A Discursive Analysis of Organizational Age Inequality and Older Worker Identity

Kathleen Riach

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Management Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences University of Glasgow

© Kathleen Riach, 2007
Declaration of Originality and Copyright

The author of this thesis declares that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree.

All work presented represents the author's own work except when referenced to others.

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the UK Copyright Acts as qualified by the University of Glasgow. Due acknowledgement must always be made when referring to any material within or derived from this thesis.
Abstract

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

Situating the Older Worker in the ‘Three P’s’

Population: Demographic Trends
Productivity
Participation: The Current Labour Market

Towards a Social Justice Perspective of Age Discrimination in Employment

Defining Age Inequality

Methodology of Literature Review

Structure of Thesis

CHAPTER 1: CRITICALLY ASSESSING GOVERNMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES TO AGEISM AND THE OLDER WORKER

1.1 Governmental Reform on Older Worker Discrimination

1.1.1 Historical Approaches to Managing Older Workers
1.1.2 The U-turn on Older Worker Policy
1.1.3 The European Drive Against Age Discrimination
1.1.4 Preparing for UK Legislation
1.1.5 Discussion of Proposed Legislation

1.2 Understanding Older Worker Inequality in the Work/Retirement Interface

1.2.1 The Rhetoric and Reality of Retirement
1.2.2 ‘Accidental’ Retirement
1.2.3 ‘Non-Regular’ Forms of Work
1.2.4 Discussion of Older Worker Inequality in Work/Retirement Interface

1.3 Older Workers and Organizational Discrimination

1.3.1 Direct Forms of Discrimination
1.3.2 Stereotypes
1.3.3 Discussion of Organizational Discrimination

1.4 Organizational Responses to Age Discrimination

1.4.1 Equal Opportunities Vs. the Diversity Approach to Age Discrimination
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Limitations of Current Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>New Avenues Within Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Towards a Bourdieusian Perspective of Organizational Age Inequality</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1</td>
<td>Introducing Bourdieu's Theory of Practice</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.2</td>
<td>Bourdieu and Organization Studies</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>A Bourdieusian Perspective of Discourses</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1</td>
<td>Applying Bourdieu to Discourse Studies: Discourse as Ideology</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2</td>
<td>Discourse and Language</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Limitations of Bourdieu</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Bourdieu and Identity</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.1</td>
<td>The Habitus as a Discursive Tool</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.2</td>
<td>Developing the Habitus</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.3</td>
<td>The Hexis as Embodied Identity</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Research Aim and Objectives</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Collection of Texts</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Using Interviews within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Perspective</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>A Bourdieusian Perspective of the Interview</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>The Fallacy of 'Naturally Occurring Data'</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Choosing and Recruiting Participants</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5</td>
<td>Details of the Research Participants</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.6</td>
<td>Interview Design and Location</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.7</td>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Research Approach</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Differentiating a Discursive Approach</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>The Role of the Recorder</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Interviewer Reflexivity</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Process of Analysis</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>The Diversity of Discursive Approaches to Analyzing Texts</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Analytical Framework: A Pictorial Representation</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Summary of Analysis</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Limitations of the Research Method</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.2 Benchmarking Inequalities
6.4.3 Ageism as Excess
6.5 Summary and Conclusions

CHAPTER 7: CONSTRUCTING THE 'OLDER WORKER'

7.1 Who Is the Older Worker?
  7.1.1 Definition Through Attributes
  7.1.2 Definition Through Deficiencies
  7.1.3 Generational Age Cohort

7.2 Positioning the Older Worker
  7.2.1 The Conceptual Work Hill
  7.2.2 The Precedence of Retirement
  7.2.3 Reasons for Working

7.3 Employing the Older Worker: the B &Q syndrome
  7.3.1 Cultural Factors
  7.3.2 Service
  7.3.3 The 'Nature' of Work

7.4 Summary and Conclusions

CHAPTER 8: IDENTITY WORK AND THE AGEING SELF IN THE WORKPLACE

8.1 Embodying the Older Worker
  8.1.1 The Body as a Mirror
  8.1.2 ‘Doing Age’ Through Body Choreography
  8.1.3 Body Discrepancies
  8.1.4 The Ageing Body Project
  8.1.5 Agelessness as an Achievement

8.2 Growing Older at Work
  8.2.1 Age Aware
  8.2.2 Ageing as a Gendered Process

8.3 Constructing Self Within, Between and Against Older Worker Identity
  8.3.1 Flipping Stereotypes
  8.3.2 Denying Personal Relevance of Older Worker Ageism
  8.3.3 ‘Winning’ the Ageing Game
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Key findings

9.1.1 To explore how constructions of ageism and age discrimination are created and justified by managers
9.1.2 To explore how older workers are discursively reproduced and positioned in an organizational context
9.1.3 To investigate the interplay between self-identity and the construction of the older worker and age inequalities
9.1.4 To conduct An exploratory analysis on the role of the body in relation to older worker identity

9.2 Evaluating the Theoretical Contribution

9.3 Implications for Policy and Managers

9.3.1 Policy Intervention
9.3.2 Managers

9.4 Research Limitations and Future Avenues for Research

9.4.1 Research Limitations
9.4.2 Future Avenues for Research

References

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation following contact from prospective participants
Appendix 2: Research brief sent to participants prior to research
Appendix 3: Ethical form given to participants (3 pages)
Appendix 4: Interview Schedule
Appendix 5: Description of Discursive and Textual Strategies
Appendix 6: List of Participants (Pseudonyms)

List of Figures overleaf:
List of Figures

Figure 1: UK Employment rates for people aged 50 and over  
Spring 1992 – Spring 2004 4
Figure 2: Legal definition of age discrimination 8
Figure 3: Questions used to guide literature review 11
Figure 4: Initial guide to age and employment main research areas 12
Figure 5: Principles of good practice from ‘Age Diversity in Employment’ 21
Figure 6: Summary of considered data collection methods 144
Figure 7: Tenets of qualitative research methodology 159
Figure 8: A pictorial representation of analytical framework 169
Figure 9: Pictorial representation of rationalising process 242
Abstract

This thesis explores the construction of organizational age inequality and older worker identity using discourse analysis.

It argues that whilst a critical mass of age and employment literature is developing, research has centred on the work/non-work interface, or focussed on the experience of ‘older workers’ as classified through chronological markers. As a result, it has overlooked how the terms themselves that are used within policy, academia and organizations to conceptualise and refer to age inequality are interrelated and shape our understanding of this phenomenon. In order to further investigate how language and power affect the reproduction of organizational age inequality, this study takes a discursive approach to examine ‘ageism’, ‘age discrimination’ and ‘older worker’ as socially constructed phenomena.

The discursive approach develops the work of Pierre Bourdieu to argue that whilst action may be shaped and understood through larger collective ideological processes, power and domination are never absolute, since the constitution of the individual is created through the interaction between the self and social in different spaces and at different times. Thus, in order to understand the reproduction of age inequalities, one must not only consider what ideological discourses are drawn upon and the strategies or techniques used to legitimize them, but also analyze the relationship between these constructions and how they are related to an individual’s own identity work. These theoretical commitments informed data collection and analysis within this thesis.

Using data collected from 33 interviews with human resource managers, the findings show that whilst managers discuss their own organizations as upholding age diversity, their interpretation of what constitutes ageism and age discrimination allows for a high degree of variability in their practices. By negotiating between the margins of what constitutes equal and unequal practice, a number of ideas can be justified which may equally be construed as discriminatory. These discourses are then analysed in relation to their own ageing identity work, where the ‘older worker’ is constructed through a complex negotiation between the reproduction of an ‘ideal type’ and the individual’s own ageing identity project.
Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support of Fiona Wilson and Mar Beirne, who had the courage to become my supervisors and have made my doctorate a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Fiona has went far beyond what I could ever have expected, dedicating so much time to not only my thesis but also my academic career as a whole, and has been an invaluable source of support in every way throughout this journey. Martin has been a great source of inspiration since the early years of my undergraduate in constantly pushing me to ‘think outside the box’ and his ability to bring some humour and joviality to the bleaker moments helped me to see light at the end of the tunnel.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the research students and staff in the School of Business and Management at Glasgow University who I have cornered in corridors and blocked up their inboxes in order to discuss my ideas, and have so patiently engaged with my work. Stephen and Moira were excellent proofreaders, spending time on a thankless task when there were so many other things that they could have occupied themselves with. Special thanks go to all the administrative staff who have always been on hand with a sympathetic ear or bar of chocolate. I only hope this thesis stands as a testimony to the continuing academic and pastoral support that the department has given me over the years.

During my time of study I was extremely lucky to meet a number of people whose help and support have made a significant impact on my work. I am indebted to Phil White from Edinburgh University for so enthusiastically providing guidance and assistance throughout my PhD, and to Wendy Loretto who has helped to foster in confidence and develop my own thoughts and spent her precious hours trawling through my work in its various forms. Many thanks also go to Lesley Wilson and the CIPD branches who provided a means of accessing participants. And of course, to the research participants themselves who willingly gave up their time to be interviewed by a lowly PhD student, and without whom there would be no thesis.

I also want to thank my Mum, Dad, Chris and Anna for their unconditional love and support, never asking ‘when exactly does it finish?’ My Mum has been a never-ending
supply of comforting phone calls and hot dinners for when it all got too much whilst my Dad has kept me motivated and focussed, and has so patiently proof-read my work and listened to my rants about age discrimination. Their reassurance, faith, encouragement and guidance should win them a medal, or at least a book deal on ‘How to get your daughter through her PhD’.

Finally, I am so grateful to my close friends who have supported me during these three years, and forgiven me for missing birthdays, cancelling on the last minute and the bad tempers. In particular, Emma, Ruth, Lauren, Shivs, Vikki, Laura, Victoria and Sarah have been unwavering in their tolerance, encouragement and friendship, and I will be forever grateful for their gentle reminders that (gasp) there are more important things in life than a PhD. And last but not least, thank-you Martin for putting more time, dedication, patience, humour and love into dragging me through this process than anyone else – you’re one in a million.
Introduction
Situating the Older Worker in the ‘Three P’s’

In October 2006, the UK will introduce legislation to outlaw age discrimination in the workplace. Its aims, according to a recent Government consultation are to change existing practice and attitudes towards the employment of older workers within the UK (DTI, 2005:4). However, the growing interest in older workers and age discrimination has emerged from larger political concerns about the effect of the ‘ageing population’. In attempting to synthesise these concerns, a recent OECD report (2006:25) employed a ‘Three Ps’ framework to explain why the older worker ‘issue’ now figures so heavily in policy, political and academic debates within the United Kingdom. These three P’s are population, productivity and participation as expanded upon below:

Population: Demographic Trends

The last fifty years has witnessed a transformation of global demographics (Preston and Martin, 1994). Declining fertility and increased life expectancy have been recorded throughout the developed world, as a result of improvements in health standards and the shifting of cultural norms towards delaying parenthood or not having children at all (Sobotka, 2004). This trend is predicted to continue, with a decrease in so-called ‘prime age’ workers and an increase in the proportion of older people who are economically inactive (Blundell and Johnson, 1997). Available projections estimate that by 2050, in Europe, the ratio of inactive older persons to those working may be 1:1 (OECD, 2006).

The UK situation reflects this global demographic picture. By 2050, 47% of the UK population will be 65 or over. The so-called ‘baby boom’ generation of the sixties was followed by reduced fertility rates during the seventies when birth rates fell by 43% (OECD, 2004a). Projecting the consequences of this shows that there will be less people to support the post World War II generation, who are due to retire within the next two decades. Moreover, the subsequent rise in life expectancy to just under 80 years increases the pressure on the population having to support more older people than ever before and for a longer time (National Statistics, 2006).
Productivity
One possible solution purported as the ‘answer’ to the ageing demographic by growth development agencies such as the OECD is the potential for high growth rates of productivity to offset increasing inactivity in the population. The consequences of this not happening are two-fold. Not only would more individuals be reliant on State subsidies, but also the lack of labour force resources may slow down economic growth (OECD, 2004a). However, it is actuarially risky to rely on high levels of productivity since public expenditure would increase resulting in higher taxes and a potentially unstable welfare system, which would be very vulnerable to downturns in the economy.

There is also increasing evidence that older workers in the UK who return to the job market after a period of retirement or move towards flexible working options may earn considerably less compared to other age cohorts (Owen and Flynn, 2004; Dex and McCulloch, 1995), a finding that is mirrored across the rest of Europe and in the US (Johnson and Neumark, 1996; Chan and Huff Stevens, 2001). Part of the reason for this may relate to the subjective beliefs about older workers and productivity, where research shows that employers see older workers as less productive or of lower value for money than their younger counterparts (DTI, 2003b). Such barriers may be preventing older workers from obtaining positions that fully utilise their skills set, and therefore do not maximise on their potential contribution to the economy.

Participation: The Current Labour Market
The third P calls for workers to stay in the labour market for longer than current normalised retirement ages. Two significant European agreements commit the UK to increasing participation, both passed in 2000 with targets to be achieved within a decade. Initially, the Stockholm target set the objective that European countries should seek to employ 50% of older workers 2010. This was followed three years later by the Barcelona target which aims to delay early retirement by 5 years (European Commission, 2003).

Current labour participation rates suggest that today’s UK workplace is not a welcoming or well adapted place for the older worker. Compared to other countries within the European Union, the UK has the third highest participation rates for employment of 55-65 year olds, although this still only sits at 52.3% (EU Committee of the Regions, 2003). Simply
speaking, nearly half of this age cohort are not occupied within the labour market. Participation rates decrease faster for men aged 50+ than any other age group. Here participation rates fall dramatically from 89.7% at 50 to 37.8% at 64 (OECD, 2004a). Other figures estimate that as many as 2 out of every 5 men between 50 and 65 are not working (Campbell, 1999). Ginn (2003) states that the trend for early exit is similar for women, although figures are shrouded by a general increase in the participation of women in the workforce (Auer and Fortuny, 2000; Ginn, 2003).

There are signs that participation of the over 50's is growing, albeit slowly. As Figure 1 shows, participation has risen for both men and women with an increase of 6% and 7% respectively.

*Figure 1: UK Employment rates for people aged 50 and over*  
*Spring 1992 – Spring 2004*  

(Hotopp, 2005)
A strategy paper released in 2005 by the Department for Work and Pensions ('Opportunity Age': 17) proposed to achieve an 80% overall employment rate. This called for the inclusion of over a million older workers, and outlined its intention to measure this growth effectively through setting and assessing clear objectives and indicators. That said, whilst activity may be rising, it is difficult to assess whether any change is due to recent government incentives, to a buoyant economy or to a change in attitudes concerning the value of older workers (Disney and Hawkes, 2003; Hotopp, 2005; Banks and Blundell, 2005).

**Towards a Social Justice Perspective of Age Discrimination in Employment**

Whilst these three factors have provided an economic rationale for the promotion of older workers, there has also been a growing commentary within political circles about the responsibility in society to treat people fairly. The social justice perspective argues that any form of discrimination belittles the moral and ethical foundations of an equal democracy. Instead, interactions and structures should be 'ageless' in order to transcend the perceived barriers or limitations associated with particular ages. This not only advocates equality through fairness, but seeks to actively promote the position of the older worker through highlighting their (potential) influence. For example, one argument would be that the ageing population means the 'grey voter' will have the potential for political mobilisation and collectively to choose which party stays in power (Platman and Taylor, 2004).

The social justice perspective has long been associated with social movements and pressure groups such as the Grey Panthers in America, or Help the Aged. However, in recent years the current UK government has begun to focus on the rights for an individual to be treated equally within their age diversity campaigns. Consultations on age have rehearsed this argument for fairness throughout society, often mentioning the 'human right' to be treated equally at any age in forwards written by leading figures such as Tony Blair (DWP, 2005) or Alan Jimson (DTI, 2005).

The promotion of this perspective should be congratulated for challenging age discrimination through a key moral principle on which society is based, rather than economic rationales which are subject to change and re-prioritisation in light of
environmental and market factors. Nonetheless, the influence of the three P’s has meant that studies of older workers and age inequality have been conceptualised as requiring policy interventions and action to ‘solve’ the particular problem of the ageing demographic. Since academics have often conducted their research through research council awards or government commissions which prioritise this perspective, academic knowledge has grown alongside this debate, and has been widely influenced by policy arguments. This had led to a heavy bias towards articulating age discrimination within rationalistic or economic arguments. To underline the implication in doing so and foster a broader understanding of organizational age inequality, this thesis takes an alternative theoretical perspective, exploring the discursive construction of organizational age discrimination and the older worker.

So far, few political or academic studies have explored why organizational age inequality may exist in the first place. Many focus on the symptoms of ageism, for example, the existence of stereotypes, and link these with consequences such as redundancy through early retirement and low employment rates for the over 50’s. This tendency oversimplifies the nature and pervasiveness of ageism by implying that if stereotypes are challenged, age discrimination will disappear. Yet our knowledge about the incidence and complexity of other forms of organizational inequality such as gender and racial discrimination suggests that age discrimination may occur in a multitude of ways by seeking to create a social order that benefits some groups whilst marginalising others. Correspondingly, this thesis seeks to explore how age discrimination may be understood as a complex social phenomenon which is created through embedded processes of power.

**Defining Age Inequality**

Attempts to conceptualise age inequality have led to three common terms being used to describe this phenomenon: ageism, age discrimination and older worker. Yet to date, few (if any) mainstream studies have examined how the language used to discuss age inequality relates to the phenomenon itself. In doing so, subsequent sections will demonstrate how this implicit acceptance of definition may continue to perpetuate ageism and age discrimination.
Ageism

The term ‘ageism’ is one of the most widely used phrases in media, academic, political, practitioner and popular genres with regards to age inequality. Definitions of ageism are still heavily influenced by the work of Butler (1969) who became the first director of the US ‘National Institute on Aging’. He referred to ageism as “a process of systematic stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people because they are old, just as sexism accomplishes this for colour and gender” (Butler, 1987:22). This definition is problematical for a number of reasons centred around its assumption that ageism is enacted in similar ways and for similar reasons to racism and sexism. Whilst the end result for people may be equally traumatic, the processes of reproduction may be dramatically different. This is down to the complexity of social processes of categorisation. Whilst gender and ethnicity can be related to their corresponding biological categorisation, there is no set chronological age at which someone is universally understood to be ‘old’. Whilst gender can be split into a limited number of variables in relation to the ‘male/female’ classification, age is a continuous variable which can be divided up in a number of ways. Whilst the aim here is not to reduce age classification to chronological terms, it highlights the difficulty facing academics when deciding whom to regard as ‘older workers’.

Latterly, ageism has been defined in more recent texts through an emphasis on behaviours. For example, Glover and Branine, (1997:276) describe ageism as “A form of prejudice which uses perceived chronological age in forming judgements about people and age discrimination as acts based on such prejudices”. Bytheway’s (1995) seminal text also characterises ageism in similar terms; as “a set of beliefs originating in the biological variation between people and relating to the ageing process. It is in the actions of corporate bodies, what is said and done by their representatives and the resulting views that are held by ordinary ageing people that ageism is made manifest” (Bytheway, 1995:14). Both definitions show the move towards a more culturally sensitive description of ageism, signalled in the use of language such as ‘perceived’ and ‘beliefs’. This helps to distance ageism from a cognitive process to a socially produced bias.

However, Glover and Branine and Bytheway’s definitions still appear to be built on the assumption that ageist remarks are made because of a person’s age. Placing age as the main trigger of ageist behaviour ignores how ageism may be understood as both affecting and affected by larger social processes such as their position within society, relationship to
those espousing the ageist beliefs or the social context in which the ageism occurs. Even in Bytheway’s definition there is an inclination to define ageism as unidirectionally affected by social processes, rather than embedded within the complex construction of social reality which in turn affects practice.

**Ageism and Age discrimination**

Another limitation in current studies is the lack of differentiation between ageism and age discrimination, which has led to such terms being used interchangeably within the literature. Although a legal definition of age discrimination will be enshrined within future legislation (see Figure 2), even government consultations leading up to the introduction of the law (e.g. Dti, 2005) fail to define ageism adequately, and only refer to age discrimination in the glossary of terms (p.105), even though they talk about the ‘ageism debate’ (p.4) throughout their publication.

Similarly, academic scholars have not chosen to explicitly discuss the difference between ageism and age discrimination, even though there are suggestions that age discrimination has been referred to through legal paradigms, whilst ageism is more related to social attitudes. Nonetheless, there is still confusion over the relationship between the two, both conceptually and in practice. For example, Palmore (1990) suggests that age discrimination is dependent on proxies which are used to make judgements on age, rather than on ability, personality or skills. Yet he fails to discuss whether such proxies in themselves may be deemed as ageist or hold inherent biases.

**Figure 2: Legal definition of age discrimination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A person (&quot;A&quot;) discriminates against another person (&quot;B&quot;) if—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) on grounds of B's age, A treats B less favourably than he treats or would treat other persons, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice which he applies or would apply equally to persons not of the same age group as B, but—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) which puts or would put persons of the same age group as B at a particular disadvantage when compared with other persons, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) which puts B at that disadvantage, and A cannot show the treatment or, as the case may be, provision, criterion or practice to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1031, part 1, section 3)
Finally, the term ‘older worker’ is fraught with oversimplification. A number of studies have already acknowledged this by showing, for example, that ‘older worker’ may refer to someone as young as 35 within the IT sector (EFA/Silicon, 2000; see also Gallup, 1990), or “past it at 40” (Third Age Foundation, 2002). As acknowledged by Phillipson, (1998), it is impossible to establish chronological benchmarks since structural, cultural, economic and social factors affect who or how the older worker is regarded. Yet despite this, authors appear to rely on limited classification and revert to using chronological markers such as ‘over 45’ (Warr, 2001), ‘50’ (Loretto et al., 2005) or ‘over 55’ (OECD, 2004a). This reliance on chronology serves to limit our understanding, not only of older workers, but also how older workers are defined within organizational life. Moreover, whilst research emphasises the need to address the heterogeneity of the group, basing so many definitions on essentialist classifications implies that age inequality is only narrowly understood in terms of chronology.

This study takes issue with the essentialist truisms contained within many of the regular definitions used to conceptualise organizational age inequality, arguing that they are frequently indicative of a broader misconceptualisation of the experience of age inequality in the workplace. The lack of definition surrounding such terms suggest that until now, phraseology used to discuss organizational age inequality implies such terms refer to the same group. However, on closer examination of published work, there appears to be disparities between how the older worker is recognized. For example, the ‘older worker’ is referred to in a number of studies, but the precise categorisation can range from 50 within OECD and government publications (such as in the New Deal 50+ programme) to 55 and over. Moreover, these definitions are often used as categories of convenience by the researcher, and there is very little discussion as to how they relate to the participant’s understanding in empirical research, or research contexts.

Finally, this under-conceptualisation fails to assert how applying such terms may in fact shape our understanding of older worker inequality. By classifying an older worker as 50-64, we may be precluding those outwith that age category who have also felt the effects of age discrimination. Likewise, concentrating our definition of ageism on the relationship between the incidence of discriminatory attitudes and the victim means we are more likely
to concentrate on investigating ageism in a cause-and-affect paradigm, rather than considering how it is also related to larger social processes such as power and the construction of social order. In response to this, and in light of this thesis’ primary aim, this research further endeavours to contribute to a more sensitive phraseology of organizational age inequality by investigating the underlying processes of construction around the meaning of ‘ageism’, ‘age discrimination’ and ‘older worker’.

