to; and that is all about how we should treat our employees, you'll be able to find it if you google it. And the council has really taken the lead on that and that's our byword around training people properly, the living wage, you know, development etc.so that's the thing that really follow as our charter.

When I go around Town B , I always think it's a city of voice, there's always a protest of some kind, compared to the nearest large town where you don't see that very much at all.

It's the council, its fantastic (laughs), the fair employment charter is quite important really in setting the standard of what we should be trying to do.

The use of voice mechanisms, particularly by older employees, do you think that there is, amongst older employees a desire to use their voice, I mean positively as well as negatively, that is, contributing as well as grievances on the more negative side of things.

I think there is, but I'm not sure that we capture it very well. I do know whenever there's a managers event and I stand up and say something, I always have people at the end, coming up and wanting to tell me what would be great, what would be a good way to do things, or then emails after saying why don't we do this. I think there definitely is a desire and its one of the things that I don't think we are very good at capturing, but definitely people want to tell you. I've always tried in this job to be very visible as the HR Director so most people in the council know who I am, although I don't always know who they are, which is a bit strange sometimes. My face is often on the intranet saying things and doing things, so I do think people feel very comfortable coming to talk to me and talking to me and saying things. We do try and do that, and the Chief Executive similarly is very open to people, you know so I think we are quite good at that really, it's not much formalised.

I think sometimes that's a good thing. So for the individual so you think some people as they get older are deliberately silent

Some people get a bit disenfranchised don't they? So I think most of them will think I'll keep my head down and get to retirement but I don't think they are very usual in this place, my experience is most people are quite loud and vocal but that's perhaps because I am. But you do meet some people who have just had enough and they just want to come and do their job. I think it's quite an energised organisation this council so it's not something I see regularly, no.

And the impact of managerial style, do you think that's got a bearing on...

That has a massive impact, so I can tell you some services where people do feel a bit sat on, and I can tell you other services where they totally feel free to say whatever they want. That does come down to style and it also comes down to the professional areas that people work in which sometimes do create a different style of management. I don't know if you, if you have been trained as a social worker you're going to be a different type of manager than to a planner.

Yes good point.

Figure 16: Appendix 3 - Example of data familiarisation and developing early coding

The primary data gathered at interview, observation and workshop was supported by secondary data in the form of organizational documentation and webpage material. The secondary data was processed manually, to verify and compare with participant responses.

Step 2: Preliminary coding for the initial template

In template analysis, as in all but the most positivistic of research techniques, theme development is influenced by the reseacher, and therefore not wholly correspondent with fact; as King (2012, p. 431) says of themes, "they do not lie waiting to be discovered, like a fossil in a rock". Theme identification using Ryan and Bernard's (2003) suggestions, highlighed, for example, repetition, similarities and differences between sources, and metaphors to explain perceptions of a role or hierarchical position. Furthermore, a priori themes focused the coding onto the main areas of interest. As King and Brooks (2017) point out a priori themes are frequently used within the limited realist variant of template analysis but should be small in number and discarded where they are found not to be useful.

A priori theme	Description
Perceptions of EV as a concept	Includes: forms, mechanisms, purpose and scope of voice. Perceived value to self and organization. Continuum of voice to silence
Age/ individual variegation factors and EV	Includes: ageing and propensity to voice. Emotional representations such as frustration and cynicism. Combination of personal effects of age and other factors such as personality.
Ageism/ other discrimination and EV	Includes: those forms of discrimination intersecting with age that affect EV. E&D policy and the equality, diversity and inclusion approaches.
Local Government EV regimes	Includes: trade unionism, collective bargaining and direct forms of voice. Depth and width of mechanisms. Balance between direct and collective voice.
HR strategy and purpose for EV	Includes: role, HPWS, strategic aspirations, unitary direction, ownership/ managers of voice mechanisms. Relationships within LG.
Contextual influences on local government EV	Includes: Central government policy, regulation, austerity, traditions, pluralism, localism, politics, professionalism, ethos marketization and out sourcing

Table 10: Appendix 3 - A priori themes used to analyse data

The six a priori themes (Table 10) were informed by the research objectives as developed through the literature review, married with Wilkinson et al's (2018) suggestions regarding the influences on employee voice at the macro, meso and micro-levels.

Step 3: Clustering

Following the preliminary coding, the tentative themes were transferred onto a mind map again using NVivo, to facilitate identification of any interrelationships between codes. As King and Brooks (2017) recommend, clustering should incorporate some

experimentation so that the relationships between themes can be freely investigated. By using colour to indicate hierarchical positioning, and displaying only higher-level themes, the relationships between themes became clearer. The full code list was held in an Excel table which was referred to when a greater level of detail was required.

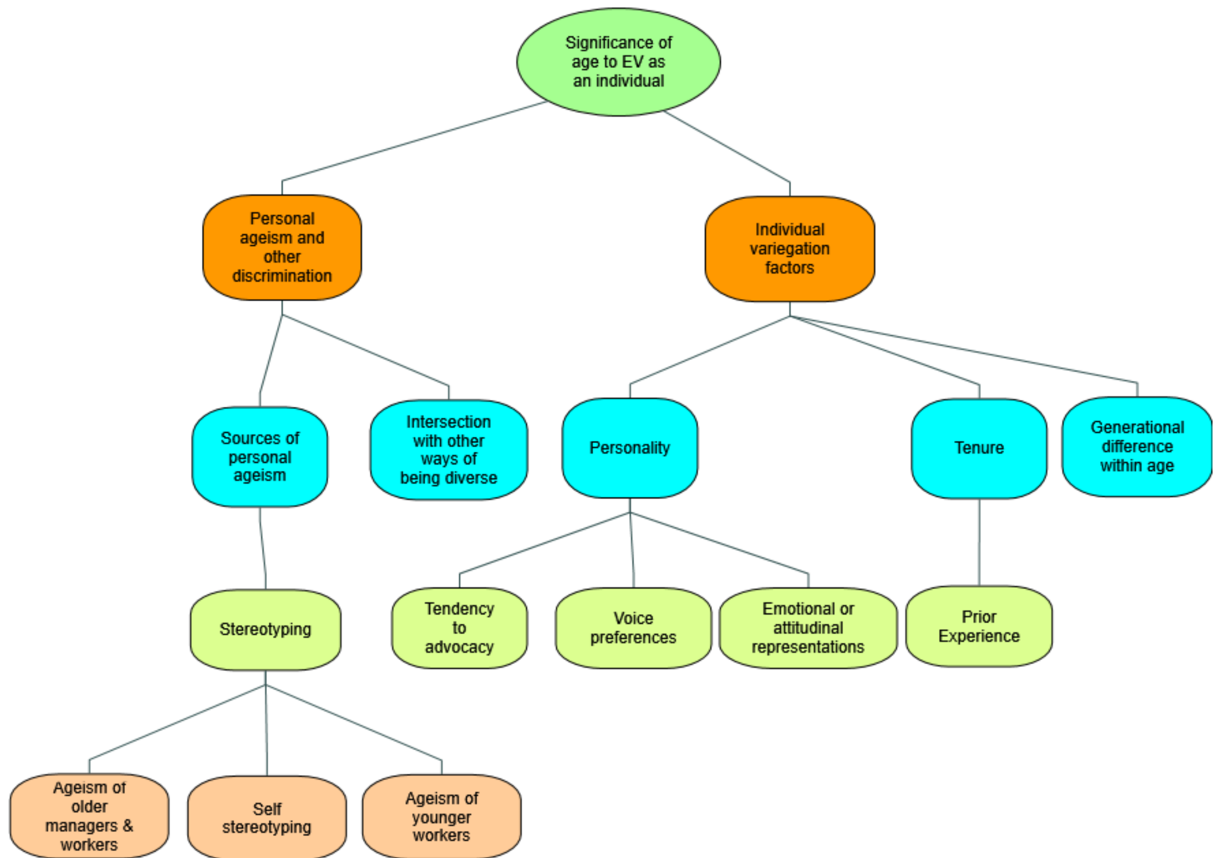


Figure 17: Appendix 3 - An example of early theme clustering

One a priori theme was reworked through combining 'personal ageism and other discrimination' and 'individual variegation factors', into one theme of 'significance of age to EV as an individual' as shown in Figure 17. The sub codes beneath the two themes were repositioned in the template to reflect their interrelatedness, resulting in the five final themes (Figure 10)

Initial template themes after first revision
1.0 HR EV strategy 1.1 Influence of CIPD discourse 1.2 Legal obligations 1.3 Purpose of collective voice 1.4 Purpose of direct voice 1.5 Relationship with employee **2.0 Local government context for voice** 2.1 Austerity 2.2 Central government policy 2.3 Change 2.4 Culture 2.5 Equality and diversity strategy 2.6 LG party politics 2.7 Regional influences 2.8 Workforce diversity **3.0 Local government employee voice regimes** 3.1 Balance of forms 3.2 Depth of employee influence 3.3 Employer desire for voice 3.4 Forms of voice 3.4.1 Collective voice 3.4.1.1 Changing role of TUs 3.4.1.1.1 Impact of direct voice 3.4.1.1.2 Membership changes 3.4.1.1.3 Role in outsourced organizations 3.4.1.2 Channels 3.4.1.3 Equality champions 3.4.1.4 Equality representatives 3.4.1.5 Informal collective voice 3.4.1.6 Mechanisms 3.4.1.6.1 Codetermination 3.4.1.6.1.1 Collective bargaining 3.4.1.6.1.2 Negotiation 3.4.1.6.1.3 Partnership working 3.4.1.6.2 Consultation 3.4.1.6.2.1 Informal mechanisms 3.4.1.6.2.2 Formal mechanisms 3.4.1.7 Purpose 3.4.1.8 Relationship with councillors 3.4.2 Direct voice 3.4.2.1 Channels 3.4.2.2 Mechanisms 3.4.2.3 Purpose 3.5 Local Government EV traditions **4.0 Older employee perceptions of EV** 4.1 Barriers 4.2 Enablers 4.3 Expectations of voice 4.4 Motivations for EV 4.5 Responsibility for EV 4.6 Value of voice 4.7 What is voice? **5.0 Significance of age to EV as an individual** 5.1 Individual variegation and EV 5.1.1 Generational difference within age 5.1.2 Personality 5.1.3 Tenure 5.2 Personal ageism and other discrimination 5.2.1 Intersection with other forms of diversity 5.2.2 Stereotyping

Table 11: Appendix 3 - Initial template (expanded sub theme of collective voice)

Step 4: Producing the initial template

As the logical construction of themes on the template emerged, coding concerning equality and diversity legislation might have been sited within the theme illustrated in Figure 17, but was situated within 'Contextual influences on employee voice' because of the wide-reaching implications of the legislation for all employees. The first revision of the initial template (Table 11) provides an example of where the coding has followed an area of interest (King & Brooks, 2017) resulting in a taller hierarchy, in this case for the sub-theme of 'Collective voice'.