**Methodology of Literature Review**

As Hart (1998) discusses, carrying out a comprehensive view of current knowledge in a research area is vital to producing a high-quality, relevant contribution to knowledge, and should be recognised as not only informing the researchers knowledge, but shaping the subsequent empirical research. This should be guided by broad conceptual questions which not only help to identify the key thematic or empirical development within the area of study, but also explore the theoretical positions and advances which could be made. Adapting Hart’s model, a list of criteria was made to help structure the review of literature in this thesis (Figure 3). Using this as a way of analysing each piece of work helped to ensure that the research remained consistent and systematic throughout the literature review process. The model was also influential in dictating the path the thesis chose to take. By ensuring that each paper was read not only in terms of its thematic content, but also its philosophical leniencies, the identification and critique of current theoretical apparatus’ led to developing a theoretical contribution within the thesis, as well as an empirical contribution to knowledge.

(Figure 3 overleaf)
However, since the area of age and employment studies is still a relatively new field compared to other areas of organizational discrimination, such as gender studies, the boundaries over which literature to include and which to dismiss were ambiguous. Moreover, with the imminent legislation, new academic articles, public documents and government publications were appearing every month, making it difficult to keep the research up to date. In order to successfully manage these challenges, not only did the actual reading of work have to be carried out in a consistent manner, but also the scoping of available literature had to be consistently undertaken throughout the project.

This was done through following a number of steps used to seek the information. Since I had an initial understanding of the broad research area within age and employment studies, from attending a conference on age and employment during my Masters year and undertaking a Masters dissertation in the area, I began with a circular diagram of the areas where literature appeared to be concentrated (Figure 4, overleaf):
From this, I then created a list of key words, phrases and synonyms associated with these areas which could be used to search databases, library catalogues and online government catalogues. This list was then used to conduct a number of searches of the literature, which were then given a preliminary check for relevance by reading the abstract, and then downloaded into reference manager. Reference Manager not only enabled a record of searches to be kept, but meant that any references which came up in different searches could be cross-referenced. The search was then repeated by adding a number of other keywords which had been used in the article abstracts and provided keywords. These key words were stored and used to undertake a search to uncover new work every three months from October 2003 to July 2006.

However, since the databases used were electronic, they only usually covered work from around 1980. Whilst this was sufficient in relation to outlining current literature relating to age discrimination and older worker identity (Chapter 1), for an exploration of the theoretical influences, alternative methods had to be employed. To do this, I turned to the
articles that were already downloaded to see whether they referenced articles pre-1980, and
gained these documents through library catalogues of Glasgow, Strathclyde and
Caledonian libraries, or the British library inter-library loan system.

Finally, during the reading of the literature, a number of other search devices were
employed. The main method involved assessing what texts had been referred to in a
number of articles. This helped to define what appeared to be ‘key texts’ within the
subject field. However, in light of critiques of referencing practice (Lovaglia, 1991;
Hyland, 2003), each of these documents was carefully assessed to ensure they made some
form of contribution. Another way of searching the literature through the downloaded
articles was following names of authors which kept appearing. This indicated that they had
conducted a number of studies within that area or were topical specialists, and a search of
their name was conducted, not only through the databases, but through University web
pages to see if they had a home page with a list of publications. On occasion, the
researcher also chose to contact the author directly, to see if they had any work which was
currently under review, or to obtain copies of working or conference papers which were
not available through other means. Whilst this did involve some cold-calling, at other
times, the researcher would also hear about work which was not yet published through
attending various conferences and seminars, and follow up any leads that had been given to
her by other attendees or presenters.

The literature sources were potentially vast, and in order to produce a focused study, it was
impossible to attempt to answer all the possible research gaps that were unearthed during
the literature review process. This meant that it was necessary to make systematic choices
throughout the review about what literature to consult, both in terms of genre and theme.
This inevitably led to defining some research areas, and neglecting other potentially
interesting research paths, which may have deviated from producing a focused thesis. A
number of key points during the literature review process subsequently defined the scope
of this thesis. For example, one main decision was only examining age inequality in
relation to those classed as ‘older’, which was done for two reasons. The first was on
grounds of practicality: with the ageing demographic being a key debate on the policy
agenda, it was considered that a study relating to older workers would be able to attract
doctoral funding, and would perhaps be of more interest to organizations when carrying
out fieldwork. Secondly, whilst there is a mass of literature on social inequality against
young people and youth unemployment, in carrying out a cross reference check in the compilation of literature searches compiled in Reference Manager, they seemed to be coming from completely different literature bases than those studies discussing older worker inequality (the exception being Loretto et al., 2000). Attempting to study both areas would have effectively resulted in an extremely large study that would have been difficult to undertake during the duration allowed for a doctoral thesis. However, it is acknowledged that investigating the relationship between the two may prove to be a significant future research endeavour.

A similar process was undertaken for the review of discourse analysis literature and again for literature by, and about Bourdieu. In carrying out the literature review in a systematic way, the researcher was able to ensure all the key articles, books and documents were included, and also able to see where the two bodies of literature had overlapped through cross referencing within reference manager databases, which came in incredibly useful in terms of this thesis’ theoretical development.

Structure of Thesis
This thesis begins by critically reviewing the available research on the older worker and organizational age inequalities. It proceeds by means of a critical assessment of the development of age discrimination and the emergence of the older worker as a policy issue, recognising how governmental approaches have influenced both organizational practice and academic thinking. In discussing the limitations of knowledge about the nature and impact of age discrimination and the older worker, the thesis calls for a more explicit study of work-floor processes of discrimination. This leads to an examination of the theoretical perspectives that have led to the limited research agenda which exists within age and employment studies (Chapter 2). Whilst studies of work-retirement transition have been explored using a number of theoretical perspectives, studies of discrimination and the older worker have been dominated by economically rationalised or policy focused approaches. In identifying these theoretical approaches as being a possible drag chain on current knowledge about organizational age inequality, more sociologically informed debates about age are explored as possible avenues to heighten our understanding of age inequality. A discursive perspective is subsequently introduced as a means of exploring
organizational age inequality and the older worker as embedded phenomenon that are constructed through larger processes of power and reproduction.

Taking this perspective as a basis for development, Chapter 3 discusses how a critical discursive perspective may provide a means of deconstructing terms such as ageism, age discrimination and older worker, and, in doing so, fosters an appreciation of how they are used to manipulate, recreate and justify particular patterns of social order. Current approaches to critical discourse analysis are complemented by a consideration of the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a means of outlining the importance of subjectivity and individual experience when conceptualising social action. After considering how this helps to explore older worker identity and age discrimination, Chapter 4 outlines the research objectives before providing a detailed description of how the theoretical commitments inform the empirical analysis, organization of data and the overall research process.

Four Chapters then form a discussion around the most significant findings of the study in relation to the research questions. Chapter 5 explores how age discrimination is situated within a broader understanding of age in the workplace through discourses of diversity, serving to merge the distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ age differentiation and justification of unequal practices. The following Chapter focuses on the ways in which participants discursively marginalised the importance of age discrimination as a management or organizational issue whilst still appearing to support the case for equality. The third Chapter in this section then undertakes an exploration of how managers define the older worker, whilst the fourth re-examines how the term is understood in relation to participants own ageing identity work and discourses of the body.

The final Chapter serves to draw together the findings and explicate how they relate to the gaps in current knowledge. This proceeds from a review of research objectives set out in Chapter 4 and the subsequent research findings, as well as an assessment of the theoretical contribution. The penultimate section considers the implications of the research for managers and policy makers. The thesis concludes by outlining possible limitations in the research before mapping out two main directions for future research arising from this study.
Chapter 1
Critically Assessing Government and Organizational Approaches to Ageism and the Older Worker
Concerns over the pressures of an ageing demographic have caused a tidal wave of interest in the position of older workers within the labour market (Loretto and White, 2006). This Chapter begins by outlining and critically assessing governmental approaches to age inequality in relation to the older worker. It does so by first chronologically presenting the development of policy and practice up until May of 2006, paying particular attention to the commentary and criticism of the voluntary code and the introduction of age legislation.

The Chapter then goes on to discuss older workers and age inequality in an organizational context. This is done by first critically examining the interface between work and retirement before drawing on empirical studies of age discrimination and organizational approaches to managing age discrimination.

1.1 Governmental Reform on Older Worker Discrimination

The last ten years have witnessed fundamental changes in the treatment of age as a form of organizational discrimination within UK government policy as part of a wider assessment of the treatment of older people within society. Whilst the discussion of recent pension reform and provision for the elderly may also be seen as integral to a larger message which New Labour intend to promote, such work has been examined elsewhere (e.g. Harvey, 2005; Whiteford and Whitehouse, 2006). Therefore this thesis is confined to the assessment of age discrimination policies and their effect on older worker inequalities in the workplace.

1.1.1 Historical Approaches to Managing Older Workers

As Macnicol (1998; 2005:297) notes, the concern towards older workers is not a recent phenomena and was discussed as early as the 1950's in relation to "longer chronological lives, but shorter working lives". Nonetheless, the second half of the twentieth century was dominated by concerns for policy and practice that promoted early exit as a result of both economic recession and the changing nature of industry. Developments in the 1970's saw the marked deterioration of traditional manual labour and a massive restructuring of work, with downsizing of industries such as manufacturing and shipbuilding which had previously promoted a 'job for life' status. This had drastic effects for older worker participation since they were typically overrepresented in the heavy industries (Trinder,
Coupled with periods of recession and a downturn in the economy which resulted in high figures of unemployment, the Labour Government introduced strategies such as the Job Release Scheme from 1977-1988 (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991:49) to promote early exit or filtering older workers into disability or incapacity benefit schemes. This ensured that employability figures could be manipulated by releasing older workers in order to employ the young displaced workers (Walker, 1985). Re-employment of older workers was unlikely with evidence of many claimants in the 1970’s and 1980’s being persuaded not to re-enter the labour market by job advisors (National Audit Office, in Nickel and Quintini, 2002; MacNicol, 2005). Thus early retirement was fostered as a form of quasi redundancy (Casey, 1992; Platman and Tinker, 1998), where older employees were pushed out of the labour market prior to state pension age. It may be argued that it is from such practices that ‘early exit’ became a concept embedded within British culture, reflected in the low participation rate of future generations in the decades that followed.

1.1.2 The U-turn on Older Worker Policy

By the late 1980’s, there were signs of a change. The House of Commons report, ‘Employment patterns of the over 50’s’ (1989) signalled a fresh perspective on older worker policy, although it was rather accidental. Initially set up to seek new ways of easing older workers into early retirement, the committee, upon examining the workforce demographic and labour market projections, performed a U-turn on the objectives of the report and sought to promote older worker retention. In response to demographic concerns, a number of recommendations were made that emphasised the integral role of pension and benefit reform for the over 50’s, as well as the need to raise the profile of employing older workers. Whilst many of the recommendations in the report were not taken up, the notion of a ‘demographic time bomb’ heralded an acknowledgement that the current approach towards older worker participation would have to be reassessed.

In 1993, the Government announced a ‘Campaign for Older Workers’ with the dual objectives of encouraging them to stay in the labour market and persuading employers to treat individuals fairly, which led to a number of publications aimed at employers, organizations and older workers (DfEE, 1994; 1995a;b). Unfortunately the impact of the initiative was negligible. Early exit had become an embedded cultural norm. An independently commissioned report on the impact of the campaign (Hayward et al., 1997)
suggested that although the campaign had raised awareness about older workers and employment, it lacked practical advice (for either employers or older workers) about retention and job seeking. More significantly, many older workers were reported as rejecting the label since they felt that it only heightened their disadvantaged position in the workplace.

The next Labour government, who had pledged to introduce anti-age discrimination law during their election campaign (Labour Party, 1997), reverted to proposing a voluntary approach alongside a number of initiatives to attempt to tackle the long-term unemployed among the over 50's such as Third Age Apprenticeships and the New Deal Fifty-Plus. Traditionally, back-to-work government initiatives have strongly favoured younger workers (Taylor, 1998). The New Deal 50+ was the first of its kind to be structured around the specific challenges of older worker returnees. Its introduction formed part of a generic strategy, the 'New Deal', to increase workforce participation by providing the long term unemployed (6 months or more) or those on incapacity benefits, advice on returning to work along with a £750 training allowance to facilitate this transition.

The effect of the New Deal 50+ has yet to be subjected to rigorous scrutiny or study on a large-scale. Many critics suggest its apparent success is down to those who would have re-entered the labour market anyway (Beatty and Fothergill, 2004, see also OECD, 2004a) or favourable market conditions (Disney and Hawkes, 2003; Phillipson, 2003b). One study (Atkinson, 2001) also questioned its sustainability by suggesting that the main reason for many joining was the employment credit to supplement low paid jobs. Since this credit stopped after a year, there was a feeling that individuals were leaving the programme after this time (although this is unsupported in government-commissioned research by Grierson, 2002). There was also doubt about its impact on helping all older workers. By comparison to other 'New Deal programmes', the uptake amongst ethnic minorities was less than half of the uptake within 25-29 years old age brackets (3% to 7%; Hasluck, 2000:27) and appeared to have less effect on older workers above 55 (Atkinson, 2001; Taylor et al., 2002). One reason for this may be the inherent age bias within return to work schemes. For example, men aged 60-64 did not have to report to job centres to indicate that they are looking for work, unlike those below the age of 60.
A qualitative study by Loretto and White (2004) also suggests that the attitude and experience of advisors was highly variable (in the applicant's experience) and this had a pervasive effect on the client's success. Moreover, the quality of available jobs did not meet client aspirations in terms of financial and intrinsic benefits. Phillipson (2004b) argues that programmes such as New Deal are more likely to appeal to younger individuals whilst Taylor (2002) argues that instead of introducing separate policies for particular age groups, existing programmes should remove age barriers in order to include the over 50's. Moreover, the 6 month unemployment period required to qualify for the New Deal scheme may mean that individuals entering the programme have already become too demotivated to find a job (Ford et al., 2003) and the New Deal provides too little, too late.

In order to promote older worker participation, there was a recognition that policy would have to reverse the culture of early exit and address social attitudes and beliefs concerning older workers. The creation of 'Age Positive' was seen by the Labour Government as providing a body to support the political and cultural development of age and employment issues by framing age as a means of gaining a strategic advantage within business. This 'business case approach' suggests that the costs involved in adjusting to the needs of a diverse workforce may not only offset any costs associated with absenteeism but deliver an increase in overall morale, retention and better productivity of staff. By reflecting the (age) diversity of their customer base in their workforce, organizations will be more competitive within the global marketplace: "It stands to reason that businesses with a diverse workforce are likely to attract a wider customer base, have the ability to recognise potential markets, and to provide better, more tailored service to meet individual needs" (DTI, 2003c:1). Yet this claim may be seen as more ideological than based in hard evidence. While the participation rates of many minorities (around gender, disability, age and ethnicity) have increased over the past five years, those in the senior positions who make such strategic business decisions are still overwhelmingly white, able-bodied males (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2005; EOC, 2006). Moreover, there is little evidence which quantifies the added-value of the older workers, although one study (Help the Aged, 2002) suggests that age discrimination itself may cost organizations around £31 billion a year.

Notwithstanding this lack of evidence, the business case model was held as the philosophy supporting the Voluntary Code of Practice (1999) where age discrimination was regarded as "wasteful for Britain, for business and for individuals alike" (DfEE, 1999:2).
Accompanying the six principles of good practice upheld within the code (Figure 5) was a booklet offering guidance case studies that laid out practical examples of good and bad processes in recruitment, promotion, training and development.

Figure 5: Principles of good practice from ‘Age Diversity in Employment’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six Principles of Good Practice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>Recruit on the basis of the skills and abilities needed to do the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selection</strong></td>
<td>Select on merit by focusing on application form information about skills and abilities and on performance at interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td>Base promotion on the ability, or demonstrated potential, to do the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and Development</strong></td>
<td>Encourage all employees to take advantage of the relevant training opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Redundancy</strong></td>
<td>Base decisions on objective, job related criteria to ensure the skills needed to help the business are retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retirement</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that retirement schemes are fairly applied, taking individual and business needs into account</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(DfEE, 1999:7)

Yet as the first industrial relations code to be voluntarily introduced, the Code of Practice remained contentious in both its introduction and impact. Not only did it fail to address a number of important issues, such as voluntary early retirement (Desmond, 1999), but the cultural change viewed as so necessary in eradicating age discrimination was lessened by contradictory messages from the government themselves. For example, during the planning and implementation stages of the Code of Practice, a 1998 private members bill which attempted to outlaw age markers in advertisements of jobs was thrown out. From its inception, many academic assessments and interest groups were concerned that a voluntary
approach would lead to a negligible impact and called for legislative backing (TUC, 1999; EFA, 1999a; Kodz, et al., 1999; Loretto et al., 2000; TAEN, 2000), or at least statutory provision which would allow the Code to be used as guidance within tribunals similar to provision within the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 (Desmond, 1999:189).

Such doomed prophecies were upheld in retrospective studies of the Code (Taylor, 2004). As Disney and Hawkes (2003:16) note, there is little evidence to suggest that “awareness generates action” and the Code was limited in its impact on employer’s practices. The Government’s own commissioned report (DWP, 2001) which investigated the perceptions of the code found only 29% of employers were aware of the voluntary code 6 months from its introduction. The effect on those who were aware of the code also remained questionable with a CBI employment trends survey stating that only 9% of respondent’s based good practice on it. This sentiment was also reflected in the SME sector with over half (63%) not planning to change their age practices (EFA, 1999b) and awareness of the Code being smaller within the SME sector (National Opinion Polls, 2001). This may be seen as unsurprising: whilst the case studies included three companies with fewer than 250 employees, the code fails to recognise any logistical or financial challenges smaller companies may face considering their resources are substantially less than large employers featured such as ASDA and Natwest. This deficiency was addressed in the updated version of the Code in 2002 which attempted to provide more practical benchmark measures for businesses (DWP, 2002a). However, no modifications were made to the six key principles.

1.1.3 The European Drive Against Age Discrimination

After the assessment by UK government bodies of the Code of Practice (DfEE, 1999; Jones, 2000k), the strategy to eradicate age inequality became refocused towards legislation. Yet this decision was not simply made as a result of the negligible success of the Voluntary Code, but the need to adhere to new European policy.

The European concern for older workers is promoted within the principles of social justice outlined within the Social Charter of 1989, which the UK initially opted out of (European Union, 1989). In light of the Social Charter and pressures of the ageing demographic, a number of European studies were set up during the 1990’s to monitor the impact of social
and economic policies on the ageing workforce across Europe such as the European Observatory of Ageing and Older People (Walker, Guillemard and Arber, 1991). By 1993, EU led research highlighted the extent to which age discrimination was both perceived and experienced within the European Community (Drury, 1993; Walker, 1993) and highlighted that age inequality should become a priority area for political attention. This emphasis was underlined in a White Paper (European Union, 1994) documenting the demographic and economic consequences of inflexible working practices within a globally competitive market and led to the ‘Age Barriers’ project where research teams reported the main issues of ageing and employment in seven member states (Walker, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1997). This initiative was reinforced during subsequent years with parliamentary conferences on the position of older workers in the EU (1998) and the creation of a forum for employers, trade unions and governments to discuss successful strategies for increasing labour participation of older workers (Naegele, 1999), promoting the active intervention against age biased policies, such as early exit.

Legislatively speaking, rights concerned with age are generically covered under article 14 of the European Human Rights Act 1998 (enacted in the UK in 2000) which protects citizens from discrimination on ‘any grounds’ (Article 14), including age. However, a new clause in the EC treaty of Amsterdam (1997) prohibiting discrimination on many accounts which explicitly included age (new Article 13) formed the basis for the framework of subsequent discrimination directives. In November 2000, EU member states agreed to implement policy against age discrimination in employment by 2006 through the Employment, Occupation and Training framework directive (Employment Council Directive 2000/78/EC, 2000). This stated that “Discrimination based on religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation may undermine the achievement of the objectives of the EC Treaty, in particular the attainment of a high level of employment and social protection, raising the standard of living and the quality of life, economic and social cohesion and solidarity, and the free movement of persons” (recital 11, EC Directive 2000/78/EC) echoing the impetus on social justice within the 1989 social charter.

Countries within the European Union varied in their need to modify existing codes and policies. Many had existing policies upon which they were able to graft new regulations concerning age. This was possible since age, unlike other discrimination law, only applies to occupational training or employment. For example, in Cyprus, the Equal Treatment in
Employment and Occupation Law (No. 58(I)/2004) covers racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age and sexual orientation in the workplace. However, many states have failed as yet to implement it successfully, with infringement proceedings being noted against 6 countries already, Austria, Germany, Finland, Greece, Belgium and Luxembourg (Europa, 2005). Due to the complexity of ensuring implementation was in line with existing discrimination legislation, the UK was one of five countries (along with the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium) that requested, and was permitted a 3 year delay period in 2003 in order to give them enough time to implement the policy successfully (Age Platform, 2004:7).

One reason for this delay is the complexity of implementing a law which will successfully litigate, since many keystones of current discrimination laws hold particular challenges when related to age. One example is the ‘comparator element’ of the directive, which is used as a basis for assessing whether discrimination has taken place: “direct discrimination shall be taken to occur when one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation, on the (grounds of age)” (EC Directive, Article 2.1.2[a]). This requires using a hypothetical or real comparable individual to show that the complainant was treated differently on account of age. However, unlike other forms of discrimination, where the ‘comparisonee’ is relatively easy to distinguish (white, male or able-bodied, for example), it is difficult to assess who to use when applying this hypothesis to age. Moreover, since the law recognises that many characteristics closely associated with age can be legitimately justified, such as experience, it is difficult to hypothesise that a direct comparison can be made since age may be conducive to years of experience.

1.1.4 Preparing for UK Legislation

Prior to the introduction of the Voluntary Code, an initial study, ‘Action on Age’ (DfEE, 1998) reported on secondary research drawn mainly from the Family and Working Lives National Survey. The report took an important step towards acknowledging discrimination through age in employment by uncovering some of the inequalities faced by older workers, finding that the over 50’s experienced higher levels of unemployment and greater difficulties when trying to return to work after redundancy. Moreover, the methods of job search employed by the over 50’s seemed to be far more diverse than for those aged 16-49.
years old, with informal methods such as networking or using existing contacts being preferred (DfEE Research Report 4445, 1998).

Yet the limitations of this study appear to have shaped the subsequent formation of age discrimination legislation in relation to older workers. Whilst the data used was both nationally representative (through the Household Panel Survey) and collected in a rigorous and ethically sound manner, the questionnaire format used was limited in its ability to capture issues of age discrimination per se. For example, whilst it was evident that individuals were leaving the workplace early, the reasons why could not be fully explored since the data did not provide more precise details as to why this was so. There was also an intrinsic assumption made by only surveying those above 50 that this constituted an older worker. The data did not allow for questioning participants whether they classed themselves as older workers, or whether those younger than 50 experienced age discrimination, and did not allow a consideration of the manifestation of ageist attitudes or perceptions beyond chronological classification.

In preparation for the introduction of law, the UK government conducted three consultations which shaped subsequent legislation. The first, in 2002, was a generic consultation on equality covering age, race, gender and disability (DTI, 2002a;b). This built on responses from a previous proposal (‘Towards Equality and Diversity’) and asked for further comments on the main aspects of proposed legislation. Whilst this was a more general overview of the incidence of discrimination in the UK, it did note the complexity of age as a discrimination and sought to take a measured approach to subsequent legislation (DTI, 2002b:37). The consultation also discussed the creation of a single statutory body for equality which in future would cover all areas of discrimination (DTI, 2002a:19), affecting age legislation.