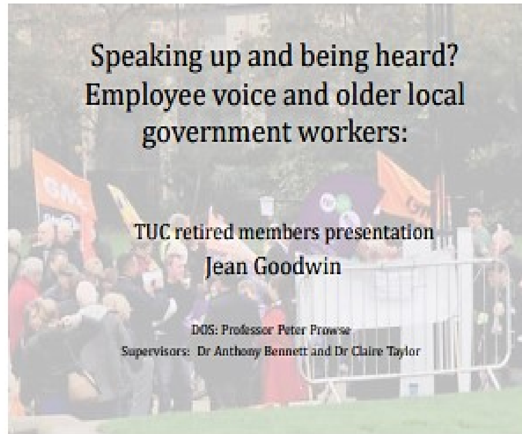
Step 5: Applying and developing the template

At this stage new data was applied to the initial template (King & Brooks, 2017), with one phase of data added, before moving onto the next. Consequently, significant codes emerged for some groups, for example for participants working at a strategic level, perhaps unsurprisingly, 'central government policy' featured prominently. Using NVivo highlighted possible redundant or replicated codes, and alerted the researcher to possible integrative codes for example 'unitarization'. A template review after 11 transcripts facilitated a third revision of the template.

As the template developed, notes were recorded of areas of new interest or relationships within the data, to be applied at the next revision. Further iterations of the full template review were applied after 21 and 31 transcripts. Once all the transcripts were coded, a final review was used to identify omissions, to ensure that the template offered a good representation of the data. Finally, a reflexive consideration of how a priori assumptions might have affected the analysis completed the process. As King and Brooks (2017) advise, there is no definite point at which the template is complete and knowing when the template is good enough is the decision of the researcher. The final five themes emerging from the process can be viewed at Figure 10.

Appendix 4: Retired members' workshop

1. Presentation to members
2. Discussion notes



Background

- Research setting - northern councils
- Ex-employee - Important to acknowledge possible bias
- Employee voice, defined as:
  "the ways and means through which employees attempt to have a say and potentially influence organizational affairs relating to the issues that affect their work and the interests of managers and owners." Wilkinson et al (2014, p.5)
- Older workers taken as aged 52 years and above (McCarthy et al, 2014) . Acknowledges ways in which older workers are diverse
- Takes the employee's perspective

Why?

- Ageing workforce
- Retirement age likely to accelerate to 68 (2037 to 2039)

- Tendency of employers to treat older workers as a group rather than as individuals
- Growing career aspirations of older workers ignored

- Impact of austerity and radical change in public sector
- Weakness in legislation

- Role of voice in achieving equality and social justice is under researched

My research question

How is employee voice perceived and used by older local government employees; who is listening and why?

Employee Involvement and participation

What I did

Area of investigation	Participants	Accessed through
1. History and context	Leaders, HR Directors x 3, Councillors x 2, CIPD branch official, Regional TU official	Network of local government colleagues and supervisor recommendation
2.Organisational practice	HR ER Advisers x 4, TU representatives x 2 (+), Equality and Diversity officers x 4 HR Engagement officer Employee representatives of equality groups	CIPD branch meetings, approaching a TU demonstration and gathering business cards. Attending public meetings of councils. Attending E and D workforce forum
3. Secondary and supporting data	N/A	National data sets and publically available organisational documentation
4. Perceptions of older employees	Inclusive sample of older employees x 20	Finding organisational contacts in HR and regional TU office. TU representatives

Making my research findings trustworthy

- Credibility – Interviewing participants who have different roles, backgrounds and contract types relevant to answering the research question
- Transferability – Creating an in depth description of what I find so that others recognize elements that can be applied to their own situation.
- Dependability – taking an auditing approach through maintaining clear records of decision making and field notes
- Confirmability – acting in good faith without prejudging the findings
- + Authenticity – a fair representation of the different viewpoints

Page jumpers

- Equality and diversity practice is assumed to be good by all parties
- Different outcomes for office based and manual workers
- Public sector ethos perceived to be stronger in older employees
- Strong work ethic of the over 65s
- Stereotyping less evident than expected. Grievances in older work group more to do with pay and conditions than personal differences
- Good relationship and team approach with younger workers. Older workers sometimes voice on behalf of younger workers and younger workers help out with older workers issues e.g. a physical difficulty.
- Increase in direct voice methods reduces reliance on trade unions
- Direct methods seen as weakening union position
- Structural change and short termism obstructing voice of middle managers and supervisors.
- Age related issues such as menopause and episodes of cancer may reduce an individual's confidence in speaking out. Other age related conditions likely to impact in future.
- Relationship between unions and councillors is alive and well

What do you think?

Thank you for listening and lets talk!

Discussion notes and summary of presentation delivered at TUC Retired Members Forum ███ General Meeting

Monday 16 July 2018 ██ ███

11am to 1:30 pm

Present: 20 members and officials (Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary) of the forum. Several unions were represented, 15 members being male and 5 females. Also present was Professor Peter Prowse, Director of Studies of PhD student researcher Jean Goodwin.

Agenda items 1-9 covered private administration and matters arising for the branch

11:30 am: Agenda item 10, PhD presentation by Jean Goodwin.

The presentation was originally planned for a smaller number but due to the encouraging turnout, JG switched to a general presentation.

Slide 1: Explained the interest in the subject area as due to observing the misreporting by the press of events where people were voicing their concerns and her difficulty in using her employee voice in NALGO meetings as a young person. Other significant factors were observing the effects of leadership, management style and organizational policy on being heard as an employee.

Slide 2: Concerned the background to the research, the choice of setting in northern councils and definitions of employee voice and choice of 52 years and over as being an older employee. Also, the research taking the employee view of employee voice.

Slide 3: Explained that the University needs evidence that the topic is suitable for a PhD and covers new ground i.e. the ageing population, the change in pension regulations affecting future older workers, the growing career aspirations of older workers, the impact of austerity, legislative weaknesses and the lack of research on employee voice as a means of achieving social justice.

Slide 4: The research question is "How is employee voice perceived and used by older local government employees; who is listening and why?

One member raised a question at this point about why other practices such as for recruitment are not considered. JG answered that although this is a well evidenced area of age discrimination, perhaps the most, PhD research necessitates that quite a narrow field be addressed in order to get the depth of research needed to meet the pass criteria

so that voice alone covered this. She added that recruitment and recognition are most definitely related to employee voice and recognized that the collective voice of the trade unions have achieved major advances in terms of pay and conditions.

Slide 5: This showed one of the models used to frame the research; using models to prepare questions and analyse answers is something that is required of PhD researchers. JG asked what kind of voice the members had in their work other than the collective voice of the trade unions.

One member described team meetings as being a regular occurrence where two-way conversations took place. Another member said that they would speak directly to their manager but that some managers did not accept that employees' opinions were worth hearing because of being promoted to the position of manager and beginning to believe they were a superior being. A third member described how an employee had thought of a cost saving measure potentially able to save the organization a large amount of money (something the union convenor agreed was feasible) but he was not listened to. JG commented that they might be more inclined to listen now because the cuts were making senior managers search for answers wherever they might come from. The member conveyed the depth of cuts in funding at their organization as major and far reaching. JG agreed, reliable sources had indicated this to be about 50% since 2010.

Slide 6: Explained that PhD research requires that you look at what other people have said about the subject you are covering and that she has investigated changing ideas around employee voice, the local government context, HR and HRM practice and age diversity.

One member commented that as HR moved away from being the personnel department, it evolved into another form of management. Another mentioned that people are now treated as a resource in the same way as any other and one member added that HR had become faceless.

Slide 7: Described the way JG had gathered data from various parties to explore the history and context of local government, organizational practice and views of employee voice from older employees.

Slide 8: Explained the design considerations required to ensure this type of research is trustworthy and worthwhile

Slide 9: listed the early findings of the research which JG invited the members to comment on.

Members agreed there are differences in outcomes for manual and office-based staff. A general discussion followed around the changes in pension regulations creating the difficult circumstance where someone is no longer able to do their original job but is still deemed to be capable of work of some kind and so does not qualify for their occupational pension. JG relayed the sentiment of a participant in the research who said that the only way to get a pension early is to be terminally ill and to be fair to HR advisers this was not something they felt comfortable with either. One member spoke of the effects of redeployment without full training for a new position as leading to dismissal under capability policies. Another person commented that because older people are more likely to be disabled, they are unable to take some roles and that this is a form of indirect discrimination (on the grounds of age). A member expressed his view that the impact of mortality is that some employees will never get to their state pension age and that this impact will increase with pension age increases.

Another member described how many of the older workers in their organization had been made redundant. The conclusion of the group was that this was either because of a desire to get new people into the organization or because of cost. JG commented that participants in the research had indicated that the cost element was a significant factor for schools in trying to make budget savings but that now, in other areas of local government, the cost of making an older employee redundant is high so they are being retained, sometimes against their wishes or expectations. A member remarked that the age of 55 years was significant for many in thinking about retirement.

Regarding the strong work ethic of the over 65s, several members talked of a change in culture in young people which also impacts negatively on their likelihood of joining a trade union.

Stereotyping was thought to be more evident in recruitment than in other areas. JG answered that despite this her sample included people who had been successful in gaining a position after 60 years of age despite their being many applicants and perhaps that it might be less of a problem for office workers in local government than in other sectors. JG suggested that IT skills can be an area where there is stereotyping and that this can be particularly irritating for older employees who have had a career in IT. Some older people have good IT skills and others do not in common with the general working population. For employee voice, a major problem is that about 30 percent of the work force doesn't have access to a computer. One member described how a manager had interfered with his employees' access to IT equipment which he put down

to the manager being a controlling individual desiring that he should be the only point of access who could then filter the information provided to those reporting to him. Following the meeting, one member added that the organization he worked with had been more forward thinking and had given all their workers IPads.

There were no comments regarding the finding that older/ younger worker relationships were often good and helpful to teamwork.

There was general agreement with the finding that the increase in methods for expressing employee voice as an individual is negatively impacting on the collective voice. JG asked the room if they thought that, for example, this was a sign of the times, the rise of individualism or a strategy of management. At least one member stated that some organizations would rather not have a trade union presence. Another member reminded us that trade unions emerged from the capitalist system and reflect the hierarchy of capitalist organizations. He concluded that trade unions are part of the system and so keep us inside 'the box'. A member replied that the collective voice is the only realistic way to challenge bad management practice and poor conditions. The member remarking on capitalism suggested that there is not enough time devoted to debating the impacts and alternatives to capitalism. He suggested that a healthy debate could stimulate new thought and possible solutions. One member described how is voice was quashed by being blacklisted both by his industry and trade union. A member from the health service suggested that management consultants are presented as an opportunity to have a say but that, in reality, they get employees to do their work, take what employees say and present it in a report using fancy graphics which the employees could have produced at a lower cost.