The findings relating to age discrimination in the consultation suggested an early questioning of effective sanctioning of legislation and managerial problems surrounding succession planning, which were developed in the 2003 ‘Age Matters’ consultation (DTI, 2003a; b). Amidst discussion of the approaches to outlawing discrimination, two key features were discussed which would have a key effect on future legislation: circumstantial differentiation of age and the use of mandatory retirement ages. The first instance, termed ‘objective justification’ quotes article 6.1 from the directive (2003:14) which states
differentiation may be allowed “objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim, including legitimate employment policy, labour market and vocational training objectives, and if the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary”. The consultation sought feedback which would help to decide what approach should be taken to objective justification in terms of what practices it should cover, specifically outlining comments regarding retirement, seniority or length-based pay and benefits, and setting upper age limits based on the time an employee has left before retiring (DTI, 2003a:16).

The second issue, mandatory retirement presented more complex discussion about financial and pension provision, and resulted in a delay of the draft legislation, which was originally intended to be released by 2004. Originally informed by a government Green Paper (DWP, 2002b) and its accompanying consultation calling for a reform of tax provision to allow a more flexible retirement (HM Treasury/Inland Revenue, 2002), mandatory retirement was suggested as permissible through objective justification, as well as suggesting a default retirement age of 70, although responses resulted in maintaining a default retirement age in line with current state pension age of 65.

The responses to the consultation revealed the extent of age discrimination within the workplace with evidence from both professional bodies and personal experiences confirming earlier reports (e.g. DiEE, 1998). Although this highlighted the need for legislative measures, the report also emphasised the importance of accompanying the changes in law with larger social and cultural modifications (DTI, 2003b) and a wider examination of all issues that affected older workers. This was answered in part by the publication of a comprehensive review of literature and survey findings pertaining to the provision of older workers unemployment and retirement (Meadows, 2003; Urwin, 2004). Such work was not only extremely useful in assessing the current trends in the labour market but also showed an attempt to draw together labour market, pension and retirement policies to help present a more holistic picture of choices and challenges facing older workers.

The final consultation, ‘Coming of Age’ (DTI, 2005) not only asked for comment on the draft regulation, (The Employment Equality [age] Regulations, 2006), but also provided employers with an overview of the proposed legislation. This was particularly important in terms of outlining objective justification and genuine occupational requirement in
exempting circumstances. Regarding the notion of objective justification, the government appeared to now favour a 'half open' system which included a general statement on objective justification, but also states explicitly that the provision for a default retirement age of 65 is objectively justified. However, such legislation will not be introduced within a political vacuum and the same year sees moves towards pension reform that will have subsequent effects on older worker participation. For example, a recent independent report proposed an increase in state pension age from 65 to 68 by 2050 (The Pensions Commission, 2005) in order to encourage working to a later age whilst reducing the strain on pension requirements by the baby boom generation.

Final legislation will be introduced on the 1\textsuperscript{st} October, 2006 with a formal review in 2011, to examine the extent to which regulations have had an effect on age discrimination and reconsider particular dimensions of the regulations, in particular, the default retirement age (DTI, 2005). However, in light of the discussion of restructuring discrimination laws under one umbrella equality body, it is unclear as to how long age discrimination legislation will remain a stand-alone act.

1.1.5 Discussion of Proposed Legislation

Whilst the UK Labour Government has made explicit statements referring to their future vision of an equal workplace for older workers, as yet, academics and stakeholder bodies have been hesitant about proclaiming legislation as the answer to low labour participation and workplace inequality. Indeed, there is little evidence from abroad that legislation may succeed in changing anything (OECD, 2006). Some studies from the US, where ADEA (Age Discrimination in Employment Act) was enacted in 1967 suggest a positive effect on reducing discrimination since managers are made liable for their actions (O'Meera, 1989) after educative, voluntary measures were not successful (Ventrell-Monsees, 1993). Others have suggested that issues explicitly covered in legislation, such as mandatory retirement age still exist and are indicative of the persistence of age discrimination at work (Grossman, 2005), albeit in a more subtle form (Tobias, 2002).

Currently, four areas of concern can be identified. First is the contention over the default retirement age (e.g. CIPD, 2006a; AUT, 2005; EOC, 2005a; Justice, 2005). Initially a default retirement age has been included to strike a balance between protecting the
employees' right to retire or work on as they choose, and allowing organizations the ability to forecast and plan their workforce requirements. However, if employees request to work after 65, employers are not obliged to give a reason for refusal, providing the organization with a 'get out clause'. This results in the peculiar position where employers are best to not give a reason at all for refusing to employ someone after 65, since any reason they give may be viewed as discriminatory. The default retirement age may also mean that the law provides more protection to those under 65 than over 65 since it effectively differentiates between those who can file against unlawful redundancy (under 65) and those who are eligible for a State pension and want to continue working yet remain unprotected from being forced to retire, having being refused by their companies.

More confusion rests over the implementation of the objective justification concept which exempts certain practices from the forthcoming law. Even though objective justification is used in other discrimination laws, it is a key component to age discrimination since age is often used as a marker in employment policies, pension provisions and legislation alike. This results in a distinction being made between practices which are viewed as rational and can be objectively justified, compared to unfavourable decision based on prejudiced or biased stereotypes, deemed irrational and discriminatory (European Commission/O’Cinneide, 2005:13-15). The former does not only cover genuine occupational requirement (GOR), such as having a capped age for firemen or other physically-related jobs, but suggests that age can be a 'proxy' indicator for health and may be justifiable in some cases (European Commission/O’Cinneide, 2005). Yet, should the boundaries of the definition remain as ambiguous as many responses claim they are, objective justification could be open to manipulation (Justice, 2005). Indeed, some argue that the term objective justification is misused within the consultation documents themselves by justifying practices which could be viewed as ageist, such as differential pay scales (AUT, 2005:2; TUC, 2005:6). By using a concept that is ambiguous, both employers and workers may find it difficult to understand whether something is legal or not. In particular, organizations such as small and medium sized companies who may not have legal experts at their disposal to decipher the implications for their business may find themselves in infringement of the law whilst practicing managers in all companies may find it difficult to interpret the concept into everyday work-floor practices.
The ‘objective justification’ argument is indicative of a final, larger concern about age discrimination legislation. The employment of such concepts indicates that the legislative measures proposed have underestimated the complexity of eradicating age discrimination, since age is an extremely complex term itself and is one of the most commonly employed categorisers in legal, public and organizational spheres. For example, in their responses to the consultation, some organizations ask for more clarification on what is lawful and what is unlawful with regards to structuring particular practices aimed at chronologically-defined groups. The Association of Graduate Recruiters was concerned that internships may be viewed as discriminatory, falling foul of proportionality since the target audience (final year undergraduates) are in the majority under 30 (AGR, 2005). Moreover, there is evidence that a rationalisation of such practices may be construed as discriminatory: “we believe that there is a case for arguing that graduates who have already had extensive work experience and who apply and are successful in being recruited to a graduate scheme may not benefit from a generic development programme in the same way as a graduate with limited work experience” (AGR, 2005:2). In this case, is using age as a qualifier an ‘objective justification’, or age discrimination? The complexity of differentiating between age as a categoriser and age as a discriminator had led to doubts over companies having enough time to adjust their practices and policies, particularly since it may affect retirement or financial policies (CIPD, 2006a).

Another problem may be targeting all sizes of workplace, especially those who do not have the resources or time to facilitate the formal management of equality (Bacon et al., 1997). The Code of Practice was shown as having less impact on the practices of small and medium sized firms with only a small minority being aware of the code (National Opinion Poll, 2001, Goldstone and Jones, 2001) and over half (63%) not planning to change their age practices to accommodate best practices (EFA, 1999b). Attitudes towards legislation are also not encouraging. A survey by AXA conducted in 2004 suggested that 40% of SME’s are not aware of the forthcoming legislation on age with many not aware of other more generic factors which affect older workers such as pension reform (Tenon group, 2005). Those who were aware of legislation question its positive impact on their business. Out of 1650 employers, only 32% of SME’s felt positively about the age legislation, compared to 64% of larger organizations (Age Partnership Group (2004). With 46% of UK workplaces classed as SME’s - Small and Medium Enterprises (Kersley, 2004), employing more than half the working population in the UK (National Statistics, 2004:1) there is a
need to consider whether the law will fully protect individuals working in these organizations.

Finally, there is a question as to whether the introduction of legislation will change attitudes. The backdrop of promoting age as a diversity issue through Age Positive should, in theory, make the age discrimination law more successful by addressing cultural and social factors surrounding age inequality and promoting the notion of celebrating, rather than negating, difference. However, there is little evidence to show whether such campaigns have made a significant difference to the way age inequality has been managed within organizations. Moreover, unlike the sex discrimination and race relations Acts, which from their inception in 1975 and 1976 respectively cover social as well as professional environments, forthcoming age discrimination law only covers discrimination in employment, and doesn’t protect volunteers or non-paid members of staff (see DTI, 2005: 3.1.11). Despite the government stating a need to challenge age discrimination through practice and attitudes (DTI, 2005:4), individuals will still be able to continue stereotyping outwith the workplace.

1.2 Understanding Older Worker Inequality in the Work/Retirement Interface

Whilst the governmental steps towards inequality focus specifically on legislative attempts to outlaw age discrimination, academic studies have also acknowledged that the future of older worker participation will not only be affected by conditions within employment, but also in relation to the flexibility and choice individuals have over decisions surrounding work and retirement. Although government policy emphasises the importance of allowing individuals the right to control their work and life choices, decisions may result from a number of factors which are both liberating and constraining (Biggs et al., 2003). This makes it extremely difficult to determine whether the retirement decision is down to ‘choice or chance’ (Vickerstaff, 2006) on the part of the employer or worker.

This section introduces the broader picture of age inequality through an examination of studies which relate to the interface of work and non-work. It explores whether the options
proclaimed as improving older worker choice and flexibility may in fact seek to displace them further by limiting financial rewards or personal choice.

1.2.1 The Rhetoric and Reality of Retirement

Traditionally, retirement in the UK is associated with a complete withdrawal from the labour market (Meadows, 2003) and has long been determined by an economic definition, where an income is replaced by a form of pension (Streib and Schneider 1971; Guillemand 1980; Palmore et al., 1985). Yet the experience of retirement is best understood as a socially and culturally malleable concept (Blaikie, 1997:11) which has been defined in the latter stages of the twentieth century as an integral part of the life cycle (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991). Rather than being seen as the pre-cursor to death, retirement now stands for a definitive stage of life which has the potential to be enormously fulfilling. Thus its meaning may not simply be defined in terms of work, but larger transitions concerning self-image and perceptions of people's role in society and social processes of 'life reorganization' (Luborsky, 1994).

Despite the recent promotion of working later in life, there is still widespread social consensus that retirement is unidirectional and a 'reward' for working (Duncan et al., 2000), most notably witnessed in the government recent consultation on age: "in many cases retirement is an occasion for which the employee has planned and to which the employee is looking forward" (DTI, 2005:55). Latterly, this has been accompanied by the emergence of a 'Third Age', conceptualised as a period of life where an individual is not in paid employment but still in good health (Aries, 1973). Lasslett (1989) argues that this period is one filled with self-fulfilment and opportunity which is post-dependant, in terms of having to care for others, and pre-dependency, in terms of needing to be looked after. Fuelled by consumerism and the media through the emergence of holiday companies and coach packages aimed specifically at this group, such as Saga, social trends are moving towards the promise of a more fulfilling retirement, with the increasing incidence of retirement migration (King et al., 1998; Rodríguez et al., 1998). For many this can be induced through early retirement, where one or both partners retire before state pension age, and the promise of a third age appears seductive, with as many as one third of individuals voluntarily retiring early (PIU, 2000) and 74% wanting to retire before 60 (Duncan et al., 2000).
Yet such portrayals of retirement often shroud the reality of a decision strongly determined by financial position (Mayhew, 2001; Higgs et al., 2003). The current cohort of retirees are often supplemented through defined benefit (‘occupational’) pensions provided by employers, which have often been regarded as facilitating early retirement (Blundell et al., 2002; Banks and Smith, 2006). The move to defined contribution (‘DC’) pensions where the individual is required to make private contributions which the employer often matches may mean that future cohorts are unable to retire early without penalties to their future pension contribution, and this may have a negative effect on early retirement rates (Disney and Hawkes, 2003). Moreover, the Conservative Government decision in 1982 to relate pension to prices not earnings has been enforced through subsequent reforms. With UK State spending on pensions not increasing as much as in other European countries (Whiteford and Whitehouse 2006), it will be extremely difficult for retirees to retire early and rely on the State pension alone.

Since this experience of Third Age retirement remains heavily dependant on financial position (Scales and Scase, 2001) scholars argue that such trends carry an inherent middle class bias and an “unrealistic portrayal of the lifestyle, time-scale, planning orientation, financial resources and aspirations of the mass of today’s retiring non-intellectuals” (Lasslett, 1997:85; in Arber and Evandrou, 1993:15). This is a fair argument, considering that the number of empirical studies referring to the third age concentrate on professional individuals or couples (e.g. Hillbourne, 1999; Formosa, 2000). Similarly, an individual’s engagement with so-called ‘third age consumption’ is also heavily determined by their social class (Gilleard et al., 2005). Analysis by Banks and Casanova (2003) suggests that whereas those at the top of the socio-economic scale retire early and rely on private or occupational pension schemes, those lower down the scale are more likely to retire even earlier, even though they tend to rely on government benefit schemes such as incapacity support. Similar findings from the US suggest that those within the secondary labour market work are at a distinct disadvantage due to a lack of pension or savings provision (Hodson, 1984). Although future cohorts of retirees will not have DB schemes, such class related trends might continue. Whilst reliance on DC schemes may lead to wealthy retirement for many, such schemes are usually confined to professional or higher-paid occupations (OECD, 2006). Moreover, unlike some countries such as Australia, where
employees are defaulted into such schemes, employees in the UK are still able to opt out of personally contributing alongside employers payment.

Financial analysis of retirement also reveals a gender inequality where women face a 'double jeopardy' of being older and female. One in five women in the UK faces poverty in retirement as pensioners (EOC, 2005b). Patterns of women’s employment play a key part in placing women in an unfavourable financial position during retirement (Bernard et al., 1995). In contrast to men, women often have a disjointed career trajectory since child and caring responsibilities are more likely to rest on them rather than their partners (Bottero, 2000) and a baby-boomer female only spends 60% of a relative man’s duration in paid employment (Jefferson, 2005; Jefferson and Preston, 2005). Gender inequalities within the labour market are also felt by women throughout their working life both in the type of work (Itzin and Phillipson, 1993) and the low pay and low status assigned to stereotypical ‘female’ jobs (Ginn and Arber, 1993; Barnum et al., 1995) which results in lower pension contributions (Higgs et al., 2003). These factors result in the median of women’s superannuation balance being less than half of the male median (ABS, 2001) and may mean continuation of work is required in order to build up a pension (Arber and Ginn, 1991).

In terms of retirement transition, patterns of women’s trajectories are more difficult to assess due to the blur between work and non-work for women. As women are more likely to engage in part-time or temporary work throughout their working life, they are more likely to find bridge jobs or work past the state pension age. However, these are often poorly paid and low skill jobs with little opportunity to contribute towards a private pension scheme (Lissenburgh and Smeaton, 2003). This has led to a gendered assumption that women are more ‘flexible’ that men in gaining employment and may marginalise them during discussions of older worker employment. For example, Ainsworth’s (2002) study of texts from the Australian Royal Commission found that women were sidelined from discussion about strategies for re-employment since they were deemed more willing to accept lower-paid, part-time jobs.

An analysis of the British Household panel survey has also revealed that gender inequalities in retirement are determinant on marriage (Bardasi et al., 2002). Whilst single men were no different from married men in their pension income, women without a partner
were 26% more likely to become poorer than their married counterparts, whether their partner was employed or not. This status may be exacerbated with longevity of women’s lives compared to men’s and result in less money having to last longer (Bateman and Piggott, 1999). Single women are also at a disadvantage through not being able to claim a full state pension based on a husband’s NI earnings, although a recent White Paper on pensions (DWP, 2006) discussed plans to improve women’s position by enhancing National Insurance credit.

However, married women may face other social effects which impinge on their retirement and choice, although this may lessen in future generations (Ginn et al., 2001). Women may feel pressured, or choose to retire at the same time as their husbands (Mason, 1987), even if it affects their pension status. Cultural norms may also affect this decision; for example, women may view pension provision as their husband’s responsibility (Rosenman, 1999). Should divorce or widowhood occur, women are left with little security or knowledge about their entitlements or future provision.

One of the major challenges documented in private pension schemes is whether individuals engage with their financial planning or later retirement. Considering the gradual focus on individual responsibility for retirement provision (Rowlingson, 2002) the complexity, and associated perceived monotony, of financial planning means that many individuals do not fully understand their pension provision (Mayhew, 2001; Vickerstaff et al., 2004), or are not making enough provision early on in their working lives (Rowlingson et al., 1999; Anderson et al., 2000) This has been acknowledged in recent government discussions (e.g. DWP, 2004:19) where plans are being developed to integrate the consideration of such issues into the national curriculum: “all children should have the opportunity to build up the necessary skills to enable them to make appropriate financial choices throughout their lives”. However this leaves a generation of people who will be heavily reliant on private pensions with little knowledge of their workings or actual entitlement.

1.2.2 ‘Accidental’ Retirement

Although retirement may be planned and a positive decision for some individuals, others may experience the transition from work as an unexpected and unintentional event with many who withdraw permanently from the labour market between 50 and SPA doing so
involuntarily (Campbell, 1999; Arthur, 2003). Whilst early retirement is more likely to be a choice for the well-paid, an inability to stay employed due to illness or redundancy is the more likely exit route for low paid men (Lissenburgh and Smeaton, 2003).

1.2.2.1 Health

Although not actively encouraged by the current government, incapacity benefits often provide a means of facilitation from unemployment to retirement with 7.5% of all men between 50 and 64 moving from unemployment status to sick or injured status, 75% of whom are not looking for work (OECD, 2004a). Using British House panel survey data, both Disney et al (2003) and Banks and Smith (2006:53) showed ill health as the key reason for early retirement with around a quarter of respondents citing it as the main reason for withdrawing (also shown in Disney and Tanners’ analysis of the Retirement Survey Data, 1999) whilst Barham’s (2002) analysis of data from the British Labour force survey concludes that many older men are unable to work due to long-term illness. Similarly, International studies have also highlighted the role of health in determining a conscious decision to continue working or retire (e.g. Citro and Hanushek, 1997). However, aside from such large scale studies and benefit figures, it is difficult to establish precise figures on the number affected since many subjective factors such as perceived versus actual health and retrospective perceptions of health may mar actual figures.

In 1995, a reform of the health benefits system saw incapacity benefit (IB) recipients undergoing tighter assessments and work focused assessments for those newly receiving IB income. This was also supported by a number of schemes such as allowing individuals to receive credit whilst attempting to return to work (DWP, 2002c). Yet, compared to other European countries the United Kingdom’s expenditure on disability back to work schemes is relatively low (OECD, 2004a). This was reflected by empirical evidence that those on IB had a more negative experience of finding work (Loretto and White, 2004). One could argue that the UK government has been guilty of focusing on those who are on incapacity benefit as ‘on the sick’, rather than concentrating on a more pro-active strategy which would reduce ill health, or aid those on such benefits back to work. Even recent strategy documents only refer explicitly in passing to the relationship between workplace health and older workers (e.g. Prime Ministers Strategy Unit et al., 2005). This is particularly poignant in light of research which suggests that work should remain an
integral part of health rehabilitation, even during retirement (e.g. Hillman and Chapparo, 2002).

Surprisingly, the debate has only recently been linked to larger concerns about occupational health. Whilst a large number of current incapacity benefit claimants are from manual occupations and more likely to have sustained physical injury through their work (McGoldrick and Cooper, 1988), the current workplace may also hold dangers which will lead to early retirement trends through ill health. For example, a wealth of research exists on the psychological health effects of work in relation to stress, depression, and alcoholism. These are particularly pertinent in new forms of working such as call centre or service-based industry where a lack of control and autonomy of work combined with workspace environment and high levels of emotional labour can lead to serious health issues (Burge et al., 1987; Keel, 1993). Although older workers have been mentioned in more general issues of occupational health (e.g. Sparks et al., 2001), they are often portrayed as more susceptible to the ‘new forms of occupational health problems’, as seen in Jones et al. (1998) which claims that stress and musculoskeletal disorders are more commonly reported in older than younger workers. This approach may be potentially damaging to older workers by ascribing a degenerative model that has been linked to commonly held stereotypes of older workers (see 2.3).

Otherwise, there has been little research into occupations health and prolonged participation of older workers which places emphasis for responsibility on organizations. Griffiths (1999) argues, in a more general discussion of job design and older workers that inadaptable workplaces may result in ill health that force older workers to withdraw from the workforce. Although a logical conclusion, with no empirical evidence to expand on the applied implications or challenges, the concept remains under-explored.
1.2.2.2 Redundancy

Until the 1990's, research suggested that ill health was the primary reason for early exit (e.g. Parker, 1982). However, a number of older workers also become 'accidentally retired' through redundancy, both through being targeted in redundancy programes and also from an inability to become re-employed. Estimates vary on those made redundant, depending on the sample used and the sector from which the sample was taken. For example, a study of local governments placed 26% of all early exits on redundancy (Audit Commission, 1997). However, redundancy figures may also be shrouded through initiatives termed 'early retirement schemes', which share the same objective, that is, to downsize the workforce. Such practices make the over 50's a clear target for any initiative to decrease surplus workers; a trend which is not only a UK phenomenon but is documented as a popular strategy within most industrialised countries (Samorodov, 1999).

Whilst the uptake of redundancy is greater amongst older workers, this does not imply that the decision is made through choice. Workers may feel that the package offered is the only option they have (Campbell, 1999) or feel under pressure through an ethos to 'make way' for younger workers. Moreover, organizations offer little support to workers in job hunting and are more likely to encourage early retirement than aid the re-employment of the worker (Quinn and Burkhauser, 1990; Taylor and Walker, 1993; Warr, 1994).

When first made redundant, displaced older workers have intentions to rejoin the labour market. However, the chances of becoming employed soon after diminish dramatically after fifty, compared with their younger counterparts (Westergaard et al., 1989; Payne and Payne, 1994). The figures vary on this account although some studies suggest only 10% of those over 50 are re-employed within a year, compared to the average of 60% under 50 (Third Age Employment Network, now known as The Age and Employment Network, 2005). However, once unemployed for some time, a growing number of potential employees become 'discouraged workers' (Taylor and Urwin, 1999) where they believe there is no hope of finding re-employment (PIU, 2000; Read et al., 2005). Older workers are also more likely to be re-employed in a lower paid job (Love and Torrence, 1989) or move into part-time work. The high incidence of part-time older workers who are over 50 suggests the latter option is popular: according to the Labour Force Survey, this group collectively accounted for over 40% of those who left employment over 50 (Lissenborough and Smeaton, 2003) However, the extent to which this latter move is through choice remains contentious and in reality many individuals, particularly men, move into part-time
employment for negative reasons. For example, one study claims that 11% of 55-59 year older men working part-time did so through a lack of choice or an inability to secure full time employment (Lissenburgh and Smeaton, 2003)

A number of other barriers may also make it extremely difficult for those over 50 to gain employment. Age discrimination is a major challenge in the recruitment process (MORI Social Research Institute, 2002) which is manifested in two ways. First is the use of age limits either in advertisements, or informally during the recruitment process. This is usually connected to inherent beliefs about older worker’s ability or characteristics, meaning that potential employees are met with inhospitable and negative assumptions about their ability through stereotypes (see 1.3.2). Secondly, there is evidence of problems in gaining more training which may make them more employable (OECD, 2004a). Awareness of the training allowance within the New Deal 50+ was low amongst claimants (Atkinson, 2001) suggesting that resources are not being made available to those who are required to challenge stereotypes about trainability (see 1.3.2.2).