The research finding on the effects of restructuring organizations attracted several contributions. Another member from the health service described how an entire layer of management had been removed causing the management layer above to be unable to work effectively and rather than move management responsibilities upwards much of the additional work was undertaken by the layer below. JG relayed that some of the research participants had said that this made having your voice heard quite difficult because the new managers did not understand the service they were delivering; this led to feelings of isolation for the manager. The member agreed this was feasible.

The members agreed that there would be an impact on employee voice because of age related health issues such as the menopause, cancer, prostate problems and ultimately, as the state pension age increases, other conditions such as dementia both in a personal

and a caring capacity. This was a cause for concern and felt to be less than an ideal situation. One member said the ideal would be for people to leave and to be supported in their decision when they felt personally ready to do so but added that this was unlikely to happen.

The last point raised by JG was that the relationship between unions and councillors in the research setting appeared to be alive and well, to the point that the union officials advise new councillors to beware of some senior managers continuing with the status quo rather than complying with the elected members' new objectives.

JG asked if there were any other questions and one member asked why the research had not been focused on younger workers. JG replied that she had considered this. There is other work taking place in the area and that as she is getting older herself thought it useful to consider the views of her peers and in some way to contribute to an improvement in the working life of older workers which ultimately, we all will be at some stage.

At this point the meeting moved to items 11 to 13 on the agenda and JG thanked the forum for their generosity in giving of their time and comments.

Appendix 5: Observation of equality forum

1. Participant information sheet
2. Observation notes

Sheffield Hallam University

Employee voice in Local Government, PhD research

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your interest in my research. Before you decide whether to take part, please take time to read the following information about why I am researching this area and how your data will be stored and used. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information about any aspect of the research. My contact details and those of the research supervisory team are at the bottom of the sheet.

Thank you for reading this.

Background of this study.
Local Government is experiencing a turbulent period of change affecting councillors, managers and employees alike. In addition to funding changes by central government, the local government workforce is ageing and is likely to age further. Modifications to state and occupational pension provisions are likely to result in employees working until later in their lives. In the past, local government leadership has encouraged a healthy exchange of views with employees via trade unions and directly with the individual. There are many positive examples of how local government ensured that diverse employees have had their say, however structural, functional and demographic changes may impact on the effectiveness of the channels and processes for employee voice.

What is the purpose of the study?
The study sets out to explore the employee voice of older workers in local government. Given the recent evidence of leading employment relations organizations, including ACAS, the Involvement and Participation Association and CIPD, that a strong employee voice encourages employee engagement in older employees, the research will focus on how this can be usefully facilitated. The aim of this is to encourage performance improvement for the organization and a just and positive work experience for the older employee. The perceptions of the older employees themselves regarding employee voice are of particular significance to the research; the knowledge and skills accumulated by this group are frequently cited as valuable thus I am setting out to establish if they are speaking out or lasting out until their retirement and why this might be so?

Why am I observing this forum?

I am observing today to gain understanding of the issues diverse employees encounter and how these are heard in local government. I will be paying special attention to your perspectives of employee voice, equality strategies and your experience of the local government context.

What will happen to the information collected in the study?

The information collected will be securely stored within the University. It will be analysed carefully in accordance with a research design approved by the supervisory team responsible guiding the research and will respect the recommendations of the ethics committee (approval reference SBS-258). You and the organization will be anonymous in both the collected data and in the thesis. Data will not be stored until after it has been anonymised.

All information collected for the study will be stored safely and securely in password protected computer files and any consent forms will be stored in locked drawers within University offices.

Contacts for further information

If you would like further clarification of any of the above information or have questions you would like to ask at any time, please contact one of us using the details below.

Jean Goodwin
Doctoral Researcher
Sheffield Hallam University

jean.goodwin@shu.student.ac.uk

Professor Peter Prowse
Director of Studies
Sheffield Hallam University

Dr Anthony Bennett

Supervisor

Sheffield Hallam University

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information.

Observation notes B16

Observation of a workforce equality event 26 April 2018

9:30am to 12:35 pm

Participants –

These numbered approximately 50 including facilitators. Visible or easily discernible variegation in terms of ethnicity, age, sex, disability, religion, marital status, contract type, role and council service. Participants were smartly dressed in office wear with some in attire conforming with their religion. Most of the men present wore ties.

Setting

A traditional council reception room, wood panelling and decorated with oil paintings conveying the special significance attached to the event. Delegates were seated around round tables averaging 10 per table. Materials for the workshops were distributed around the centre of the table and included was a quiz to test prior knowledge; the table I was seated at also had sweets and chocolates brought by older participant. I was seated at the table because this was to be the setting for the subsequent workshop on planning for an older workforce. Refreshments were provided. These were sited at the rear of the room and were freely provided on traditional ironstone crockery. A large screen was located at the front of the room for showing the films and PowerPoint presentations. A microphone was made available to presenters and questioners but some chose not to use them. The room was arranged to provide easy access for wheelchairs and those using a walking stick. I had asked and was granted permission to attend the event and was completely overt regarding my intentions.

Welcome

The deputy leader of the council welcomed delegates to the event. Commitment to the principles of equality and diversity was stated both from a council and personal perspective. The councillor had other engagements so could not stay for the whole event.

Introduction

Following a general welcome, a member of the HR team opened with a statement to set the tone of the event in stating that everyone has a protected characteristic, for example we all have an age. Then the officer moved on to discuss the PSED emphasising the proactive duties of the council. A list of the recent equality work initiatives was

focused on improving work with partners and achieving quality marks. The principal voice related initiatives discussed were the role contact advisors, the strategic equality and inclusion board and the workforce opinion survey. The opinion survey has been redeveloped for the next issue and a separate survey was available to disabled employees.

A discussion of the actions resulting from a previous equality event featured a 'you said, we did' type discussion and a change from the employee network of groups based around protected characteristics to larger themed events such as this one.

Numbers of managers completing equality, diversity and inclusion training were stated and there was an announcement of a new offer to be made available to first time line and middle managers.

A comprehensive list of new initiatives was proposed and two of significance to older workers were improvement to support for carers and joining a national review on hidden impairment.

Workforce data

The principal officer for inclusion and social justice presented an interpretation of the workforce data. This is available publicly and will be interpreted in detail from the source by the researcher. Points highlighted here were the change in the ratio of males to female which is now about 40:60 overall with differences in the various areas of council service, for example engineering is still heavily male dominated and the highest level of officers are more likely to be male. An unexpected finding is that at the extremes of the age range the numbers are more equal. There is a healthy representation of disabled employees at 11% although this has fallen from its peak. BAME representation is about 5% less than the general population but is improving. LGBT employees are lower than the general population (4.4%) but this was thought to be affected by non-declaration. The speaker added that younger people are more likely to declare their sexuality as LGBT.

The statistics include some of the external providers and the highest number of carers is in the older employee population.

81% of part time workers are women but in the over 55s there are more men.

An analysis of the employee opinion followed. The overall participation level was not given. From the available data trends of interest were that as employees get older or are disabled or carers satisfaction scores become lower.

Part time and temporary employees have higher scores and temporary full-time staff have the highest satisfaction rates.

A question-and-answer session followed. Issues included the levels of diverse staff in external agencies. Also, the numbers of BME staff submitting grievances and being subject to disciplinaries being inconsistent with performance data was questioned. This was answered by the HR representative that each case is treated and cared for as an individual matter. Also, an issue arising from managers seeking earlier help from HR is that they appear on the monitoring system earlier.

A further question concerned the occupational health provider in that if there was dissatisfaction with the service an employee would have no choice but to go back to the same provider for reassessment.

All questions were answered.

Break

15 minutes comfort and refreshment break. During this time, I spoke to the participants on the table and learned of their aspirations regarding higher education and the challenges of their areas of work. One participant had worked at a neighbouring authority and hoped that this would help their contribution to the workshop. I shared that I was a former local government employee and attempted to put the participants at ease with my presence and to evidence that I was trustworthy.

Workshops

There were 5 workshops of an hour's duration, each delegate being assigned to one based on their individual characteristics or work role were held. I was assigned to the planning for an older workforce workshop. The other workshops covered aspects of health and wellbeing, testing the workforce data, equality champions and mental health.

At the start of the workshop, I declared the purpose of my attendance to the participants and gave each person a participant information sheet to introduce the research and give the details of my supervisory team should there be any cause for complaint. I stated that I was observing but would be happy to answer questions. I answered a question on my perspective of the research subject and approach, and another on the PhD process.

Also, a participant requested that I feedback to the university that the opportunities to study part-time in the evening are very limited.

There were 9 participants on the table; one person was assigned the role of facilitator and another of note taker. Notes were in the form of a flip chart. Although I would have liked to take a photo of this, I felt that it might compromise individual anonymity so chose not to do this as I perceived it to be unethical and overly intrusive. The group was made up of a mix of individuals aged from 20s to mid-60s, two individuals from the BME community, 7 females and 2 males, an individual with a visible disability and an individual with a hidden disability (self-declared during the session), a mix of grades and areas of service.

The facilitator provided case studies of how McDonalds, B & Q and M&S had embraced the employment of older workers and cited improvements in performance and benefits to employees. Participants in the main contributed well to the discussion and where they were quieter, the facilitator directly addressed them for their opinion. The workshop worked well and participants listened carefully to the opinions of others and built on each other's arguments. It was a good example of an egalitarian forum.

Issues raised:

- Is the older workforce a 'problem', some roles are ideal? There is a need to think differently about older employees and see them as a resource and work more across teams.
- Perceptions that sickness was higher in older employees; the workforce data clearly disproved this idea.
- Flexitime, which was acknowledged as helpful to older employees, was not available to all. Some of this was obviously for the good reasons of service delivery but there was a perception that some of it was down to individual manager resistance. Again, flexible working was not available to all.
- Employee led schemes cost the council money.
- Agile working, which was interpreted as being able to work from home, was compared to other local authorities where it is much more prevalent, for reasons of accommodation costs as well as employee requests. It transpired that only officers above a certain grade were eligible for home working.
- A participant who was disabled conveyed the difficultly (12 months) in gaining a parking place to ease access. Would older employees need better access?