1.2.3 ‘Non-Regular’ Forms of Work

In an attempt to move away from the dichotomy between full-time work and retirement, governmental, practitioner and academic literature has begun to promote alternative forms of working as a means of undertaking work in some form whilst still being ‘retired’ (Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1997; Loretto et al., 2005; DWP, 2006). Some evidence suggests that a number of individuals already dismiss the concept of work and retirement as mutually exclusive: one study showed that 24% of men in employment classified themselves as retired (Tanner, 1997).

The concept of flexible working refers to any type of work which involves non-standard employment relations (Kalleberg, 2000). Although this broad term may cover a multitude of schemes, such as working from home or shift patterns, age and employment studies have tended to adopt the term to refer to forms of work which are either different to an individual’s ‘career’ job or which do not follow conventional working patterns.

This notion is manifested in different forms across the world, and is to a great extent understood in relation to the labour market and cultural trends of a particular country. For
example, in Japan, both social and political systems support the notion of retirement as incorporating work. At 60 employees reach ‘Teinen’, literally translated as ‘prearranged’ or ‘prescribed’ year. Whilst this may be the end of their ‘career’ lives, this is not paralleled with their working lives, and employees will often continue to work in their original company or a subsidiary organization (Riach, 2006). This appears to be effective in achieving high labour participation rates, where the average age of retirement is 69 and 65 for men and women respectively (OECD, 2004b). However in the UK, it is unclear whether the government impetus to change this notion of retirement as merging forms of working with a period of retirement has infiltrated the social consensus.

1.2.3.1 Retention jobs

Retention jobs (Tilly, 1996) involve the continuance of a ‘career’, or same type of job with different working conditions. This is a popular option for those eligible to collect a private pension whilst working a limited amount of hours, a term described as “flexible retirement” (Vickerstaff et al., 2004:30). Pension reports have emphasised the importance of ensuring this is financially beneficial for both organizations and individuals (Pensions Commission, 2005). With incentives to encourage longer working lives, the impetus to encourage more flexible working patterns has become a policy agenda within work and employment, which has removed disincentives which prevent continuing flexible forms of work whilst receiving an occupational pension (OECD, 2006:54). Whilst a popular option for individuals beyond retirement (Smeaton and McKay, 2003), flexible options also refer to those who wish to gradually retire by changing their working patterns before SPA, as well as the over 50’s who wish to return to the labour market (Pfeffer and Baron 1988; Humphrey et al., 2003).

Flexible work has been widely cited as having the mass potential to retain older workers (e.g. Encel, 2003). Attitudinal studies also suggest that this would be welcomed by older workers themselves. In a UK postal survey, whilst more than half of respondents wished to work after retiring from their main job, only 6% wanted this to be full time (McNair et al., 2004). Taylor’s (2004) survey of BT workers also showed a strong preference by men to change to a less responsible job with the company before retirement whilst Watson et al. (2003) showed how small changes to nurse’s employment patterns could have a direct positive affect on their retention.
However, it appears that flexible working practices are largely contingent on both the type of work and the industry in which the individual is placed. Often, empirical studies of flexible working are confined to the discussion of professional occupations. In one UK survey of psychiatrists (Brown 2001), 56% of ‘retired’ professionals were still engaged in some form of work whilst a Norwegian survey of 1,158 retired physicians noted that 44% still worked in a part-time, research or consultative basis (Gogstad and Aasland, 1998). Historically, this pattern is also prevalent within higher education, where academics who consider themselves retired have continued to participate in University life in some capacity (Leake et al., 1963; Taylor, 1999; Tizard and Owen, 2001; Tizzard, 2004). Even when retirement had been forced through ill health, there is evidence of professionals engaging in the workforce in some way. In a small qualitative study of thirteen men, Hillman and Chapparo (2002) highlighted the strategies used by stroke-affected men to continue working in some capacity.

However, wide scale evidence of such practices being carried out within all industries is rather elusive. Apart from part-time work, flexible working patterns such as job sharing, and flexitime are not common (Loretto et al., 2005). Lissenburgh and Smeaton’s (2003) analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that flexible work is still not being used as a transition for those moving from full time work to retirement. Loretto and White (2004) found that out of the 37 employers in their study, only 17 offered part-time work and 10 offered phased retirements. Vickerstaff et al.’s (2004) case study of three organizations show that employees had the chance to shorten their hours coming up to retirement, although there was little evidence of a pro-active response to an individuals changing employment needs in terms of their health. Similarly, Bosch (2001) discusses the increasing practice of cutting hours in the run up to an individual’s retirement. However, most employers view modes of flexible working and a decrease in hours as a precursor to stopping work. This limits the potential for flexible work to be given as a sustainable long-term form of work although, aside from part-time hours, few studies have explored the incidence of flexible working as a sustainable mode of work when offered for a number of years.

Moreover, there is little evidence that flexible working has become a valued form of work. Increasing the popularity of flexible schemes for older workers requires two key steps: a modification of job structure in the workplace (Welford, 1988), and a change in the social
and cultural meanings of work. As, yet, studies indicate that there is little change on either front. Apart from part-time work, the incidence of flexible working does not seem to be a strong trend with over half of all employees over 50’s (66% men and 56% women; Loretto et al., 2005) working 5 days a week. This may be attributed to the cultural adherence to the long hours ideology within the professional workplace (Murray and Syed, 2005), or down to the lack of choice of the individual to move to a more flexible work style (Phillipson, 2002:2). Although some studies find as many as 20% of older workers in part-time managerial work (Thurman and Trah, 1990), 16% of over 50’s work longer than 50 hours, higher than the European average which sits at under 10% (OECD, 2006:80). This norm infuses a ‘time is quality’ mentality into work systems and human resource policies. It is not surprising then that the options for working part-time within white-collar or professional occupations still appear to be limited: one report shows that despite three-quarters of managers wanting to work flexible or part-time hours, the choice was not available at senior levels and was perceived as affecting future career prospects (Hudson, 2005). It is unclear whether this situation may change in the near future: one study from New Zealand, which has a similar work culture to the UK showed that less than a third of 981 employers offered flexitime with only a fifth suggesting they may do so in the following year (McGregor, 2001). There also seems to be little evidence of companies promoting or integrating older worker flexible working options alongside family-friendly policies aimed at working parents, although some research has indicated employees view the two as mutually complementary (e.g. EFA/DWP, 2002). Part of the reason for this may be that the term ‘family friendly policy’ is often used as a substitute for flexible working schemes. This phrase is often limited to referring to childcare, with few studies considering other caring responsibilities relating to partner, grandchildren or parents which might also apply to older individuals. As a result, older workers may be excluded from wider discussions about flexible working both within policy and management practice.

1.2.3.2 Bridge Employment

The second main form of non-regular work concerns older workers who engage in a job which is different to their original career. Often referred to as ‘bridge retirement’, a North American term coined by Doeringer (1990), it draws on a similar distinction made within the Japanese Tienen system discussed earlier. Defined as work other than a ‘career job’, a number of studies have shown the rise in individuals engaging in part-time work before fully withdrawing from the labour market as a means of supplementing income from a
pension (Rhum, 1990; Feldman, 1994; Weckerle and Shultz, 1999). The potential of this older worker contingent workforce has been acknowledged within both academic and practitioner literature (e.g. McNaught and Barth, 1992; Kindelan, 1998; Shultz, 2001) and framed as a win-win situation. Organizations can thus access a valuable labour market to work within peak times and 73% of older workers were reported as more willing to work seasonal or part-time hours (Collinson, 2003).

However, the popularity of bridge retirement may be a result of the lack of public funding available within the US. As the 5th lowest OECD country in terms of public spending on social security at only 14.8% (OECD, 2005:72), it is unsurprising that many Americans plan to rely solely on their private pension and savings income in retirement and need extra post-career employment (Hansson et al., 1997; AARP, 1998). However, the popularity of this form of working is rising within the UK. Hogarth and Barth’s (1994) early study of workers at B&Q has become an oft-cited example of what older workers can offer in terms of customer service skills, patience and life experience. This formula has often being repeated through case studies of organizations such as Tesco (Stoney and Roberts, 2003) and IKEA (DWP, 2005) to exemplify the benefits of employing older workers.

However, once again, there is debate over whether such work is a favourable choice for older workers. Bridge employment is often distilled within secondary labour markets and conducive to low paid, low skilled jobs (O'Reilly, 1994; Lissenburgh, 1996). Displacing older workers into what may be contingent or temporary jobs relies on a buoyant economy and may not be a sustainable option should there be an economic downturn. This is seen in US studies of bridge jobs where individuals experience a loss of earnings, as well as having a greater chance of being discriminated against on account of age (Rhum, 1989; Hirsch et al., 2000; AARP, 2002). Some may have reverted to such jobs due to inability to gain full time or career employment (Lissenburgh and Smeaton, 2003). Job stability and training may also be lacking in many forms of flexible working compared with full time jobs, although control over their time is seen as a major source of satisfaction for many individuals (Lissenburgh and Smeaton, 2003). However one should question whether this is a compromise that should have to be made when some ‘older workers’ potential have 15 years ahead of them before reaching SPA.
Just as gender and age reflect a 'double jeopardy', employees involved in non-regular forms of work may also experience age discrimination combined with unfavourable treatment due to the irregular structure of their work. Although there are no studies of part-time older workers which relate to a double jeopardy, it could be argued that the form of work may serve to heighten discrimination against older workers. Part-time workers of all ages face disadvantage in the workplace. For example, cultural perceptions of the value of part-time work serves to negate opportunities and access to training and promotion (Walsh, 1989). Those working less hours are also subject to stereotypes such as not being interested in career development, or as marginal to the company's overall development (Beechey and Perkins, 1987; Neathey and Hurstfield, 1995). Other workers may also feel unfairly affected by changes to their working patterns in order to accommodate part-time employees (Dick, 2004), resulting in divisions in the workplace through resentment.

1.2.3.3 Self-Employment
The interest in 'third age entrepreneurs' has increased over the past ten years in both entrepreneurial and governmental literature. Not only are older entrepreneurs statistically more likely to succeed in business start-ups than younger people (Cressy and Storey, 1995), but retention figures show that those who became entrepreneurs earlier on in their career are more likely to remain within the labour market. Whilst employment figures highlight a decrease in the overall labour market participation of older workers, self-employment figures increase in relation to age (Loretto et al., 2005) with a quarter of over 65's who are still active within the labour market being self-employed (Tillsley, 1995). This high figure is a combination of those who have begun their own business at a later age, as well as an increased likelihood of those who have established a business earlier on in their careers not retiring.

Most research is either prescriptive or descriptive and concentrates on motivations for becoming entrepreneurs and general challenges (e.g. Blackburn, 1999), rather than concentrating exclusively on entrepreneur's experience of age discrimination and age inequality. Reasons for becoming self employed later on in life are both push and pull. Baucus and Human (1994) argue that third age workers who have reached a plateau start their own business as a means of engaging with new challenges, whilst Galbraith and Latham (1996) suggest that those who are made redundant start working for themselves due to a lack of options. Yet the literature differentiates the 'silver entrepreneur' from other
business owners by ascribing personality traits which deviate from the personality behaviours through which other entrepreneurs are characterised (Zhao and Seibert, 2006). For example, research by Parker (2006) has purported that older entrepreneurs respond less sensitively to new information than younger entrepreneurs, which serves to reinforce the stereotype of maladaptability discussed later in this Chapter.

Freelance careers have also been noted as allowing older workers to have the choice and autonomy over type of work and working hours, whilst maintaining a single career trajectory which builds on past experience. Platman's (2003) longitudinal study of portfolio older workers in the media revealed that whilst job insecurity and lack of regulatory protection were seen as hazards which were heightened through age, these were seen as overcompensated for through the autonomy of work. Nonetheless, the need for choice over working hours was often dominated more by client needs, rather than employee choice (Platman, 2002).

However, the potential of older workers becoming third age entrepreneurs may be limited (Blackburn and Mackintosh, 1999). As Curran and Blackburn (2001) suggest, financial support is not always available since many government schemes focus on the under 25's. This limits the potential to start a company to those with capital or assets which they may place against the business. Research has also centred on business success being determined by past experience collected throughout their careers (e.g. Barclays Economic Report, 2001). Whilst this could refer to generic experience, the case samples and populations used within empirical studies suggest that those who have been in professional or skilled employment will start companies. This means that the potential to start a business after 50 is determined by financial stability and professional experience, rather than the individual's personal desire. Finally, international studies from Australia and the US limit their discussion of the 'grey entrepreneur' to mainly discussing men, causing Weber and Schaper (2003) to argue that third age entrepreneurs remain a male dominated phenomena.

1.2.4 Discussion of Older Worker Inequality in Work/Retirement Interface

Aside from more direct forms of discrimination, older workers face a number of challenges in terms of making a successful transition between work and retirement. Whilst the
threshold between these two stages of life may be blurring, this is often due to the economic need to continue working. For many, the reality of poverty in retirement remains a very real threat with a fifth of pensioners living in income poverty (Hills and Stewart, 2005), a predicament which is highly dependant on gender and social class.

Whilst a number of schemes such as New Deal 50+ mentioned earlier have attempted to resolve unemployment among the over 50’s, there is little indication whether the targeted audience are aware of what these schemes could offer them. Moreover, there appears to be a disparity between the main form of governmental support for back-to-work schemes and the route to retirement taken by large numbers of individuals who find themselves ‘accidentally’ falling into retirement long before they had planned or intended to. One may argue that the 6 months unemployment necessary to join the scheme means that individuals have lost motivation to return to work (Ford et al., 2003), even though this is a shorter qualifying period than other New Deal schemes such as New Deal 25 plus, which requires claimants to be unemployed for 18 months.

Choices in flexible working appear to be determined by the type of job previously held by the individual. Following a dual labour market theory, Kahne (1992) describes the divide between choices of flexible working as ‘new concept’ jobs which aim to retain professionals within their vocations and specialist knowledge, and ‘bad’ jobs which lead to low pay and low skills. This partition is also discussed by Tilly (1996) as ‘retention’ and secondary jobs. Whilst retention allows the individual to make use of their previously acquired skills, the extent to which such practices are widespread is questionable. Although it should be remembered that individuals might want to change to this form of work, there is little research to conclude whether their move to such employment is a proactive choice, or arises because of a lack of choice over continuing to work in their original occupation.

Finally, there is little evidence that bridge employment challenges or changes ageist perceptions or practices. Ignoring professional skills and qualifications devalues the full potential contribution older workers could make, and makes no attempt to challenge institutional and structural forms of age discrimination which normalise the early ending of career trajectories. By failing to challenge the attitudes towards older workers should they wish to continue with their career, bridge employment may even be seen as preserving a
disengagement theory where older workers are gradually sidelined within the labour market. Moreover, there is a lack of evidence that retention jobs are commonplace and formally recognised by a majority of companies. The small number of qualitative-based studies which explore the options and experiences of employees and workers in relation to retention work suggest that arrangements are often informal and ad hoc (Vickerstaff et al., 2004), leaving employees unsure as to the stability of their job. Future legislation may also mean that such practices are open to claims of age discrimination, since the option is not explicitly available to everyone. Whilst these practices should be recognised as improving employee choice, it is difficult to assess whether they are challenging larger forms of age inequality or barriers to older worker opportunity. If norms of work such as the long hours culture remain embedded within society, it is possible that grafting flexible practices onto the current working structure may still disadvantage workers, who could be viewed as less committed, as found in more general studies of part-time working (e.g. Neathey and Hurstfield, 1995).

1.3 Older Workers and Organizational Discrimination

As the previous section has discussed, older workers may find themselves facing a number of institutional inequalities which emerge through the ‘choices’ presented to them towards the end of their working life. Yet inequalities are also found through embedded biased perceptions and beliefs which manifest themselves throughout the employment cycle and during day to day workplace interaction. Not only do these pervert the choices and opportunities presented to older workers, but also contribute towards their marginalisation within the work place and can often result in early departure from the labour force (Walker and Taylor, 2000).

1.3.1 Direct Forms of Discrimination

Direct discrimination is when age is explicitly used as a biased measurement or factor in management decision making. However, it is likely that with the increasing awareness of age diversity, organizations are less likely to use overt forms of discrimination to differentiate, and a majority of research was carried out in the early 1990’s. In theory, such modes of discrimination will be outlawed in October 2006, except when objectively justified, as discussed at the beginning of this Chapter. However, that is not to say these
practices will be obliterated overnight, and may only become more informal and covert in order to avoid legal infringement.

1.3.1.1 Recruitment Practices

Age bars in advertisements use chronological age as a limiter on those who are invited to apply for jobs. The earliest study in the UK was carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1985 (EO Review, 1989) which revealed that 61% of 123 clerical job advertisements stated an upper age limit. Similar results were found by the Institute of Personnel Management who examined over three thousand jobs advertised in their own magazine, finding that 41% stipulated preference to particular age groups (Naylor, 1987). Naylor's own research of advertisements in Personnel Management between 1985 and 1986 saw a gradual decrease of age being used as a limiter in advertisements falling from 60% in the September 1985 addition to 33% in the final publication. Similarly, Tillsley's (1990) study of advertisements in national newspapers, Personnel Management magazine and vacancies in job centres and local governments suggested a decrease in the use of age, although there was still a heavy bias towards using upper age barriers. Studies carried out in the early 1990's supported this: Taylor and Walker (1994) found a large percentage of recruitment advertisements studied used age, whilst managers in Metcalf and Thompson's (1990) research also referred to using upper age limits in advertisements.

In the increasingly politically correct environment towards the turn of the millennium, such practices are likely to have become less common, particular in light of forthcoming legislation. However, this does not mean they have ceased to exist altogether. Loretto et al. (2000) highlighted that age bars on employment, whilst not explicitly advertised, may be informal and normalised throughout the company. In other studies, 55% of managers used age in the decision making process during recruitment (McGoldrick and Arrowsmith, 2001) compared with 43% in Taylor and Walker's 1992 study (Taylor and Walker, 1998a). As well as mentioning preferential age groups, Taylor and Walker (1998a:66) found that organizations used 'key questions' as a way of promoting younger candidates over older candidates, such as asking whether they had family commitments, on the premise that those who did not would be younger and thus more committed. Whilst this is not strictly overt or direct discrimination, such practices will be illegal when legislation comes into force. However, if we look at the historical difficulty in obliterating sex discrimination in
recruitment (e.g. Snell, 1979; Weichselbaumer, 2004) individuals may still have difficulty in proving that age discrimination actually affected the decision.

1.3.1.2 Fixed Retirement Ages

Whilst the UK has never impinged a universal retirement age on employment, retirement has often been synonymous with state pension age (SPA) within British employment for the past 25 years (Meadows, 2003), set at 65 for men and 60 for women (although this will gradually increase to 65 by 2020). Statistics show the sharp decrease of labour force participation the year before the respective SPA: between 64 and 65, the participation rate for men falls 13.1 percentage points and for women from 59-60 11.3 percentage points (OECD, 2004a; Whiting, 2005). However, a report by the DWP which sampled 2,800 50-69 years old suggested that fixed retirement ages were more of a barrier to working beyond retirement, than encouraging early exit (Humphrey et al., 2003).

Despite this claim, there has been a historical trend of both formal and informal retirement ages operating within a number of industries (Walker, 1982). However, an adherence to age diversity good practice has seen large institutions, such as the NHS, abolish fixed retirement ages (Steatham, 2005) in preparation for legislation. The impact on informal retirement ages however, may be less substantial. Age norms are often so deeply embedded within the organizational culture or history of an organization that individuals may feel obliged or required to leave at a particular time (Hayward, 1998; Greller, 2000). Whilst it may also work inversely and result in delayed retirement, such as in academia (Hughes, 1981), social norms may also make individuals feel pressurised to leave before pension age.

1.3.2 Stereotypes

The substantial literature on older worker stereotypes has played a considerable part in highlighting the unequal practices towards older employees. Not only have formal government consultations cited stereotyping as a reason to introduce legislation and a starting point for a number of programmes, such as Age Positive, but the incidence of stereotypes has been a topic of academic interest for over 30 years. As early as the 1970’s, psychological studies have explored the phenomenon of typecast views about older workers (e.g. Rosen and Jerdee, 1976). These rely on more subtle beliefs about older
workers, and can lead to a denial of opportunity, or become the justification for more direct forms of discrimination. Whilst such beliefs may manifest themselves in different ways or be attributed to different people depending on the job type or employment sector (Lucas, 1995), older worker stereotypes can be split into three mains groups relating to interpersonal relationships, productivity and health.

1.3.2.1 Intergenerational Tension
Considering that age forms a basis for differentiation in all aspects of life (Turner, 1998), one assumption marring older worker employment is the perceived threat of a clash between different age cohorts. This may be socially ascribed to the reliance of the aged on younger cohorts for social and financial support (Turner, 1989:600) or unequal distribution of resources across age cohorts (Johnson, 1989; Irwin, 1996). However, such intergenerational tensions have also been discussed within organizational literature. Rather than the outcome of empirical academic studies, such views are often purported within academic and practitioner texts in relation to disruptions within the hierarchy. In his study of workplace stress, Jex (1998) suggests that working for younger managers may cause frustration in older workers and make younger managers uncomfortable. A study by Austin Knight also found that younger workers reported finding difficulty in telling people more than 30 years older that them what to do, although no such tensions were reported by older workers (Austin Knight UK Limited, 1996). This was contested by a survey of students (Loretto et al., 2000) that revealed little evidence of intergenerational tensions in the workplace. Although limited in its sample and relying on those not fully immersed in the labour market, it suggests that intergenerational tension in the workplace may be more hypothesised than apparent.

Contradicting this view is the notion that an age diverse workforce is conducive to a productive work environment. The argument for age diversity argues that a mixed age workforce reduces labour turnover and increases motivation (EFA, 2005). Of course, this may not simply be down to the age diversity of the workforce, but the likelihood that those companies switched on to an age diverse workforces have more developed HR policies and workplaces are happier for other reasons such as good terms of employment and working conditions.
Intergenerational tension may also result from issues which, although related to different cohorts in the workforce, are not a direct consequence of tension on account of age. For example, resentment may arise from older workers feeling discriminated against if overlooked for promotion in favour of younger employees (e.g. Brooke and Taylor, 2005). Likewise, others may become resentful of part-time older workers by feeling that their own work patterns are affected by them (Dick, 2004). These two examples suggest that intergenerational tension is the result of managerial practices, rather than interpersonal conflict.

1.3.2.2 Poor Performance and Resistance to Change

The earliest academic study examining American manager's beliefs about older workers was conducted by Rosen and Jerdee (1976). The survey results found the stereotypes included being slower, harder to train and not able to adapt to change. Whilst now dated, it appears that such ideas are still widely espoused within organizational life both within the US (e.g. Hassell and Perrewe, 1995) and more significant to this study, the UK.

One of the key themes within age discrimination research is the belief that performance and age are directly related (Loretto et al., 2000). Limited physical deterioration to eyesight or hearing appears to have the hyperbolised the idea that workers do not perform as effectively as they grow older. US studies have refuted this claim (Waldman and Avolio, 1986; McEvoy and Cascio, 1989) by showing no distinct correlation between performance and age. Despite this, subjective perceptions of productivity by supervisors favoured younger workers as more productive than older workers whilst those who are above the 'average age' for a particular job often receive less favourable evaluations (Waldman and Avolio, 1986).

One of the earlier studies of age discrimination in the UK (Casey et al., 1993) showed that older workers were deemed not as able or capable as younger workers, and performed less well than their younger counterparts. More recent studies suggest that this may be explicated using particular examples which refer to 'maladaptability' (Warr and Pennington, 1993), meaning an inability to deal with new processes or practices. This was also linked to perceived attitudes of older workers: not only were they viewed as slower to learn, but were also seen as not interested in receiving training (Warr and Pennington, 1993; Taylor and Walker, 1994; Warr, 1994). Similar views have been widely recorded in
other studies along with perceptions of being over cautious (Hayward et al 1997; Taylor and Walker, 1998a). Other studies showed that older workers were resistant or unable to cope with change (Itzin and Phillipson, 1993; Chiu et al., 2001; Redman and Snape, 2002). The role of technology was also seen as having a debilitating effect on the perception of older workers (Brooke and Taylor, 2005) through being stereotyped as technophobic, or not interested in technological change (Warr, 1994; Lyon and Pollard, 1997; Taylor, 2002). Such stereotypes have been echoed in Australasian and American studies. McGregor and Gray (2002; see also Gray and McGregor, 2003) found older workers were viewed as less willing to train, less promotable, less flexible and not able to use new technology.

The impact of stereotypes can be far reaching both in terms of the individual's workplace experience, and their chances of gaining employment. Whilst barriers to training may not be made explicit, the low incidence of training amongst older workers suggests that managers withhold or prevent opportunities for further development of older workers. Trindler et al. (1992) reported low levels of training amongst older workers due to lack of opportunities, a finding which was also supported by Taylor and Urwin (1999). This has wider implications for their career prospects. One related effect was the likelihood of older workers being overlooked for promotion (Palmore, 1990). Using a case study approach, Brooke and Taylor (2005) verified this by reporting a preference for promoting younger workers over older workers to supervisory positions, even if the older workers had more experience. Considering the increased likelihood of job loss amongst the over 50's, the lack of training may result in a vicious cycle for older workers who may be made redundant since they have had no opportunity to update their skills, and will also remain unemployed due to a lack of skills (Metcalf and Thompson, 1990).

Part of the reason for not training older workers may arise from the impetus to quantify and rationalise return of investment on training (Taylor and Urwin, 1999). Taylor and Walker (1994) reported that just under half of employers were willing to train older workers since it was difficult to substantiate a long term investment (see also Oswick and Jones, 1991). However this assumes that the training will always benefit the company, and contradicts research which suggests that training is intended to increase employability within the job market as a whole, rather than the company (Rajan, 1997). Therefore, reasons for a lack of training may more often be linked to biases about older worker trainability.
1.3.2.3 Cost, Illness and Absence

A third main stereotype concerning older workers is beliefs that older workers are not as cost effective as younger workers. In terms of some forms of provision, this may actually be economically rationalised. For example, in the US, health insurance costs could vary from 6.1% for a 25-34 year old to 14.5% for a 55-64 year old (Barth et al., 1993). Similarly, in the UK, pension costs within defined-benefit may increase in relation to a workers age. Although a majority of systems have now moved to defined contribution schemes that even out equal payment through the employee’s career, a cultural lag may mean that the perception of older workers as ‘expensive’ persists.

Research evidence also suggests that managers perceive older workers as more susceptible to absence through ill health. This view is strongly influenced by a physiological degenerative theory of ageing where laws of nature are governed by deterioration over time. Studies in gerontology have suggested that older individuals are more likely to become ill and, once ill, will take longer to recover. However, such studies focus on the very old, rather than the older worker, who may be as young as 45 and many studies report that days off from sickness was lower amongst older workers (e.g. Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1996; Stoney and Roberts, 2003).

Research which gauges views of managers shows that often a comparison is drawn between those older and younger with regards to health issues. For example, whilst younger workers are seen as more likely to take one-day ‘sickies’, older workers, once off work, are thought to remain absent for longer. Tillsey’s (1990) study also revealed that older workers were seen as having poor health and fitness which impinged on their productivity. Metcalf and Thompson (1990), in an attempt to assess why older workers were subject to discrimination, found that deteriorating physical health was cited as a problem. However, it appears that in practice, many of these issues have been overstated and used as excuses for discriminating, rather than based in evidence. Moreover, there is little discussion of the relationship between older worker health problems being caused by work and whether such issues should become more central to a management discussion of occupational health and welfare, rather than attributing it to ‘natures law’ of deterioration.
**1.3.2.4 Double Jeopardy Stereotypes**

Whilst age discrimination may be experienced on its own, ageist attitudes can also be exacerbated through a combination of prejudiced attitudes. Returning to the concept discussed in 1.2, ‘double jeopardy’ may also be experienced at an interpersonal level where the combined effects of ageism with other stereotypical beliefs are felt by individuals.

Although early feminist research agreed that older women experiences were accentuated sexism rather than ageism (e.g. Sontag, 1979), research now suggests that ageism manifests itself in particularly gendered ways and is felt as a double jeopardy through unfavourable perceptions of older women. Early work by Itzin and Phillipson (1993:45) in English local authorities saw that women experienced age discrimination at any age, and were in effect “never the right age”, a term employed by later authors (e.g. Duncan and Loretto, 2004). Women have also been reported as being older at the same chronological age than men: McGoldrick and Arrowsmith (2001:87) reported a quarter of managers viewed an ‘older’ women as under 45. In their study of a financial services company, Duncan and Loretto (2004) also found that women as young as 30 were perceived to be old compared to men at 45, whilst women’s careers were perceived as peaking at an earlier age than men’s. Although not suggested by the authors, one explanation may be that women are penalised on account of age throughout their life course due to expectations about taking time off to raise children.

Media and social images of women may also influence perceptions (Itzin, 1995). Critical studies examine the pervasiveness of female sexuality as embodied in youth and the sum and substance of a women’s identity. Such a notion marginalises older women to either a silenced position or towards unfavourable images of hags, witches, or baying mother-in-laws. Even positive stereotypes of motherly figures which may be used by employers (Holmes, 2005) reinforces a gendered division of labour which serves to limit the opportunity and heterogeneity of choice for older women.

The majority of the research into the experiences of age and race as a form of double inequality has been carried out in North America. This is not surprising considering that the make-up in the US is more diverse than Britain, where only 9% of the population of England and Wales are non-white and 2% in Scotland (UK Statistics, 2006). According to
Blakemore and Boneham (1994), the term 'double jeopardy' was first used by the National Urban Bureaux in 1964 in relation to health inequalities experience by black older Americans. However, research is more likely to highlight inequalities of wealth and class, rather than focus particularly on discrimination in the workplace due to being viewed as older non-white workers.

Although not empirically tested within an employment context, one may argue that age-ethnic related discrimination in the workplace may be derived from generational perceptions about those belonging to an ethnic minority. Sociological studies examine the stereotypical images of older Asians include having a poor command of English (Mays, 1983). Such attributes are thus positioned as the fault of the individual, rather than the hostility of others, and are used as an excuse for double jeopardy relating to health inequalities in older age experienced by ethnic minorities (Johnson, 1984; Mares et al., 1985). Whilst studies of youth ethnic identities shows how second generation individuals are more likely to have assimilated UK traditions (Jacobson, 1998), older generations stricter adherence to religious or cultural customs such as dress or appearance (Bhalla and Blakemore, 1981) may also result in a perception of not wanting to integrate into 'white' society (Mays, 1983). However, the dearth of literature in this area makes it extremely difficult to further explore such issues without the empirical support of academic discussion.

Despite a lack of research into other forms of workplace discrimination felt alongside ageism, it should be noted that studies of social attitudes suggest prejudices which individuals have experienced throughout their lives, such as discrimination related to disability or sexuality may also be experienced differently as employee's age. A number of studies and personal narratives relating to homosexuality discuss the different challenges and perceptions that are experienced during the ageing process (MacDonald and Rich, 2001; Berger, 1995; Turnbull, 2001; Thompson, 2006), although the ageing experience is not necessarily presented as a wholly degenerative and negative experience. Those with disabilities may also find themselves faced with stereotypes about poor health (Morris, 1992) or not being able to make a valid contribution (Sayce, 2003), beliefs very similar to those postulated about older workers.
1.3.2.4 Positive Stereotypes

As well as a number of negative beliefs, older workers have been perceived as possessing positive attributes. In a study of 20 employers, Metcalf and Thompson (1990) highlighted the employment of positive attitudes about older workers such as increased reliability and a more developed sense of responsibility (see also Hayward et al., 1997). Warr and Pennington’s (1993) study which interviewed chartered people managers also revealed a number of positive beliefs such as better work ethic, better team players, more loyal and more reflective in their actions. Again, these characteristics have been echoed in international studies (Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; McGregor and Gray, 2002).

Many documents by interest groups and the government expound such positive attributes as a rationale for employment. For example, a study by the Third Age Foundation (2002) reiterated the business case approach by quoting from both older workers and employers about positive attributes such as knowledge and maturity. Such testimonies often argue that older workers will be able to use their experience in a way that will benefit the business (DWP, 2005).

Whilst promoting older workers through presenting an alternative image is admirable, there may be problems in using positive stereotypes. There is a lack of understanding about the relationship between the attribution of positive and negative stereotypes, which can often exist alongside each other. Although Hassell and Perrewe (1995) state that negative stereotypes were balanced by more positive ones, it is difficult to assess whether they counteracted each other, or the nature of the relationship between the two. Attributing positive stereotypes may even have an unintended consequence of legitimising less constructive beliefs about older workers, thus encouraging older workers to be viewed as a homogenous group. For example in a study by the author of supermarket older worker recruitment literature, positive stereotypes were seen as contributing towards a narrowly conceptualised identity of an older worker (Riach, 2003).

1.3.3 Discussion of Organizational Discrimination

As exemplified in 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, a number of studies have revealed the nature of organizational discrimination and ageist perceptions. However, one may argue that the empirical and theoretical emphasis on stereotypes which has dominated this research area
has limited the potential to understand why and how age discrimination is experienced using alternative avenues of thinking.

Whilst the pervasiveness of stereotypes provides an insight into the extent of potentially biased views of older workers, many studies present a simplified picture of age discrimination and leave little room for exploring other social processes which produce organizational age inequality against older workers. Few studies appeared to have acknowledged during their research and analysis that stereotyping, like other forms of interaction, are played out within bureaucratic and contingent upon hierarchical structures. We do not know whether the effects of stereotyping are different at managerial and employee levels, or whether position in the hierarchy of power is related to the potential ability for stereotypes to affect practice. Yet we may venture to claim that ageism is felt at different times and in different ways depending on the type of work or experience. For example, studies within the IT industry state that ‘older workers’ may be as young as 35 (Employers Forum on Age, 2000), whilst many professions, such as surgeons or high court judges are not achievable before the age of 40 due to the years of training that are required and are less likely to be as sensitive to ‘old’ ageist claims so early on. By ignoring the contextual setting of the workplace in relation to the enactment of age discrimination, our knowledge is limited as to whether such factors play an intrinsic part in the formation, experience and management of organizational age inequalities.

Related to this underplay of context is the fallacy over an ideal type of ‘older worker’ to whom the stereotypes refer. Whilst studies ask for perceptions of someone ‘older’ or an ‘older worker’, there is little debate or discussion over who exactly this typifies or refers to. This assumes that we all have the same understanding of who an older worker is. Yet Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997) report alongside their research on stereotypes that many respondents’ highlighted the ambiguity in labelling an older worker. As one of the participants in Arrowsmith and McGoldrick’s study stated ‘you can be older at thirty’, and only 58% offered a chronological age when referring to an older worker. However, these were left as empirical observations, rather than fully developed through theoretical discussion.

Theoretically, the frameworks used to understand stereotypes leave little room for developing a more contextually-sensitive approach to understanding age discrimination.
Whilst policy or commissioned research leaves no explanation for stereotypes, academic literature often relies on psycho-social models of behaviour (e.g. Chiu et al., 2001; Redman and Snape, 2002). This limits the discussion of processes of age discrimination to an interpersonal level, with little potential to develop how these are reproduced within larger organizational processes and practices. Taylor and Walker’s (1998a) study of attitudes is the only research which links opinions with actual behaviours). This makes the link between stereotypes or their effect on ageist practices within the workplace rather tacit by assuming such attitudes will regulate behaviour, even when managers have a duty not to discriminate.

The need to explore new methods of research is not only of theoretical importance, but also required to ameliorate methodological tensions found in current approaches. Traditional models used to research the incidence of stereotypes may become outdated as legislation drives discriminatory beliefs underground, with participants less willing to openly discuss possible prejudices. From October 2006 it will be illegal to discriminate on account of age and whilst legislation cannot police the minds of managers, espousing such views may become politically incorrect, even if managers are ensured anonymity during a research interview. However, a majority of studies have thus far relied on survey or questionnaire approaches which require the respondents to openly assert a preference or belief. This relies on assuming that managers will give an honest opinion, ignoring all social or politically incorrect mores. Such attitudinal surveys may also be criticised more generally for making participants either exaggerate or euphemise opinions (Scholnfield, 1982) and cannot be used to correctly judge a person’s beliefs. Using such an approach presents participant views as falsely essentialised, since the structure of the questionnaire will either provide them with a list of stereotypes which they have to agree or disagree with, or openly encourage participants to name age-related beliefs (e.g. McGregor and Gray, 2002). Such attitudinal surveys not only limit the respondent’s opportunities to expand on their reasons for this but also only reflect the individual’s point of view at a certain point in time (the exception being Brooke and Taylor, 2005).

1.4 Organizational Responses to Age Discrimination

Earlier in this Chapter it was discussed that the government has already placed pressure on organizations to challenge age discrimination, mainly through the Voluntary Code of
Practice and promoting a business case for diversity. Whilst not yet bound by law, the reporting of wide-scale stereotypes and discriminatory practice has resulted in the inclusion of age within the spectrum of anti-discrimination policies, often grafted onto existing policies. Two approaches have been of particular relevance to this drive for equality, the Equal Opportunities and Diversity models. Whilst these are best understood as organizational-wide philosophies, the management of enforcing policies often relies on a particular department to facilitate change to a more age positive workplace, although other stakeholders, such as Trade Unions may also pressurise companies into challenging discrimination.

1.4.1 Equal Opportunities Vs. the Diversity Approach to Age Discrimination

In an attempt to create a cohesive and unified approach to tackling inequality, the Equal Opportunities (EO) approach aims to generate a level playing field of chance through the eradication of discrimination (Rennie, 1993). Whilst used as a philosophy, inherent in this approach is the misinterpretation that equal opportunity leads to, or is meant to lead to equal outcomes (Liff, 1999) since the impetus remains on providing everyone with the equal 'chance'. Rather dated figures reveal that age had been latterly included on 40% of Equal Opportunity statements by 1998 (Cully et al., 1999), although this is most likely to have now increased due to increasing awareness of age as a form of discrimination. However, as discussed in section 2.4, there is still wide scale evidence of age discrimination occurring within the workplace. Whilst reasons for this may fall outwith the particular EO approach, it could be argued that the complexity of age makes it difficult to manage using an EO approach. For example, the EO notion of 'comparitability' requires a hypothetical baseline 'other' who can be used as a measurement to see whether discrimination has taken place. Such a cursory measurement is difficult to distinguish within age discrimination since age is often defined through perception, rather than a chronological marker by those exhibiting discriminatory tendencies.

An alternative perspective is taken by following the organizational diversity model. Emerging from the US and popularised in the UK by Ross and Schneider (1992) and Kandola and Fullerton (1998), the approach seeks to recognise and celebrate difference between individuals as positive, rather than problematic (Thompson, 1998).
This not only encapsulates macro-group difference such as gender or age, but also personality and work style (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998:8) and views a diverse organizational make-up as key to creating an ‘organization of excellence’. In this respect, it is not surprising that diversity is developed alongside such areas as total quality management and performance systems where the key objective is financial success for the organization (Ross and Schneider, 1992). Thus, managers not only have a legal or ethical reason for promoting equality and diversity, but also an economic incentive.

Although age was conspicuously absent from the diversity agenda until the turn of the millennium (Stein et al., 2000), the diversity approach has been of integral importance to the political promotion of organizational age equality, most explicitly seen in the business case argument where older workers are celebrated as providing a mirror-image of the potential market (see 1.1.2). This is by no means exclusive to age: the promotion of equality of employment in terms of gender and ethnicity have also been seen as a strategic means of accessing the best workers in a competitive labour market and gaining a competitive advantage (Ross and Schneider, 1992; EOC, 2005c).

One of the main ‘selling points’ of diversity is its ability to acknowledge the heterogeneity of older workers, since employees are treated as individuals, rather than as one group (Ross and Schneider, 1992). However, this concept of individual treatment may not follow through into practice with individuals being bundled into particular groups on account of age, gender or ethnicity (Mcgrath et al., 1995; Litvin, 1997). As a result, all older workers may be grouped together and treated with a degree of homogeneity.

Diversity also presents a number of limitations in proactively eradicating age discrimination. In concentrating on the celebration of difference, rather than explicitly concentrating on discriminatory practices, its “upbeat naivety” (Prasad et al., 1995:5) fails to acknowledge the ‘darker’ side of inequality, where discrimination is used as a tool to exert power and control over others. There is also little to suggest that age diversity actually works. One study suggests that only certain approaches to diversity may result in benefits. Ely and Thomas (2001) show how, out of three approaches to diversity: the integration and learning approach, the access and legitimacy approach (employing a diverse workforce to access a market) and the discrimination and fairness approach (equal opportunities), only the first had any form of sustainable benefit, since it was able to link
diversity to work processes by using diversity both as a tool to understand how people work and learn in the workplace, and as a tool for organizational adaptive change to the market. However, research suggests that companies who do promote the employment of older workers often limit their recruitment to customer-facing, low skill level jobs (Metcalf and Thompson, 1990; Warr and Pennington, 1993). This makes it unlikely that older employees are placed within a position where they can influence and infiltrate strategic change within the company.

Indeed, both EO and diversity approaches may also have disparaging gaps between the purported approach and actual work-floor practice. The relationship between the presence of a diversity approach and its ability to tackle age inequality remains unclear. Hoque and Noon (2004:481) suggest that many companies are prone to what they term ‘empty shell’ policies where formal policies are simply an insurance against litigation and do not translate into recruitment or monitoring practices within the organization (see also Jewson and Mason, 1994). As a result, whilst companies promote their commitment to EO, informal managerial or cultural norms may mean managers resort to informal and potential discriminatory forms of recruitment (Collinson et al., 1990; Liff and Dale, 1994). Although the relationship between EO policy and age inequality has yet to be fully investigated, one study (McVittie et al., 2003) showed that managers were still able to assert equality of opportunity within their organization by dismissing indictors of unequal practice, such as the low number of older workers in their workplace, to factors outwith their control. This suggests that there is a large gap between the purported and actualised management of organizational age inequality which needs to be further explored.

1.4.2 Age Discrimination as a Human Resource Issue

Alongside EO and diversity approaches are specific policies and practices managing the employment relationship that have an impact on the treatment of older worker and potential employees. As a key function of managing people-processes within an organization, Human Resources (HR) views the employees of an organization as a key sustainable competitive advantage by creating a direct and explicit link between employees and organizational performance through structural, cultural and people management techniques (Guest, 1997; Storey, 2001). This is achieved through a joint and mutual commitment to the employment relationship, with the worker ascribing to organizational
beliefs and aspirations, and the organization making a long term investment in employees. In line with a people-centred philosophy, eradicating age discrimination would appear to be in the companies interest: pro-equality literature (e.g. DTI, 2005) states that companies who foster equality will have higher productivity and a better motivated workforce.

Commentators have identified the HR function of utmost importance in facilitating a cultural programme to eradicate age discrimination and promote equality (Itzin and Newman, 1995; Walker, 1999) since many of their activities relate to planning, recruiting and developing the workforce, all areas where age bias may play a significant factor (Stein et al., 2000, Gray and McGregor, 2003). For this reason, a number of studies have used HR or personnel managers as a research sample, since their beliefs and opinions are likely to influence the creation and implementation of policies within an organization. For example, McGoldrick and Arrowsmith (2001; see also Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1996) collected questionnaires from 1,665 IM members, and despite an initial assumption they may be more sensitive to generalising, respondents were reported to hold the same stereotypical views espoused in other studies. Whilst this may be a valid point, the lack of rich qualitative data generated from the study makes it difficult to make any assumptions about how such stereotypes may manifest themselves in managers’ practices.

However, more general critiques of HRM (e.g. Storey, 2001; Legge, 2005) help to question whether the approach is conducive to eradicating ageism. For example, long term strategic policies which respond to the ageing demographic through the recruitment and retention of older workers are often temporary and only provide lip service to current government policy initiatives (Taylor and Walker, 2003). Moreover, such schemes are often displaced by short cuts to ameliorate any affects of recession or external environmental forces (Hunter et al., 1993; Taylor and Walker, 1998b). Due to a guiding economic rationale where disposing of the most expensive workers is the most ‘rational’ way of saving money, older workers are often adversely affected since they are more likely to be on higher salary scales (Taylor and Walker, 1998b).

Of greater threat to managing age inequality are the unitary dimensions of HRM that define the employment relationship. The reduction (or suppression) of any form of conflict may in fact discriminate against older workers by holding a preference for ‘green workers’ who will espouse organizational wide culture (Lyon et al., 1998). This puts older workers
at a distinct disadvantage since they may be seen as having more 'organizational memory' to erase, compared to the relative 'blank canvas' of graduate and younger workers.

1.4.3 Trade Union Responses to Age Discrimination

Despite the decrease of trade union power and influence over organizational processes in the last thirty years (Ackers and Payne, 1998; Ackers et al., 2004), trade union bodies remain active in the promotion of older worker rights and elimination of age discrimination. Although research from the 1990’s suggested they did not perceive age discrimination as an issue of relevance (Tillsley, 1990; Duncan et al., 2000), their collective drive against age inequalities in the workplace has recently included a campaign for the introduction of legislation (e.g. TUC, 2000; 2005; AUT, 2005) and negotiating changes to benefit and pension entitlement for their members through their campaign, the ‘Pensionswatch’ project (e.g. TUC, 2006).

However, due to the lack of definitive research, it is difficult to determine what influence trade unions have or may come to have on dispelling age discrimination, although the issue is likely to become of key concern to their members. Despite suggestions that trade unions themselves discriminate by refusing membership to those over a particular age (Encel, 2003), 34.5% of unions members in 2005 were over 50 (DTI; 2006k) with older workers more likely to be concentrated in union recognised industries: “at least a quarter of the workforce was age 50 or over in 41% of workplaces with union recognition, compared to only 28% of workplaces where unions were not recognized” (Kersley et al., 2004:7; see also Kersley et al., 2006).

Evidence from studies of countries already legally protected against age discrimination does suggest that unions have a positive affect on organizational compliance to employee law. For example, Weil (1991) found that unionized organizations were more proactive in maintaining health and safety standards through inspections. This was also found to be the case in instances of race discrimination although it is also contingent on the type of industry (e.g. Ashenfelter, 1972). In relation to ageism, one New Zealand study (Wood et al., 2004) showed that unions also had some effect on compliance on age discrimination, such as tempering the use of unlawful questions relating to age during the recruitment stage. However it is questionable whether such union presence eradicates age
discrimination, or simply drives it underground and fails to challenge more covert forms of
discrimination. Moreover, there is no research that examines how managers or trade union
members view the role of trade unions in the management of age discrimination, making it
difficult to assess this relationship.