- The issue of older worker's IT skills was raised and the unsuitability of e-learning as a panacea for this. The existence of large amounts of old technology in the council and was presented as being more easily understood by older workers.
- A younger and older employee supported each other in describing the value of the relationship between younger and older employees. The older employee expressed the value of young employees in bringing fresh ideas into the organization.
- One participant, who was older, expressed that employees were becoming bored with change and that they did not feel fully utilised.
- There was inconsistency in the availability of initiatives across the authority, for example some areas ran lunchtime fitness classes.
- Variation in the facilities at different council buildings
- Older manual workers have different issues because of the physical nature of their work but some of this could be accommodated through changes to job design. There was a discussion on how this could be achieved in a specific area.
- Some of the mandatory training was thought to be of limited use to manual workers.
- Sessional work could be usefully addressed by creating an agency of older workers who would like to continue with some work after they retire. This would enable higher quality cover as they understand the organizational culture and processes within the council so would be able to hit the ground running.
- A younger participant offered that there is a 'cliff' that would be reached whereby the workers going into this pool would become unavailable. (NB. Did he mean that there will be many employees leaving together resulting in a skills gap?)
- Some managers are afraid of equality and diversity issues, especially disability and this creates barriers to progress
- The high cost of voluntary severance means that some employees who wish to retire will not be granted their request on financial grounds.
- One participant offered that the rules around pensions and phased retirement are restrictive and can affect retirement decisions.
- The pre-retirement course offered by the council was thought to be helpful.
- There is a need to directly consult with older workers.

The group were asked for two suggestions to take forward to the strategic equality and inclusion board and those selected were to create an agency of retired staff wanting short term work and to create a consultation group of employees over 55 to identify their needs and thoughts. The choice was made democratically and most of the workshop participants declared that the session had been useful and the others didn't express an opinion.

I thanked the participants for allowing me to sit in.

Film

A short film about the working lives of transgender employees was shown

Reflection

The diversity officer and HR facilitator briefly reflected on the workshops and gathered the suggestions of the various workshops.

CEO and close

The CEO expressed commitment to a fair and equal workplace and reflected on the council's recent success regarding the gender pay gap. He used storytelling to convey his frustration of the 'yes but' excuses made for not creating an equal workplace using the example of two neighbouring authorities who used opposite excuses for poor performance on the gender pay gap. One blamed outsourcing services and another blamed not outsourcing services.

He read out the suggestions and showed interest in the consultation group idea.

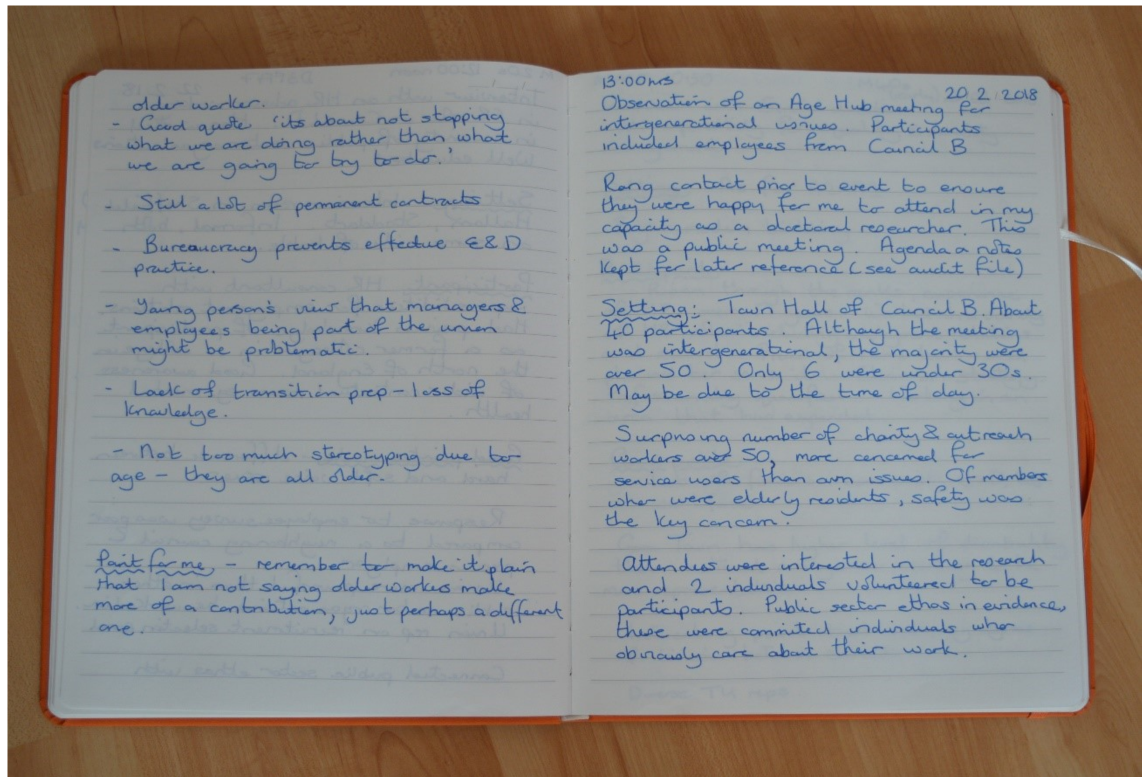
Final actions

I thanked the equality officer who had secured my attendance, and the social justice and inclusion manager for allowing me to observe.

Appendix 6: Excerpts from fieldnotes

Top: Notes from public meeting attended to gain access to the closed setting

Bottom: Notes from interview with participant D29


older worker.
- Good quote 'its about not stopping what we are doing rather than what we are going to try to do.'
- Still a lot of permanent contracts
- Bureaucracy prevents effective E&D practice.
- Young person's view that managers & employees being part of the union might be problematic.
- Lack of transition prep – loss of knowledge.
- Not too much stereotyping due to age – they are all older.