1.4.4 Discussion of Organizational Responses to Age Discrimination

Both EO and diversity are shown as having their limitations. Whilst the theory of equal
opportunity may not necessarily promote age equality, diversity could fail to challenge
discrimination. Although a combined approach would help one to solve the limitations of
the other (Liff, 1999), there is the possibility that both make it easy to ‘talk’ equality with
little impact on actual practice. For example, there is empirical evidence from gender and
ethnicity studies (e.g. Wetherell et al., 1987; Webb, 1997) to suggest that diversity policy
and inequality can quite easily cohabit in the same organization. So far, however, the
relationship between organizational equality philosophies and ageism has yet to be
explored.

It is also difficult to see how diversity, which is fast becoming the principle equality
philosophy within organizations (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998), views intervention from
external bodies, such as trade unions or even the government. From its inception, diversity
shadowed the HR approach by assuming that organizational success was based on a high-
trust, co-committed relationship with its employees. Alongside the business case for
equality, this implies that diversity should be completely internally driven. If this follows a
similar mentality to the one purported by human resource management (Legge, 2005), it
can be argued that any intervention to challenge discrimination by legislation or collective
representation will be viewed by the company as unnecessary, and may even be seen as
deviant, since it breaks the psychological trust defining the employee-employer
relationship.

As an aside, it should also be considered that a majority of studies examine large firms,
making it difficult to assess the equality approach taken by smaller firms. Discussing age
discrimination as a HR issue may automatically exclude a large number of firms in the
SME sector who do not have formalised HR departments. Whilst Arrowsmith and
McGoldrick (1997) suggest that the SME sector may hold the best prospects for older
workers with a significant percentage of SME owners being over the age of 50 (Barclays Economic Report, 2001) and business experience and knowledge is more likely to be valued alongside the possibility of flexible work structures (Vinten et al., 1997), studies of other forms of equality suggest that adherence to legislation is not seen as a priority for SME's. One study suggested that only half of small businesses have complied with the updated disability legislation (Federation of Small Businesses, 2006) whilst less than half of SME's have formal grievance procedures (Marlow, 2002). As discussed in relation to government reform, should this sector of businesses not be given clear guidelines on implementing policy which considers their limited resources, they may find themselves in breach of the law.

1.5 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter has outlined the progression of Governmental approaches to age discrimination, going on to explore older worker inequalities which have so far been identified within the literature. Whilst organizational responses to discrimination are often encapsulated under more general equality policies, early studies tentatively suggest that age discrimination can still exist within companies despite the veneer of age positive workplaces.

It is clear from the preceding discussion and critique of current literature in Age and Employment Studies that there are a number of areas that still need to be explored in order to further assess the incidence and manifestation of organizational age discrimination. In order to pull together the gaps in current knowledge, these disparities have been synthesised into four main arguments.

A. Older worker age inequality remains an under researched phenomenon

Despite a number of valuable and rigorous studies, our understanding of age discrimination is still in its infancy (Phillipson, 2004a). Compared to government regulation of, and academic knowledge about, racial or gender discrimination, concern over age inequality has only appeared under the spotlight in the past twenty years. Although government documents do allude to a social justice argument, much of the impetus which prompted age diversity occurred alongside increasing concerns about the ageing demographic. Although
this is by no means a moot point, setting up such rational limiters may inhibit the possibility of understanding why inequality occurs in the first place. As a result, recommendations and proposals may only be seen fighting the fire, rather than tackling the source.

Statistical analysis and survey data gives an initial understanding of the current position of the older worker in the labour market as disadvantaged. Yet information about how older workers experience the labour market is only coming to light through the recent emergence of qualitative-based research (e.g. Loretto and White, 2006). From these findings, it is clear that older worker's experiences are wider ranging and heterogenous, although such studies often concentrate on wider institutional or discriminatory factors which are met when trying to gain employment, rather than focussing on ageist behaviour as practices at the day-to-day-level within workplace interactions.

B. Older worker age inequality can occur at a social, institutional, organizational and interpersonal level

Inequalities can occur at different times and in different forms for older workers. So far, research into age inequality at the macro socio-political level has focused on trends and patterns whilst studies at the interpersonal level have been rather limited through only examining the incidence of stereotypes. Very few manage to relate these to the enactment of discrimination or inequality on the work-floor or in organizational policies (the exception being Taylor and Walker, 1998a, and Loretto and White, 2006).

There is a lack of understanding about how discriminatory practices at different levels of the work-floor may influence and relate to social or organization-wide biases, or vice versa. In his examination of the literature, Phillipson (2004a) acknowledged the need to understand wider social and cultural influences and relate these to the experience of retirement and the development of older workers in terms of training and development. The same argument may be made for exploring how age discrimination is manifested at an interpersonal and organizational level relate to larger social and institutional morés surrounding age and employment. That is not to say that current work should be considered useless or irrelevant. Rather, the accumulation of academic knowledge around older worker stereotypes and inequality should be complemented with studies exploring
the multifaceted ways in which discrimination manifests itself in the workplace and how these manifestations impinge on larger ideologies of inequality. In doing so, it may be necessary to develop a more theoretically rigorous framework in order to situate age discrimination as a social phenomenon.

C. There is a lack of understanding about who the ‘older worker’ is
In terms of the study of age discrimination, qualitative research has been biased towards the examination of stereotypes at the expense of accepting the ‘older worker’ as a truism. Part of the reason for this may be the multitude of research disciplines from which Age and Employment Studies emerged, such as economics, public policy and industrial relations. A bias towards more empiricist modes of thinking has meant that concern has focussed on understanding larger social trends, rather than problematising concepts that could otherwise be understood or defined using chronological markers.

Yet there are indications that the ‘older worker’ is far more complex than first assumed or given credit for. Early work commissioned by the government (Hayward et al., 1997) suggested that the ‘older worker’ label was unsuitable and was rejected by those who it referred to. Similarly, Arrowsmith and McGoldrick (1997) reported on the disparity between classing people as ‘older’. However, the current ambiguity over who the older worker is makes it difficult to assess the relationship between espoused stereotypes and older workers identity. So far, chronological age has been used as a determinant within political and academic literature (e.g. Urwin, 2004; OECD, 2006). Whilst they stress that ‘older workers’ should not be regarded as a homogenous group, academic studies have been guilty of failing to develop the concept of the older worker and penetrate effectively beyond the label. Moreover, there is little to indicate that such chronological markers are valuable or even relevant to either those who reproduce ageism, or those who are targets of such beliefs.

D. The link between governmental and organizational approaches and practice remains unclear
In order to assess whether future programmes or initiatives will make an impact on tackling age discrimination, it is necessary to establish clear links between current
governmental and managerial approaches to age discrimination, and how these have affected, diminished or transformed forms of organizational age inequality.

The introduction of legislation prohibiting age discrimination infers that organizations need to be legally responsible for upholding equality. Although the Code of Practice produced some insights into the perceived relationship between organizational practice and externally impinged standards, the diversity argument implies that organizations feel the management of age discrimination should be internally measured and monitored. However, there is still a lack of knowledge about the relationship between external drivers eradicating age discrimination and internal drivers towards promoting age equality, in terms of whether they hold complementary or conflicting messages. More specifically, we need to understand how managers negotiate and balance these two concepts of equality and discrimination in their day-to-day practice alongside other organizational objectives.

Having identified these four gaps, it has emerged that as well as attempting to empirically explore some of these areas, there is a need to undertake a more theoretical interrogation of how age and the older worker have been and could be understood as an organizational concept. In order to do so, Chapter 2 examines how the study of organizational age discrimination and the older worker may be further developed in the assessment of alternative modes of theoretical enquiry.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Influences in Age and Employment Studies
As the previous Chapter discussed, current knowledge about organizational age inequality has been derived from a number of political, practitioner and academic studies. However, whilst studies often focus on interpersonal, organizational or institutional manifestations of inequality, there is still a lack of research which has been able to link these different levels in a meaningful way. Moreover, there is indication of a lack of understanding about the social meanings attached to ageism, age discrimination and the older worker and their relationship to how work-related discrimination links with larger ideals about the ageing process and perceptions about age.

This indicates deeper problems over a lack of concern over the theoretical conceptualisation of organizational age inequality that may be thwarting the development of new directions in research. Chapter 2 aims to ameliorate this disparity and develop a theoretical approach which will be sensitive to exploring the social enactment of organizational age inequalities, by considering the possibility of relating larger macro effects with interpersonal experiences of age discrimination and ageing. This is achieved by critically examining the current perspectives that have influenced mainstream Age and Employment studies, before discussing how the application of current approaches within social theory to ageing may open up new vistas for research.

As a precursor to this discussion, it should be noted that a number of studies do not set out to develop a theoretical understanding of age discrimination and instead focus on discussing implications for policy and management practice (e.g. Loretto and White, 2006). Such studies are vital in building a critical mass of knowledge about organizational age inequality and the older worker, as well as helping to engage with political and practitioner audiences. Exploring the theoretical dimension of age and employment, as this thesis aims to do, should be seen as complimentary to these studies, in helping to contextualise findings within a more theoretically robust framework.

2.1 Macro Perspectives in Age and Employment

2.1.1 Functionalist Approaches

Functionalist theory argues that every individual needs to fulfil a particular function in relation to the social system they operate within in order for society to work effectively
As gerontological studies began to move away from bio-medical concerns over ageing, two main functionalist theories developed as a means of understanding how the individual and society interact in relation to chronological age. Disengagement theory argues that regardless of the health or wealth of an individual, they will gradually withdraw from society, eventually ‘achieving’ a complete withdrawal through death (Cumming and Henry, 1961). This means that not only does the individual gradually prepare themselves for their departure from society, but society does not want to suffer from the sudden loss of the individual, disrupting its ability to function (Neugarten, 1979). Continuity and Activity Theory take the opposing view by arguing that even through retirement, individuals must create meaningful relationships and ties within society in order to adapt to the ageing process (Lemon, et al., 1972; Atchley, 1989:183) Such engagement must continue for as long as possible, and will bring benefits to both the individual and the social system (Havighurst, 1961). Central to this idea is the concept of successful ageing or ‘productive ageing’. Traditionally, successful ageing is defined with reference to biological and physiological maintenance or simply, how long one lives. Havighurst (1961) adopted a more sociological perspective that was concerned with a longer, more satisfying life. This allows a departure from the quantification of value as directly attributed to economic potential, and allows all activities, such as caring for relatives, hobbies and volunteering to be viewed as valuable and necessary for a productive well-functioning society (Bass et al., 1993:6).

Nonetheless, the influence of functionalism is still apparent in the biases and perceptions evident within work and retirement. For example, Disengagement theory is still embedded within the concept of retirement discussed in 1.2.1 where there is an assumed mutuality of wanting to stop work by the employed, the organization and the State. The concept of disengagement may also be argued as influencing the concept of flexible working, where a reduction of hours for older workers is only seen as a precursor to stopping work altogether, rather than a form of work in itself which may continue over a number of years. Remnants of Activity Theory are also evident in the governmental approaches to promote working later on in life. For example, ‘Opportunity Age’ (DWP, 2005:29) dedicates a whole chapter to the concept of active ageing purporting a “vision of society where later life is as active and fulfilling as the earlier years”.

70
The problem with these two opposing views is that they fail to provide a balanced assessment of society. Whilst Disengagement becomes a rather fateful and pessimistic way of viewing ageing, Activity theory does not give due diligence to the constraints and barriers individuals may face in later life. Instead, behaviour is determined by age, subscribing to a bio-medical model of ageing. This influence is dangerous when applied to the workplace since it may actually legitimise discrimination on account of age through a deficit model that assumes reduced neurophysiological ability affects older worker’s performance.

There is also a lack of conceptual clarity over the main tenets of these approaches. For example, the notion of ‘withdrawal’ is particularly difficult to explain in terms of disengagement. Whilst those who are older they may become withdrawn from the labour market, an increasing reliance on health support in the later stages of life would suggest more ties with social systems and institutions than before. Similarly, the term ‘successful ageing’, has been empirically shown as being perceived as more of a coping strategy, rather than an achievement (Fisher, 1992). Moreover, the ability to successfully age may not be a universally experienced phenomena with commentators suggesting that experience of ageing is more related to financial or class status than collectively experienced by the masses (Rowe and Kahn, 1987).

Herein lies the difficulty and main limitation in applying a functionalist perspective. By attempting to understand the collective approach, the social system appears to dictate a view of the world by implying that people should change their behaviour in relation to their age (Powell, 2001a; b). Moreover, this society is perceived as operating within a level playing field, with no consideration of power or political processes, or actors who deliberately try to marginalise particular members within the social system. Therefore, any discussion of the relative cultural ‘value’ assigned to groups within society is relegated as a moot point. This ‘one theory fits all’ perspective also does little to accommodate individual experience and subjectivity even though ageing is experienced alongside other demographic intersections such as gender, class or ethnicity (which may affect the individuals experience). Taking such factors into account is extremely difficult since the philosophy of functionalism requires large groups to be assigned particular functions dictated through their relationship to social institutions.
2.1.2 Socio-Economic Theories of Ageing

With the rise of a Marxist informed debate, theorising age and ageing began to consider processes of power and reproduction in society as affecting the position of older people (Turner, 1989; Mullen, 2000). Although the main impetus still remained on the macro perspective of ageing, treating the experience of older individuals as led by the State, studies began to emerge which displayed some sensitivity towards a class differentiation of ageing which began to question the heterogeneity of ageing as a social process.

The Political Economy Theory of ageing follows a Marxist concept of society functioning in a way that serves to benefit some whilst marginalising the masses (Estes, 1979; Townsend, 1981). Dismissing the biomedical assumptions which underlie age trajectory, perceptions of old age are understood as being shaped and manipulated by the State in a way which is beneficial to the economy and those in power. This is discussed through the concept of structured dependency created by the State so that as people age, they are subject to increasing deprivation in terms of wealth and dependency, a process that is systematically and historically structured through welfare and employment policies (Estes, 1979; Townsend, 1981; Walker, 1981; 1983; Phillipson, 1982). For example, Townsend (1981) argues that much of the dependency of the elderly has evolved through the structuring of economic and social reform where elderly people are perceived and treated as more dependant than they are or need to be by the State. This legitimises particular practices, such as institutionalism, as an unfortunate but essentialised social ‘fact’, as well as concentrating on State provision for younger individuals, who are better able to contribute to the economy (Phillipson, 1982).

‘Ageism’ is thus understood as produced by capitalism and the deliberate dismissal of those who are not ‘useful’ to society (Walker, 1981). ‘Old age’ is constructed through the interface of work and retirement where the end of the working life signals a descent into old age, a period of life simultaneously associated with being in need of support by the State (Phillipson, 1982). The emergence of this ‘paternalistic welfare’ results in intergenerational conflict and a marginalisation of older persons in society (Phillipson, 1998). However, this experience is not as homogenised as presented within functionalist perspectives, since experience of age inequality is understood as simultaneously experienced in terms of income and jobs, which allows a class and gender analysis to also
be considered (e.g. Arendell and Estes, 1991; Pampel, 1992; Casalanti, 1996; Minkler, 1996).

Also emerging from Marxist debate is Modernisation theory, which argues modes of production are a means of understanding the emergence of inequality through social change. This states that as social, demographic, economic, environmental and technological changes occur, certain members of a social system are relegated (Cowgill and Holmes, 1972). As a result of urbanisation, the growing predominance of individualisation over group support has resulted in older members of society losing their position of power and status. For example, in the context of age and employment, developments in the modern workplace have marginalised the older worker through the devaluation of knowledge, skills and experience (Rhoads, 1984). Banks and Casanova (2003) also showed the effects of industrial restructuring as indirectly displacing older worker since, due to the overrepresentation of older workers within industries subject to modernisation and the use of early-retirement packages, it was older workers who were more likely to be affected. The influence of this argument is particularly strong in current debates about older worker inequality within sectors that have undergone dramatic change. Research has shown that during periods of significant technological innovation and advance, older workers are more likely to be displaced by the compensation models which accompany change (Bartel and Sicherman, 1993; Mallier and Morris, 2003).

Such approaches should be commended for their integration of power as playing a role in the production of age inequality. This departs from the functionalist perspective of ageing as being a naturalised and inevitable truth, to a greater impetus on the constructions around particular stages of life which are more malleable and open to interpretation and manipulation. The challenge, however, is that this dimension of power is assumed as unidirectional and imposed on 'the People', rather than subverted or constrained; a one-sided notion which encourages a biased interpretation of social and political situations. This criticism is not unique to theories of ageing and has been levelled more generally at modernist approaches where no conceptual space is created for the individual to assert or challenge their position (Giddens, 1991). In characterising the individual as passive and dominated, or at least unable to challenge the power of the State, suggestions of being able to construct meaning and subjectivity at an individual level are rendered theoretically irrelevant (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000). For example, theories of modernisation do not allow...
any consideration for attempts to reconcile the affects of change with life-long learning and skills development, now a key part of human resource management (see Rainbird, 2000; McGoldrick et al., 2001). Whilst change may be seen as possible, socio-economic theories only allow this to be achievable via the State or through collective or group pressure. And whilst other inequalities such as class may be taken into account, the homogeneity is not challenged further than dividing one big group into smaller subsets through mass classification (Bury, 1995). We are thus left with a damming situation which allows little potential for the individual to act as more than a social puppet.

2.2 Psycho-Social Perspectives

Whilst functional and socio-political perspectives take a macro perspective by viewing age inequality as collectively experienced through structure and social systems, the examination of discrimination at an inter-personal level has developed from a more psychological perspective which examines the creation of stereotypes. As discussed in 1.3.2, stereotyping can be understood as characteristics attributed to a group and ascribed to anyone who is perceived as belonging to the said group, often leading to differentiation or exclusion. Whilst there is a mass of literature which attempts to understand discrimination and stereotypes from a psychological perspective (see Baltes and Cartensen, 1999 for overview) Age and Employment studies have traditionally drawn from three main theoretical positions: social identity; role and contact theory.

2.2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was one of the first attempts in psychology to theorise discrimination at an inter-group and inter-personal level and is based around three central tenets: categorisation, identification and comparison. Categorisation states that individuals will ascribe themselves and others into categories so as to better understand them. In doing so, they are implying something about the identity of themselves or the other person. These are then used to compare groups they associate themselves with (ingroups) with those they do not (outgroups) and, due to reasons of ego and self-esteem, in-groups are seen in a more favourable way than outgroups (Mullen et al., 1992; Schaller, 1992). The comparative element also means that even when groups are similar, differences will be overstated in order to create a distinction (Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel and Turner. 1985).
Currently a majority of the workplace age stereotyping research either refers explicitly to social identity theory, or use the concept of ‘in-group biases’ as a conceptual framework (e.g. Redman and Snape, 2002; McGregor and Gray, 2002). Warr and Pennington (1993) also draw on comparability by showing stereotyping as both a product of differentiation and a process to help accentuate the difference between groups; a finding which fits with the concept of differential exaggeration discussed by Tajfel et al. (1971). As well as providing a basic conceptualisation for stereotyping, SIT has allowed researchers to underline subjectivity at an individual level. Both Chiu et al. (2001) and Hassell and Perrewe (1995) state that older managers may also use stereotypes in order to differentiate themselves with the out group. Other studies have used theories derived from or very similar to social identity theory. For example, Oswick and Rosenthal (2001) concentrate on the third element of Tajfel and Turner’s theory which is derived from Festinger’s social comparison theory (1954) as a means of understanding age discrimination.

However, as touched upon in 1.3.3, there are a number of limitations in using a social identity approach to understand the full extent of organizational age discrimination. Whilst it allows a link to be drawn between the individual and the group, social identity theory limits a discussion about the complexity of age discrimination. By assuming that age is a ‘dominant’ way through which individuals group people within the workplace, there is a danger of oversimplification by suggesting that an individual’s identity is affiliated with one demographic or personality characteristics over another. This makes it extremely difficult to investigate the affects of ‘double jeopardy’ stereotypes, such as gender and age, where individuals may have conflict over who they identify with most strongly. Moreover, this may change depending on the context, rather than remain static over a long period of time. Yet, unlike gender, age is a continuous variable, making it difficult to ascribe the terms younger and older, since they may be understood differently by different individuals. Individuals may thus be moving in and out of ‘old’ and ‘young’ categories, even though they are used against each other to highlight the ‘lack;’ of each group (e.g. Goldstone and Jones, 2001).

Part of the problem may rest in the way that social identity theory has been applied to organizational age stereotyping. For example, Redman and Snape’s (2002: 359) empirical research about stereotypical beliefs held by teachers bases its hypothesis on social identity
theory. However this appears to assume a dichotomous reduction of in and out group and assumes that older people will rate older workers more positively than will younger workers. Whilst one of the few stereotype studies to take respondents age into account, they assume that those perceived by the researchers as older workers identify themselves as older workers, even though this may not be the case.

2.2.2 Role Theory

Role theory is also built on a concept of differentiation, arguing that individuals have social positions which are both self-expected or expected by others on account of their age (Eagly et al., 2000). Whilst functional perspectives such as disengagement and activity theory discussed earlier draw on a concept of roles, other work has used this perspective to explore the complexity of changing between roles.

Whilst limited in its contribution to individuals during their work life, role theory has been widely used to explore changing concepts of self and social perception in relation to the transition between work and retirement, such as their loss of status (Parsons, 1951). Unlike social identity theory, role theory examines how a role may be determined through a multitude of socio-demographic characteristics. For example, Barnes and Parry (2004) highlighted how gendered roles were reflected in work roles and a gendered career trajectory, which then permeated the roles taken by individuals during retirement, This meant that women may face different dilemmas concerning their own non-paid roles, such as housewife or homemaker, and being retired (Adelmann, 1993).

Within age and employment studies, Role theory has the potential to provide examples of how individuals may be presented with options that are socially conventional or culturally sanctioned, which limit choices over their work tasks. For example, older workers may be positioned as being 'suited' to mentoring or pastoral tasks, since they are perceived as fulfilling the role of the 'parent' or 'carer' outside work. Kite and Johnsson (1988) also use role theory to connect the use of stereotypical perceptions with how an older worker was expected to behave. However, later research by the same research team suggests that this may not be due to age per se, but due to the expected employment roles held by older workers, such as supervisory or management positions (Kite et al., 2005). This example highlights a problem with researching roles within organizations. Whilst roles may be
assigned to demographic based categories such as age and gender, they may also be heavily influenced by the position or job type others expect older workers to have. This makes it extremely difficult to decipher whether the social or organizational context holds more bearing on the incidence of stereotypes.

Whilst role theory does provide one possible reason for discrimination, it is extremely difficult to suggest that role is the main determinant of social position in later life. For example, Wray (2003) found that there was little conflict felt between work and later life since motivations appeared to be driven by consumerism rather than socially ascribed age-roles. Also, role theory does not allow us to further develop our understanding beyond why discrimination occurs or how it may be challenged. For example, in relying on universal laws that govern human behaviour, there is an inability to consider why ageism may occur in some contexts, and not in others, and why some individuals are discriminated against, whilst others are not.

2.2.3 Contact Hypothesis

Whilst neither social identity or role theory concentrates on the reasons behind discrimination, contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) has been applied as a way of understanding how discrimination may be challenged. The argument states that by interacting with the ‘out-group,’ negative perceptions will be lessened (Hewstone and Brown, 1986) or even foster positive attitudes between groups by acknowledging commonalities (Gaertner et al., 1996).

Since age norms may be derived from the distribution of age throughout an organization (Lawrence, 1988), contact hypothesis does have the potential to affect how people view older workers through interaction. Both Chiu et al. (2001) and Redman and Snape (2002) propose that the more contact one has with the prejudiced group, the less likely they are to used unfavourable typecasts. However, Chiu et al. (2001) later found that there was no evidence of frequency of contact moderating stereotypical beliefs.

Yet a counter argument suggests that, contrary to inducing harmony, familiarity may also breed contempt. Hassell and Perrewe (1995) suggested that frequent contact with older workers may exacerbate stereotypes to the detriment of productivity. Similarly, a
gerontological study by Crocket et al. (1979) showed that contrary to diminishing the use of stereotypes, interaction with older people who did not fit with a stereotype were viewed as exceptions, whilst those who conformed strengthened the resolute of the stereotype, a notion also found in other sociological studies using contact hypothesis e.g. Hewstone and Brown, 1986).

One reason for this contradiction may be due to the difficulty of applying the approach to an organizational context since most research advocating Contact Hypothesis is carried out in relation to ethnic discrimination (Ellison and Powers, 1994). Social studies that did refer to age often used participants who are at opposite ends of the age spectrum, such as children or youths discussing views of the elderly (e.g. Caspi, 1984), rather than trying to divide between those aged 20-60, the age group of most employees.

Contact Hypothesis also faces other challenges when applied to an organizational context where hierarchy and the division of labour may make differences irrevocable. Allport (1954) emphasises that the quality of the contact is important and that individuals must not simply be in the same place as the ‘others’, but be actively interacting on a regular basis. Yet studies, such as Chiu et al. (2001:652) have applied the theory by referring to the duration of the contact (some, frequent or daily) rather than the quality of interaction, which assumes that contact in itself will have a moderating affect. Unsurprisingly, this study found contact had little effect on decreasing the application of ageist stereotypes.

2.3 Discussion of Micro and Macro Perspectives

Although there are over 200 theories of ageing within Western medicine (see Mendevez, 1990 and Harman, 1998 for overviews), Age and Employment has mainly drawn on the previously discussed perspectives as a means of understanding age inequality in relation to work and employment. As argued, each perspective has a number of specific limitations which hinder the development of a cohesive theory of age discrimination. Before moving on to explore possible theoretical alternatives, five main limitations found within current theoretical perspectives are overviewed.
Firstly, functionalist, socioeconomic and psycho-social theories all focus on age inequality as manifested at a particular level. This makes it difficult to adopt a multi-dimensional perspective of age inequality which collectively considers the manifestation of age inequality at an interpersonal, organizational, institutional and social level. For example, it is difficult to conceptualise how larger social inequalities relate to organizational or work-floor age inequalities, and vice versa. In order to investigate this relationship, the theoretical perspective must be able to support a multi-level analysis which links both the micro and macro activity that is related to age discrimination.

The second limitation is the lack of due consideration when applying social and psychological theories in order to develop a theory of organizational age discrimination. Theories are often derived from empirical tests which refer to participants or vignettes who are classed as older within society, rather than in a workplace context. Since ‘older workers’ may only be regarded as ‘middle aged’ outside the workplace, it is difficult to apply theories which discuss the construction of economic or physiological dependency, since neither issue may be deemed as relevant to the older worker. Moreover, applying theories developed within the social, rather than organizational environment does not allow for workplace effects to be taken into account, such as hierarchy, bureaucracy, the division of labour and organizational culture.

There is also a lack of ability to consider individual experience as a means of controlling or affecting the experience of the ageing process or stereotypes. The driving need to be able to generalise social positions or behaviour has led to a renouncement of subjectivity and meaning at an individual level. Moreover, the emphasis on cognitive processes implies that individuals are not in control of their own behaviour, but subject to a series of ‘brain patterns’ which causes them to act and think in a particular way. Although not assuming that individual identity is necessarily fixed, there is an assumption that behaviour is determined through universal laws that result in stable and consistent modes of behaviour. To an extent, such an explanation distances responsibility from those who reproduce ageism by ‘naturalising’ discrimination as an innate form of behaviour, making it extremely difficult to view age inequality as a deviant or conscious, manipulative form of behaviour.
This lack of concern over conceptualising the individual has also led to a false dichotomy created between those aligned with the stereotype and those who employ it. Macro theories draw a definitive line over those in power who create inequality within social systems, and those who experience it. Likewise, micro theories clearly delineate between those who reproduce ageism and those who are discriminated against through the classification of individuals. The use of chronological markers has averted any discussion away from the problem of who determines who is the ‘older worker’, how this is achieved and by whom. Moreover, this implies age discrimination occurs as a direct result of the victim’s age, implying a close relationship between older workers and biological determinism. In doing so, research design may be intrinsically biased towards physiological categorisation, rather than a more complex socially-defined concept.

Finally, it is difficult to separate the occurrence of age discrimination from the chronological age of the victim, since there is an implicit assumption that the victim’s age is somehow a ‘trigger’ for discrimination. Older people or older workers are defined only by their chronological age and, due to a lack of discussion or thought over other possible reasons for discrimination, an oversimplified relationship is created between age inequality as a phenomenon and the people who are likely to be susceptible to its effects. Although socio-economic theories do consider this relationship to be determined by other influences, such as power, the experience of age discrimination appears to be predominantly determined by the victim’s age, rather than culminating from the context in which it occurs, or the policies or practices put in place to manage inequalities.

2.4 Critical Turns in Age Research

As discussed in the previous section, Age and Employment research has benefited from its multidisciplinary origins by using a number of theories to substantiate or increase understanding of age within a work context. However, this has led to a difficulty in being able to understand the inter-relationship between age inequality at micro and macro levels, and a lack of ability to account for individual experience and meaning.

In light of these shortcomings, this discussion now turns towards the emergence of critical social theory and its influence within gerontological and social studies of ageing. The origins of the term ‘critical theory’ have long been attributed to the ‘Frankfurt School’ of
the 1930's who sought to further the philosophy of social science. Yet unlike previous scholars who had only attempted to understand society, critical theorists aimed to challenge the way society was with the aim of discovering how change may occur (Held, 1980). Early critical theory focused on this change as occurring through collective power and action (Calhoun, 1991), as seen in the Political Economy Theory of ageing (see 2.1.2), which is derived from the early Frankfurt School influenced by Marxism. However, the 1960's saw Habermas depart from the Marxist influences of the first generation Frankfurt school where the centrality of dialecticism in traditional critical theory was perceived as a limiter in understanding the enactment of social change (Ramussen, 1990). Instead, Habermas was keen to develop a theory grounded in action, in other words, "a theory of society conceived with a practical intention" (Habermas, 1974:1). This examined language as a means of understanding the constitution of reality, rooted in Saussure's (1970 [1916]) notion of language as a social activity which produces historical change. This instrumental element of language could be abstracted and used to verify the subject of the argument in itself. Yet this thesis only stretched to creating an argument for universal communicative action, rather than be able to account for individualistic difference and subjectivity (Calhoun, 1995).

Whilst the Frankfurt school lies at the foundation of critical theory, the limitations thus far discussed within age and employment theory cannot be challenged with the modernist-tinted work of this movement. Even second generational Frankfurters were charged with being too pessimistic in their accounts for emancipatory action and regarded as 'theoretical theorists' (Bourdieu, cited in Calhoun, 1995:34) for their inability to go beyond theorising, even though this was originally identified as one of their main objectives. However, in the second half of the 20th century, critical theory became associated with other schools of thought such as post-structuralism and post-modernism. This departed from seeking to understand the world in terms of collective forces, and instead aimed to concentrate on tackling the concept of 'difference'. In light of the resulting epistemological and ontological standpoints which were opposed to rationalism and neo-marxism, several commentators, such as Calhoun (1995) have argued for a redefinition of critical theory. This allows for a more inclusive meaning by focusing on the theoretical objectives of critical theory, which aim to critique and challenge social life and human action, rather than its philosophical stance per se.
Within studies of ageing and society, three contemporary critical perspectives have been applied and influenced the study of later-life and the marginalisation of older individuals within society: the life course approach, cultural perspectives, and post-modern influenced perspectives.

2.4.1 The Life-course Perspective

The life-course perspective is a theoretical framework specifically designed to consider the interaction between roles, experience and society as people age. Ageing and older age are not simply examined in isolation but are viewed as events or a stage, taking a longitudinal perspective of later life as part of a journey.

Early theories purporting a more developmental approach to the experience of ageing concentrated on linking age with personality formation and developmental stages, as seen in Jung’s (1969) first and second stages of life, Havighurst’s (1972) developmental tasks, Peck’s theory of the same name (1968) and Erikson’s life stages (1965 [1950]). However, such psychoanalytical concepts were often built of dichotomies, such as Ego Integrity vs. Despair, which is attributed to those 65 and over, and implied the individual as passive to their own life course, particularly in later life which was characterised as “acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle as something that has to be” (Erikson, 1965 [1950]:260). This gives very little space for any more constructive concepts of active or individualised ageing, and such an approach falls foul through its functionalist tendencies in emphasising the importance of conformity to the overall social system by assuming a checklist approach which is completed at each stage (Woodward, 1991).

Other models emerged which attempted to take a process view of ageing to explain the social. This often applies a cohort theory of age, where groups are divided through generational dissection, as in age stratification theory. Those born within certain historical, economic and social circumstances will share particular traits in relation to their manner and conduct. Studies of age often used a historical perspective where generational cohorts were used as a means of understanding age-related behaviour (Riley, et al., 1972; Riley, 1987). For example, those who were born around the same era would have been affected by the same political event and this social and cultural change was seen as creating a ‘collective view’. Whilst cohort studies took an important step in developing a dynamic
relationship between the individual and social events and changes, the structural leniencies mean that there was still an emphasis on social change as the main mediated trigger for change (Giddens, 1984). Moreover, the reliance on a notion of cohort also meant that certain unequal practices could be justified through generational differences (Laz, 1998). For example, the use of the ‘technophobe’ older worker stereotype may be explained and justified as a generational norm. As a result, the potential manipulation of older worker characteristic is distanced from discrimination per se and rationalised on account of generational differences.

Because of these disparities, current approaches to the life course have distanced themselves from ‘life cycle’ approaches, often derived from psychological or gerontological studies. In the past ten years, life course perspectives have made a transition by exploring the interplay between the self and society at an individual level with more interest on the social processes that shape and define ageing and the self. Careful articulation of the concept ‘life course’ has been made in light of this by explicitly differentiating it from ‘life cycle’ perspectives such as Erikson and Riley’s theories and life-span research (e.g. Sugarman; 1986; Baltes, 1987) which are all situated within developmental psychology. Instead, an emphasis is placed on human experience and the role of individual action (Katz and Monk, 1993; Hockey and James, 1993). Whilst values or different generational cohorts are seen as influential the life, individual experience has an imperative role in the move from one state to another, alongside a consensus of what is appropriate or inappropriate (Hagestadt and Neugarten, 1985). Thus, the boundaries between particular life stages dissolve and present a more fluid perspective of the life course. This allows an escape from binary terms often associated with ageing by using words such as ‘interdependence’ to escape the notion of individuals as either dependant of independent, whilst highlighting the potential of older members of society to positively contribute.

*Life Cycle Perspectives in Age and Employment Studies*

The move towards more flexible biographies became a key feature of political economy theory within the 1980’s (e.g. Walker, 1981; Phillipson, 1982) as a more dynamic perspective of relationships between people and work that was able to understand the changing ideas of work and employment. This development was key to the discussion of age as an inequality issue resulting from social forces. As discussed earlier, old age has
been viewed as a burden of dependency where older people are perceived as a problematic drain on resources (Phillipson and Walker, 1986:2). Yet this is as much a result of ideology and dominant constructions of old age, rather than demographic or biological fact.

The benefit of this was seen in research on the view of retirement and work. Rather than presuming a static dichotomous view, a life course perspective helped to relocate retirement as a fluid stage in life which was shaped by social change and individual’s experience throughout their life, and choices or options were contingent upon decisions which may have been made 5, 10 or 20 years previously. For example, Taylor (2002) purports how a life-course perspective within policy would mean that interventions and planning for work in later life would become an integral part of employment planning throughout an individual’s career.

This has also enabled research to identify heterogenous trends within particular groups, such as gender and age affects. For example, Itzin and Phillipson (1993) recognise that child rearing may mean that women who return to work are faced with different challenges to men the same age which will inevitably affect retirement experience and decisions. The life course perspective is particularly useful in identifying trends between particular groups, such as gender (Moen, 2001) and makes it possible to explore how these constraints, which are both individually experienced and socially affected through culturally appropriated modes of behaviour throughout their lives (Arber and Evandrou, 1993), affect retirement decision and experience.

**Discussion of Life-course Perspectives**

As discussed, the ‘life-course approach’ has been used alongside a number of theoretical perspectives. Contemporary perspectives in particular have embodied the notion of the social and its effect on individual trajectories by providing a means of contextualising age inequality as resulting from experiences throughout the individual’s life, rather than viewing ‘being old’ in isolation. It is this ability to consider a multitude of limitations and challenges which has made it an extremely popular model within social policy and political debates (e.g. Pillemer et al., 2001).
However, life course perspectives are still heavily concerned with the impingement of collectively-felt social circumstances such as class or gender as affecting the individual. Whilst this breaks down a homogeneity between examining all older people together, there is still a tendency to suggest that these sub-categories will have a determining affect over and above any personal or individual experience. Moreover, applying a life-course perspective through considering individual experience may be extremely complicated to document, since studies would either have to be longitudinal, or rely on the individual’s memory to recall what experiences were relevant, a difficult task for even the most reflective of people.

The life-course perspective is also limited in its ability to understand age discrimination from any other perspective than as emerging from particular sets of circumstances. The cause and affect relationship which defines age inequality in a life course perspective therefore seeks to examine what circumstances can cause inequality, rather than why age discrimination may exist in the first instance. Part of the reason for this may be due to life course approaches being used to identify trends which are generalisable across society or particular groups. Yet in only applying a life-course perspective, our conception of discrimination is limited to an understanding of ageism as felt on a social level, rather than targeted manipulatively or deliberately towards one individual in particular.

2.4.2 Cultural Approaches to Age

The term ‘cultural studies’ was first attributed to Hoggart, Thompson and Williams in the 1950’s (McRobbie, 2005) who sought to develop a perspective which places a centrality on culture and its relationship to power and politics. Rather than view culture as a reflection of larger social forces, such as the economy, culture is viewed as the multiple systems of meaning that constitute the social. Social processes and interaction are therefore fundamental to understanding age as a collective phenomena and critique functional and structural perspectives of ageing which has dominated ageing research.

Whilst the ‘cultural turn’ has been widely adopted throughout sociological research, the study of culture and age has only recently begun to emerge within the past 15 years. For this reason, the cultural investigation of age has engaged with both traditional modernist-
tinged perspectives of the social and more radical post-modernist flavoured approaches. However, the dominance of a recognition of the ‘material’ is still favoured in cultural studies where ‘reality’, in an abstract sense, is more durable and structured than a purist post-modern perspective would allow. For example, according to Gilleard and Higgs (2000), demographic structures can be seen as a material foundation. However, the way in which such ideas are expressed and understood is a result of cultural and social processes.

Featherstone and Hepworth (1991), as pioneers of this approach, highlight how ageing and old age has been constructed within society, most notably within images of art and the media. Enduring images of the aged as helpless, grumpy, senile, foolish or frail stigmatises both ageing and older people as undesirable. Fear of becoming or embodying such ideas is thus distanced through humour on birthday cards, television programmes and advertisements (Bytheway, 1995). Yet even within a comic context, age related perceptions are normalised and reproduced. Images which would otherwise serve to subvert commonly held myths are reduced to mocking the eccentricity or unsuitability or such behaviour by accentuating the juxtaposition between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for an older person. This also serves to silence or marginalise particular aspects of behaviour as denied through age. For example, mentioning older people and sex is deemed only acceptable in a humorous context (Sviland, 1981). Likewise, older people are rarely seen as engaging in sexual activity in films (Bildtgard, 1998).

Not only is old age ridiculed and dismissed, but also youth is foregrounded and prioritised. Images of youth are simultaneously represented along with beauty and truth (Wilkinson and Ferrarre, 2002; Turner, 2004) where youth is not only seen as a key to happiness, but the very essence of happiness (Öberg and Tornstam, 2001; Post and Binstock, 2004). The illusion of being able to ‘manage’ the ageing process and availability of ‘options’ to enable this means that ‘letting oneself go’ becomes even more forbidden by society (Goodman, 1994). The construction of youth may also be seen as a resulting in a double jeopardy. Not only are individuals not ‘allowed’ to get old, but they must also be forever young. This dominance of youth has been enforced through the rise of consumerism, in particular through commercials which examine how such images may contribute towards the creation of youth as a discourse. Studies of consumption show how norms are created and continually perpetuated through the media age-related images and beliefs (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1993) and presented as a cultural commodity. For example, Fracher (1981)
analysed 1000 American commercials and showed that not only were adverts convincing people to be young but to feel, act and aspire to youth. He calls such religiosity the ‘youth complex’ where youth is encouraged to be favourably positioned within consumer’s value systems. This means that objects, subjects and events which are symbolically attached to youth should be held with reverence.

The pervasiveness of these constructions on the workplace has already been implied within studies of age and employment. The influence of cultural ideals is discussed by Taylor and Walker (1993) who argue that discrimination is not only a form of one individual carrying unfavourable opinions, but is a socially instilled belief which is pervasive through all economic and social structures. Although no studies explore the influence of youth culture on older worker inequality, from previous research one may tentatively suggest that prioritisation of youth may affect the opportunities and conditions of older workers through references to creating ‘opportunity for younger workers’. For example, Taylor and Walker (1998) report how participants referred to a tension between providing opportunities for the young, whilst treating older workers fairly. Similarly, a study by the EFA/DWP (2002) showed participants discussing older workers creating a bottleneck which prevents the development of younger employees. Since these studies were not directly interested in exploring the ‘cult of youth’ within organizations, it is difficult to make any definitive claims. However, such work does imply that there is potential value in investigating the relationship dynamics between constructions of ‘youth’ and ‘older’ within an organizational context.

Limitations of Cultural Approaches

From the preceding discussion, it is apparent that cultural perspectives of age open up a number of potential avenues to explore within age and employment studies. In departing from a view of age inequalities as structurally determined and created, to a more fluid interpretation of ageing and being older as socially constructed and interpreted, cultural theory has shown how perceptions, categories and beliefs used to define age can be deliberately manipulated to marginalise and undermine.

However, cultural perspectives still hold some limitations in fully conceptualising organizational age discrimination and the older worker. These are mainly centred on the centrality of culture. This of course is not a general slight on the cultural perspective,
which sets out to specifically examine the affect of culture on behaviour and society. Whilst individual experience is considered to be felt through, (and created by) social processes, there is a bias towards culture being the epicentre of the formation of everything. A case in point is shown in the work of Hockey and James (2003:201). They argue that “categorical or nominal identities... can only ever be virtual identities for the individual. That is to say, they do not have a ‘life outside the person’. Yet this influence appears to displace individual agency by suggesting that identities are ‘impinged’ upon an individual through a unidirectional flow of influence: from culture to person. Only the ‘select few’ are able to induce a level of social action which changes constructions, the example given by Hockey and James is the killers of James Bulger who have changed the social perceptions of childhood. They even argue that they find Giddens (1991) notion of a reflexive self, who has an element of ‘choice’ over their identity as not “wholly sustainable” (p. 201). The problem lies, however, with an inability or unimportance over that individual’s ability for self-control and autonomy over their own destiny. And in rendering the individual in such a way, it is difficult to conceptualise how emancipation and subjectivity can occur.

2.5 The Post-Modern Turn in Theorising Age: Contemporary Critical Perspectives

As reiterated by Calhoun (1995) earlier, in recent times, critical theory has begun to embrace the problematisation of reality as constituted within postmodernism and post-structuralism, (Calhoun, 1998). The key turning point towards the emergence of postmodernism can be traced back to Berger and Luckmann’s seminal text, The Social Construction of Reality (1966). This marked a development in epistemological thought where an understanding of the world denies the existence of a ‘true reality’, or at least the importance of one reality (Gergen, 2001). This perspective focused on the individual as a site where constructions of the social are entirely created, experienced and reproduced in the realm of the symbolic universe where “the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:60). ‘Structure’ began to be seen as the sum total of typifications of shared meanings. Thus with no ‘solid’ system of knowledge, the production of man becomes a social enterprise. Rising as a revolt against objectivity and
positivism, postmodernist thought encapsulates a large and varied approach to social theory which questions the subversive and repressive aspects which are often overlooked within traditional theory. In denaturalising what is constituted or assumed as ‘reality’, one can challenge the current status of social and organizational life (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Thompson, 2004).

2.5.1 Tenets of a Contemporary Critical Approach

Whilst few scholars would regard themselves as ‘postmodernists’ in the purist sense of the term, its influence on current critical thought can be seen through the prioritising of three interrelated concepts within critical theory. First is the importance of the examination of power as an embedded process of social exchange. Not only is this viewed as a debilitating or dissident means of reproduction, but is also seen as the locus of the individual in their ability to exert agency and emancipate themselves. This is due to the second theme which focuses on the ontological departure from the notion of one reality and concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’. This denial of the existence of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1993) means that unlike structuralist theory, where this leads to power as realised through structure, power can never be absolute. The final theme is the importance of discourses and ideology as a function of transferring, constructing and reproducing thoughts and actions. Although by no means the only scholar to develop these notions, Foucault has remained one key figure who is often quoted within critical perspectives. For this reason, these three ideas have been outlined in light of his work. Whilst what follows is a crude and basic overview, his interpretations of ‘power’, ‘discourses’ and ‘knowledge’ are essential in providing an alternative world-view, which allows the study of age to explore conceptions of ageing amid a new theoretical space. These will all be discussed in greater depth during the next Chapter.

Power

Although Foucault denied power to be the sole foundation of his work, it is a concept that has become synonymous with his name, least of all through the title of one of his collected writings (Foucault, 1980). Predominant conceptions of power previously circled around the notion of the objective structure which shape, define and constrain human action. Foucault’s early work focuses on this notion of state or institutional power as a means of
limitation, and control. However, this soon developed in his work to evolve into a perspective of power as existing within relations (Lemke, 1997). Power is not a ‘thing’ or ‘entity’ which individuals have; rather it is a technique through which we are socially engaged. Within this interaction, there are challenges, contestations and struggles to maintain or create advantage. This view of power is expressed by Foucault using Jeremy Bentham’s notion of the panopticon where power is continually reproduced both by those it serves to discipline and those who benefit from its reproduction. Yet since power is expressed within dynamical terms, it can never exist in the absolute sense or be the locus of one individual.

**Truth and Knowledge**

This notion of power is inexplicably bound with the second concept: claims of truth and knowledge. Within a Foucauldian perspective, truth is viewed as socially created through the manifestation and reproduction of power processes, rather than a founding principle of a singular ‘reality’, an argument developed from Niezche’s critique of Ursprung. Thus what we know is not a reflection of a concrete world, it is the production of how we understand and operate within the social. Thus, Foucault speaks of ‘knowledges’: claims or interpretations mistaken for a truth which, like power, are contingent of historical context, for “in any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all” (Foucault, 1970:161). This is highlighted in Foucault’s ‘geneology’ thesis which showed the ‘truths’ of nature had changed over the course of history, although this change, far from being chronological, was woven layers of suppressed and concealed forms which shaped and influenced. The illusion of an absolute truth is no more than a power struggle to dictate a particular view of the world which is contingent depending on the particular period of time or context. Knowledges are particularly powerful since they do not reflect the social but have a productive capacity in forming understanding and identity. This occurs through knowledge’s becoming *discursive practices* which “systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972:49). It is through these discourses that meaning is created.

**Language**

It is within this preoccupation with discourses that language becomes a key resource. Distancing itself from traditional conceptions of language as a mere function of transporting meaning, language is viewed as both affected and affecting social reality.
This means that, as the quotation from Foucault states, language not only refers to objects, but defines them, creates them and brings meaning to everyday practice. Therefore language and its meaning can not be deciphered separately from institution or context (Alvesson, 2002).