Point for me, – remember to make it plain that I am not saying older workers make more of a contribution, just perhaps a different one.

13:00hrs 20.2.2018

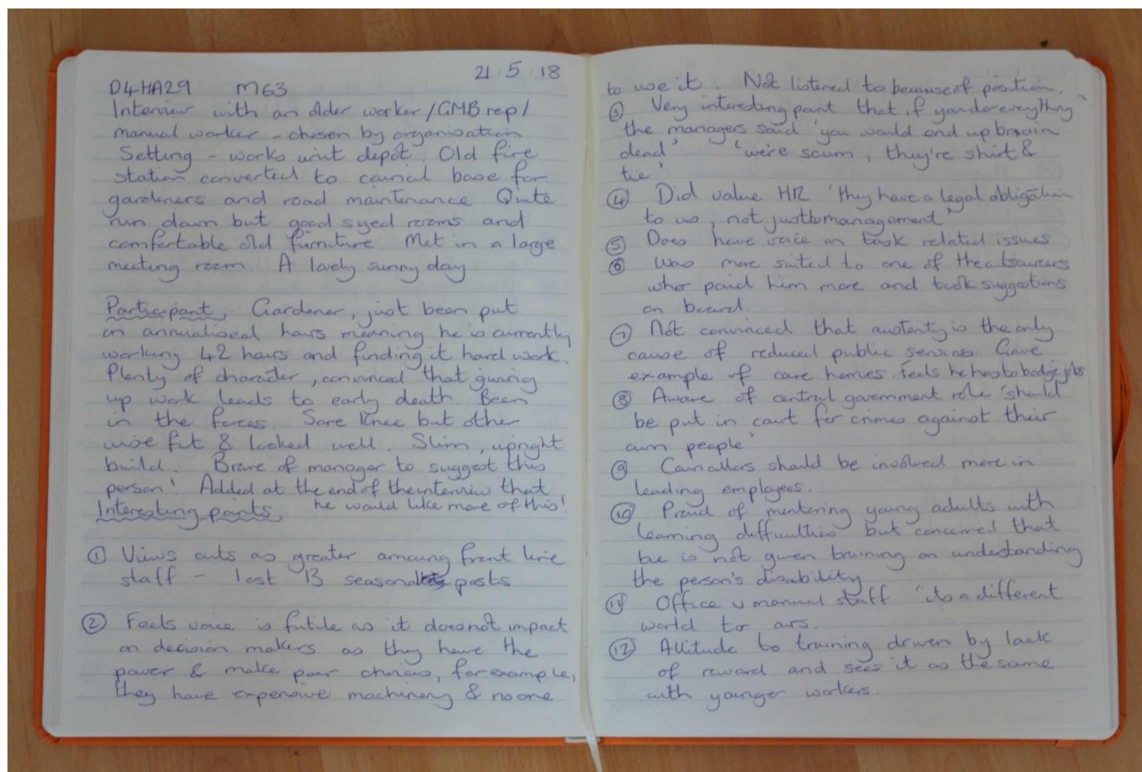
Observation of an Age Hub meeting for intergenerational issues. Participants included employees from Council B

Rang contact prior to event to ensure they were happy for me to attend in my capacity as a doctoral researcher. This was a public meeting. Agenda & notes kept for later reference (see audit file)

Setting: Town Hall of Council B. About 40 participants. Although the meeting was intergenerational, the majority were over 50. Only 6 were under 30s. May be due to the time of day.

Surprising number of charity & outreach workers over 50, more concerned for service users than own issues. Of members who were elderly residents, safety was the key concern.

Attendees were interested in the research and 2 individuals volunteered to be participants. Public sector ethos in evidence, these were committed individuals who obviously care about their work.


D4-HA29 M63 21.5.18

Interview with an older worker / GMB rep / manual worker – chosen by organisation. Setting – works unit depot. Old fire station converted to council base for gardeners and road maintenance. Quite run down but good sized rooms and comfortable old furniture. Met in a large meeting room. A lovely sunny day.

Participant, Gardener, just been put on annualised hours meaning he is currently working 42 hours and finding it hard work. Plenty of character, convinced that giving up work leads to early death. Been in the forces. Sore knee but otherwise fit & looked well. Slim, upright build. Brave of manager to suggest this person! Added at the end of the interview that he would like more of this!

Interesting points,

1. Views cuts as greater among front line staff – lost 13 seasonal posts
2. Feels voice is futile as it does not impact on decision makers as they have the power & make poor choices, for example, they have expensive machinery & no one to use it. Not listened to because of position.
3. Very interesting point that if you do everything the managers said 'you would end up brain dead' 'we're scum, they're shirt & tie'
4. Did value HR 'they have a legal obligation to us, not just to management'
5. Does have voice on task related issues
6. Was more suited to one of the outsourcers who paid him more and took suggestions on board.
7. Not convinced that austerity is the only cause of reduced public services. Gave example of care homes. Feels he has to bodge jobs
8. Aware of central government role 'should be put in court for crimes against their own people'
9. Councillors should be involved more in leading employees.
10. Proud of mentoring young adults with learning difficulties but concerned that he is not given training on understanding the person's disability
11. Office v manual staff 'its a different world to ours.
12. Attitude to training driven by lack of reward and sees it as the same with younger workers.