2.5.2 Critical Gerontology

Although the field of critical gerontology has latterly been used as an umbrella term for a myriad of research within psychology, medicine and social studies, it is most easily defined as research which develops the relationship between power, knowledge and ageing (Powell and Longino, 2002). Critical gerontology thus attempts to explore concepts of ageing as resulting from larger processes of power and control (e.g. Tulle-Winton, 1999; Biggs and Powell 1999; 2000; Powell and Biggs 2000, Powell and Cook 2000; Wahidin and Powell 2001). Departing from social gerontology which was more concerned with practical application than theoretical development (Powell and Longino, 2002), this branch of gerontology questions the meaning behind social divisions based on age. Whilst the work of aforementioned scholars, such as Walker and Phillipson also fall under this general panacea, our interest here is with research that has yet to cross the divide between social theory and Age and Employment studies.

A Foucauldian perspective has been extremely influential in examining ageing inequalities from a historical perspective by showing ageing as a disciplining process that is subject to power manipulations. This is succinctly shown by Katz (1996) who examines the historical formation of gerontology in the US through Foucault’s genealogical (historical) approach. His analysis shows how the medicalisation of ageing has culminated in discussions of ageing as synonymous with irreparable decline (Katz, 1996). Whilst ‘old’ is not seen by individuals as a permanent state of self (Keller et al., 1989), for example, they may feel older or younger at particular point of their life, dominating discourses construct being old as a permanent end point before extinction. The elderly body can thus be rendered as docile, passive and economically draining within political discourses. Biological ‘truth claims’ which are aligned with the whole of the ageing population, produce homogenised identity of the elderly as frail and heavily reliant on state welfare dependencies. Such discourses, according to Mullan (2000) have also resulted in the prediction of the
apocalyptic consequences of a ‘demographic time bomb’ as infiltrating into social knowledge.

The genealogies of old age also question the effect of power play within institutionalised and community care of the elderly through their construction as ‘patients’ (Katz, 1996). Prescribed care is assessed by the professional, who is situated as elevated, very similar to the expert gaze over those who are classified as the mentally ill within Foucault’s work (Foucault, 1973). The relegation of the subject as an active, able agent thus legitimates the surveillance of the elderly as necessary (Powell, 2000; 2001; Biggs and Powell, 2000; 2001), providing a “therapeutic gaze” (Porter, 1996:68) which contributes to increasing the disciplinary power of the State.

However, the more post-modern influenced approach used within Foucauldian gerontology may also help to provide alternative dimensions of older workers still engaged in the labour market. Current organizational studies have long recognised the pervasive affect on power in its ability to shape and define reality (e.g. Giddens, 1984; Jermier et al., 1994) with Foucault as a mainstay in the discussion of authority, control and the suppression of individuals (Burrell, 1988; Chan, 2000). Yet such work has been limited in influencing research into age inequality. This may be because the approach requires a radical alteration to a researchers ‘world view’ which has not been as influential in disciplines from which a sizeable proportion of age and employment researchers have emerged, such as economics or gerontology. However, a more likely reason is the relative infancy of age and employment as a research area within organizational research, which has yet to be infiltrated into the mainstay of other organizational workplace ‘isms’ (such as gender) that have been widely examined through a critical lens.

### 2.5.3 Re-introducing the Body

In 2.3, theories which have influenced age and employment research were shown as heavily influenced through biological classification. This led to a bias towards associating ageing with irreparable decline. In an attempt to reconsider the body as more than a biological mechanism which determines ageing, cultural and critical approaches explore how the physical and aesthetic may be understood as contributing towards the identity of the older person. Since the construction and interpretation of symbols, objects and concepts
shape and define our understanding of the world and those within it, one must consider age inequality and identity as not simply emerging from chronological markers but through the *embodiment* of age.

One of the key concepts of critical identity studies is the attention paid to image and the body by attempting to escape the long-standing Cartesian divide between mind and substance. Following a social constructionist perspective, the concept of a fixed identity is rejected in favour of a fluid conception of the self, which is constructed through interaction with other individuals, groups and social systems. Identity is not only viewed as a social process, but a continual re-modification that requires the individual to continually negotiate the parameters of their own self. As discussed by Featherstone and Hepworth (1993), beliefs about ageing are not only constructed verbally, but also visually communicated. However, this denies a return to biology, but instead highlights the malleability of the body as realised through the social. Inexplicably gendered, the sexualising of women also has age effects. Construction of women’s power may be socially purported as derived wholly from their beauty, sexuality and goodness, all factors bounded up in youth (Sontag, 1979). It has been argued that as the body deteriorates, women’s ‘power resources’ fades away and in turn they become socially invisible (Arber and Ginn, 1991).

In order to emphasise the importance of the self as an unstable concept which requires continual management, a number of motifs have been used to refer to the body and age identity. For example, Turner employs a life-course perspective by referring to a “walking memory” (Turner, 1995:250) where many experiences are explicitly ‘written’ on the body. There is a level at which change may be instituted socially but it is the embodied interaction which constitutes identity (Hockey and James, 2003:51). The motif of a ‘mask’ has also been widely adopted within sociological studies. The initial reference was made by Hepworth and Featherstone (1991) who argued that, due to a consumer driven lifestyle, the body was no more than a surface on which the individual could create their identity. According to Hepworth (1993:35), this creates a space where the individual can manipulate their own identity, very similar to the notion of bodily practice (Butler, 1993) whereby individuals seek to rectify and constantly improve or re-invent themselves through their body (Shilling 1993).
Body maintenance is thus a key symbolic resource in both preventing ageing and staying young (Öberg and Tornstam, 1999). Since self-image is defined through social processes, the exploration of body image is fundamental to identity formation throughout the life course. However, Biggs (1997:558-559) has highlighted that following a post-modern thesis of age may fail to address the inevitability of ageing: "as age gathers pace it is increasingly difficult to 'recycle' the body and it becomes a cage which both entraps itself and denies access to that world of choice”. A lack of acknowledgement about sanctions and perceptions of such practices led Biggs (1993) to discuss the ‘mask’ in similar psychoanalytic terms to Woodward (1991) to differentiate between what is hidden from others and what is seen. Whilst it still highlights the tension between the negotiations of identity as ‘felt’ and identity as ‘seen’, the notion of ‘persona’ is used to imply that it is not simply a trap, but a symbolic resource the individual can use which is performative rather than a ‘real self’. This creates an ageing body which is not simply created through physical remodification, but through managing a preferred identity.

The understandable importance of the “materiality of the body” (Burrell, 1992:86) has already been developed within critical approaches to management, although Hassard et al. (2002:2) still suggest that "the study of the body has tended to become estranged from the study of work, just as the analysis of work organization has been abstracted from the body”. Studies have been limited to either examining forms of work where the body is overtly ‘used’ such as in modelling (Banet-Weiser, 1999; Entwistle, 2002) or sport (Wacquant, 1995; Wainwright and Turner, 2004) and appearance "is the very sum and substance of their self-identity” (Wainwright and Turner, 2004:332). However, there is has yet to be any introduction of the ageing body as an organizational phenomena. From discourses present within the popular media, we may ascertain that this is an overlooked dimension of both organizational processes and worker identity. Popular managerialist literature and business media align manager’s external age persona with his or her competencies and achievements. Successful Directors are crowned with a “halo of grey hair” (Sunday Times, 2004) whilst others are warned that "Dame Edna glasses, bad hair cuts and sad looking suits worn with shiny ties or huge shoulder pads are clear signs that the ageing process has taken hold. Those, of either sex, who dress frumpily and look physically out of condition are highly unlikely to impress a potential employer as hot stuff” (Sunday Times, 2002). Such examples highlight the pertinence of the ageing body within the workplace as a signifier and cultural commodity, highlighted here with the alignment
of success of the individual and their somatic, age-embodied identity. These values and perceptions impinging on the body are not biological assumptions but ordered and hierarchalised through the social (Mumby and Putnam, 1992). It is a way in which we perceive, receive, construct and produce meaning about ourselves and the world in which we operate and experience.

2.6 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter has explored the theoretical influences of current studies within age and employment, and has led to a discussion of the possibilities of approaches inspired by postmodernism and poststructuralism as a means of developing a theory of age and employment.

A. Theoretical approaches are biased in focusing on age inequality at either a macro or micro level
An overriding dominance of perspectives which focus on either the macro or micro levels of practice and has had the unintentional effect of limiting the discussion of organizational age inequality. Either the bias towards identifying forces which work at a structural or political level has been at the expense of ignoring more micro-processes of the perpetuation of age inequality, or studies which attempt to examine the perception of older worker identity and ageism at the level of social interaction have been limited to using psychological perspectives which are limited in both relating interaction to larger political or economic processes and also allowing for individual subjectivity to counter such affects. This has created a dichotomous theorising of older worker stereotyping and larger structures of inequality which makes it difficult to progress towards a more cohesive understanding of the phenomena of organizational age discrimination within these paradigms.

B. Life course and cultural approaches to age have attempted to introduce a level of individual meaning into the experience of ageing and later life
Although not a theoretical approach per se, the life course perspective has been used as a framework to help understand age inequalities as evolving from circumstances throughout ones life, rather than simply as a result of their position during later life. Yet its adoption in
structural perspectives has limited its potential to understand the intersection between individual life trajectories and the affect or experience of age discriminatory practices.

Cultural theory has built upon the concept of reality as socially constructed by focusing on the centrality of culture as a means of interpreting meaning and determining the value of concepts, subjects and objects within society. ‘Ageism’ and ‘older worker’ are therefore viewed as cultural artefacts which are derived from a system of symbolic classification, a perspective which helps to break free of terms associated with age inequality being assumed as truisms. Whilst this approach often prioritises the role of culture as unidirectionally determining social life and identity, meaning there is often a lack of focus about the role of individual experience, the influence of post-modernism has led to a growing concern within cultural studies of the role of individual subjectivity in the experience of ageing in society. Although there is still contention over whether cultural theory and postmodernism can be used together, most explicitly discussed within the work of Stuart Hall (see Morley and Chen, 1996), the work of McRobbie (1991; 1994), Grossberg (1992) and Chambers (1993) have shown an increasing awareness of the possibilities in drawing from both cultural theory and postmodernist perspectives and suggest they are theoretically complementary.

C. The rise in postmodern and post-structuralist influenced research within studies of age in society has opened up new perspectives for understanding age inequality

This Chapter has introduced how contemporary critical social theory has developed academic understanding of age in society. Taking its lead from the post-modern condition and the role of power and knowledge in the construction of ‘truth’, it is argued that adopting this approach to explore age inequality in organizations may help to increase academic understanding of how beliefs are constructed, contested and reproduce within the workplace. This is mirrored in the move towards examining a postmodern life course which has begun to explore the social meanings surrounding ageing. For example, Hockey and James (2003) draw on the work of Anthony Giddens to develop their notion of self, identity and society as unfixed and fluid concepts which are shaped through time and interaction. Ageing is thus a more socially defined phenomenon than connected to biological of physiological processes, and is experienced as a tension between an individuals wishes to "make and remake themselves...and their dependence upon the
social' as the source of who they experience themselves to be” (Hockey and James, 2003:199). This discussion, whilst limited to investigating social identities and negates the concept of work and the older worker, it highlights the potential of applying a more contemporary theory to age and employment research by taking into account identity formation and the role of the self.

D. These new contemporary perspectives provide a valuable way of developing a theory of organizational age discrimination and older worker identity

In problematising reality as socially constructed and reproduced through power and ideology, contemporary critical perspectives allow us to understand age inequality as a highly contextual, multi-dimensional phenomenon. This encourages an exploration of the different layers of meaning which construct social life within one theoretical framework and enables us to consider organizational effects on the enactment of workplace discrimination. It also enables us to consider the role of power and discourse as a means of understanding this.

This is not an entirely new argument: both Phillipson (1998) and Turner (1989) have stressed the importance of integrating a social theory of age into organizational studies and research has begun to emerge which investigates age and employment under a critical lens. For example, Vickerstaff and Cox (2005) refer to the work of Gilleard and Higgs (2000) to show how a refocus of the transition from work to retirement allows for an insight into the importance of individual experience. From this emerges a new discourse of retirement, characterised by ambiguity and potential for individuals to blur the lines between work and non-work. Similarly, Platman (2003) uses critical realism as a framework for understanding the position of older portfolio workers. However, such studies only begin to uncover the potential value of applying a theoretically driven understanding of organizational age discrimination. Moreover, despite the focus on the construction of identity in post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives, contemporary theory has yet to be applied as a means of developing our understanding of an older worker from a one-dimensional chronologically-characterised label, to a term which is continually constructed, contested and embodied in everyday practice.
It is this endeavour to further our understanding of workplace age discrimination through contemporary social theory that this thesis commits itself. Having introduced contemporary social theory and outlined its potential value within age and employment studies, Chapter 3 now goes on to explore how contemporary approaches can be applied to develop a theory of organizational age inequality and older worker identity.
Chapter 3
Developing a Critical Discourse Theory of Organizational Age Inequality
The previous Chapters have identified a number of gaps within the established age and employment literature. It has been argued that contemporary critical theory may provide a new avenue for research into organizational age discrimination. The influence of postmodern and poststructuralist thought has created the potential to reconceptualise age inequality and older worker identity as explicit social constructions that privilege particular people or groups over others. This alternative view regards inequality as reproduced through the realms of power relations and processes. It also helps to separate the biology of ageing from the socially constructed meaning of becoming or 'being' old (Gullette, 1997). Our conceptualisation of the 'older worker' therefore goes beyond a label of convenience towards a term that is both shapes and is shaped by reality, and is perpetuated within and through power relations.

Chapter 2 outlined three key themes within postmodern and post-structuralist thought, power, knowledge and discourse. Whilst all of these are inexplicably bound together, in light of the limitations already discussed in Chapter 1, our interest lies in the process through which these three concepts are used to construct and reproduce inequality; in other words, how power and knowledge are used to produce discourses that construct and reproduce an unequal social order. Of particular concern is developing a means of deconstructing the concepts that have thus far been assumed as truisms within age and employment research. A majority of research within this area use 'ageism', and 'age discrimination' as objective, context-free terms, and in bypassing a more substantial definition, scholars implicitly assume that these expressions are understood in the same way by academics, practitioners and employees alike. Similarly, whilst studies suggest that the 'older worker' is understood differently depending on the organizational context or industry, there is little theoretical conceptualisation of how this may be enacted, or indeed, how one comes to 'be' or consider themselves an older worker. In not relating the older worker identity to other organizational or social identities is potentially problematic. For example, it could easily be conceptualised that an individual is a classless, raceless individual who has maintained steady employment until they are classified as an older worker (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004).

The naivety about the role of language and power as means of actively constructing, rather than simply communicating forms of age inequality lies at the crux of this thesis'
theoretical development. Chapter 3 aims to challenge the assumptions made about the nature of ageism, age discrimination and the older worker and create a theoretical framework that allows us to consider how organizational age inequality is reproduced through power, identity, language and the construction of knowledge. Firstly, concepts in 2.4 will be discussed in more detail by introducing a discursive perspective. Its potential value to exploring age and employment will then be highlighted by showing how a particular branch of discourse analysis, termed critical discourse analysis (CDA) can help to understand the role of power and language in the reproduction of age inequalities. In light of some of the disparities of current approaches to CDA, the Chapter turns to a discussion of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, showing how a development of his theory could help to strengthen a discursive theory and age discrimination. This in turn helps to develop an understanding of ‘older worker’ as a socially constructed identity.

### 3.1 Introducing Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a generic term for a wide variety of approaches relating to the importance of discourse in the construction of reality. Just as there are several meanings of the word ‘discourse’ (discussed later in the Chapter), discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological innovation operates in a number of ways (e.g. Potter, 1987; Keenoy et al., 1997; Phillips and Ravasi, 1998). Whilst early studies preferred to take a holistic approach by understanding the term to refer to all forms of spoken, written and social interaction (e.g. Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), this approach has evolved very differently within disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, and sociology to reflect the scholarly traditions of that particular area (Drummond, 1998; Grant et al., 2001; Grant and Iedema, 2005). However, this has led to confusion over the term ‘discourse’ and invites criticism due to its ambiguity where “discourse sometimes comes close to standing for everything, and thus nothing” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a:1128).

In order to synthesise and organise the plethora of approaches terms ‘discourse analysis’, a number of authors have attempted to map out the terrain of discourse analysis (e.g. Potter, 1997; 2004; Phillips and Hardy, 2002), each using their own criteria of categorisation. Alvesson and Karreman’s (2000a) distinction remains the most lucid in terms of providing empirical examples of how each approach may analyse the same data in 4 different ways. The first two approaches, ‘micro’ and ‘meso’-discourse concentrate on language used
within a particular context, where broad patterns within a collection of texts are identified as embedded within larger social ideals. This approach capitalises on the concept of 'discourse' as referring to language and text. The remaining two, 'Grand Discourse' and 'Mega-Discourse' approaches (note the capitalised 'D') are more concerned with larger concepts of ideals which are either institutional or universal. In this sense, 'Discourses' refer to larger more abstracted patterns of meaning-making. However, in some ways, this does not mirror how discourse analysis may be carried out in practice, since researchers are likely to move between layers of meaning throughout the analysis. What Alvesson and Karreman are trying to emphasise is that research is often more disposed towards one approach over the other.

3.1.1 Meso-Level Discourse Analysis: The Top Down Approach

A top down approach initially focuses on the "stuff beyond the text functioning as a powerful ordering force" (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a:1127), often termed ideologies. The primary concern centres on understanding the social processes which construct knowledge and power. This prioritising is emphasised in definitions of discourse as pertaining to a level of abstraction, for example, as "delimited tissues of meaning" (Parker, 1989:57) or "ways of representing forms of knowledge" (Hall, 1992:52).

This emphasis on the abstract had led to many studies placing Foucault's work at the centre of their theoretical development, often quoting his understanding of discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972:49), and drawing on his conceptualisation of power and knowledge to understand the reproduction of unequal social order. The weakness in doing so is that in attempting to identify overarching themes, many scholars make these links theoretically and then fail to systematically show these relationships in their empirical analysis, or take account of individual ways of subverting power. As argued by Alvesson and Karreman (2000a:1147): "Grandiosation and muscularisation of discourse should be grounded and shown – rather, than as in some Foucauldian and poststructuralist writings be postulated". In many instances, this failure to consider the experiential affect of larger Discourses may result in a mode of reduction where analysis simply 'proves' the reproduction of domination and leaves us with a rather damming picture of control. This has particular affects on identity construction. Since there is no 'material' to speak of, or consideration of micro-subversions
of power, individuals are limited through their own identity, which is constructed through submitting to Discursive processes (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). One example of this is found in Knights and Morgan’s (1991) discussion of corporate strategy discourse which is argued to simultaneously create a fragility of self and simultaneously seduce the individual into complying with a collective identity.

This criticism may be seen as derived from a more general limitation of the adoption of Foucault, rather than his original work per se. In his critique of Foucauldian organizational studies, Newton (1998) argues that despite claims of a Foucauldian approach allowing space for subjectivity and emancipation, this is very rarely accounted for within empirical studies of work. Part of this reason derives from the central notion of Discourses as top-down and ideologically driven. This means that the micro context of data such as agent experiential subjectivities are often overlooked, implying that on a day-to-day level, individual interaction is not seen as affecting the reproduction of discourses in any manner. It is thus extremely difficult to assess how the individual is then able to create spaces for emancipatory practice.

3.1.2 Linguistic Discourse Analysis: The Bottom Up Approach

Bottom-up approaches theoretically concern themselves at the level of practice, where analysis proceeds with a close textual reading, which may then be linked to larger interpretative patterns. The heavy influence of linguistics has been instrumental to the development of this approach, where scholars advocating or using textual analysis are often situated within linguistic or communication disciplines. By examining interaction, studies can examine how reality is negotiated at a local level. This interest in the enactment of language has some bottom up approaches viewing local linguistic achievement as separate from the constitution of reality. For example, conversation analysis focuses on the micro level of interaction through examining particular features of talk, such as turn-taking and interruption or over-talking (Sacks et al., 1974; Hutchby, 1992). Others attempt to make a link between the construction and the linguistic and semiotic function, although often still define discourse as a linguistic term in relation to speech and metaphors (Burman and Parker, 1993) or “encapsulating all forms of semiotic forms, including body language or pictures” (Fairclough, 1993:135).
However, the bias towards concentrating on the relationship between the linguistic exchange and the context can occur at the expense of considering larger social processes of power or the affect of socially-held beliefs. Studies often focus on a particular form of interaction, such as medical staff to patients (Antaki et al., 2002; Antaki et al., 2005), teacher to class, (Sinclair and Coultard, 1978) or reports within the media (Hutchby, 2001; 2005). Since the analysis concentrates on identifying textual processes, there is often a lack of consideration over the location of the interactions within larger arenas of power. For example, Antaki’s studies of doctor-patient interaction or in political studies of dignitaries conversing with the general public, analysis is concerned with textual nuances. However, more critical studies such as Wodak's (1997) analysis of doctor-patient interaction show that subject positions and identities are not only constructed by textual techniques, but are also affected by the position of power doctors have been granted historically.

### 3.2 Linking 'discourse' with 'Discourse': Critical Discourse Analysis

Whilst both top down and bottom up forms of discourse-based analysis have been employed within organizational studies to explore the nature of leadership, negotiation and interaction within the workplace (Huisman, 2001), there has been widespread criticism that they fail to relate the textual and linguistic aspects of the workplace to larger processes of hierarchy and control which serve to construct organizational reality (Putnam and Fairhurst, 2001). This critique has led to the emergence of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective which sets out to explore the connection between talk, text and power (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In particular, CDA places importance on investigating the relationship between discourse and reproduction or resistance within social practice (van Dijk, 1993).

Because of this interest, CDA follows a particular theoretical commitment to uncovering the imbalance of power between individuals and groups within society, leading to an interest towards researching dimensions of inequality: “for CDA what counts is what theories and methods are useful to study and resolve important social problems” (van Dijk, 2005). That is not to say critical discourse analysts are not influenced by either a top-down
or bottom up approach. Rather, the impetus is on *linking* the two dimensions of discourse analysis. The importance of relating the 'macro' and 'micro' dimensions of discourse is a key dimension in the empirical work undertaken within such studies, aiming to identify the manifestation of larger social ideals in both talk from interviews or focus groups, and beliefs purported within newspaper or political texts (e.g. Wodak, 1999). This can be shown in the work of key scholars within the CDA field: Norman Fairclough; Teun van Dijk, and those attached to The International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change (ICRODSC).

Norman Fairclough labels his approach critically discursive, with particular concern around the role of discourse and social change. Fairclough, at least in his method of analysis, draws on the critical linguistic school (Fowler et al., 1979). This is apparent in his use of textual analysis as a methodological tool. It is because of this emphasis on the textual analysis that Fairclough's approach has been somewhat crudely characterised as a 'bottom up' approach. Yet Fairclough complements this perspective by linking his analysis of texts with more abstract processes of social practice. Pivotal to this approach is the concept of 'intertextuality', a term first used by Kristeva (1986) which was developed from Bakhtin's 'translinguistic' analysis of texts. Fairclough understands intertextuality as the combination of different genres (forms of social practice) or different discourses (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999:49) that merge together to construct reality. From this, he develops the concept of texts as being able to transform and facilitate social change by restructuring and reconceptualising the 'knowledge' contained within previously existing texts. This is combined with a theory of social power similar to a Fouaculdian thesis, where the ability to facilitate social change is constrained by relations of power. For this reason, his work concentrates on press, political and media texts, as seen in his analysis of New Labour (Fairclough, 2000; 2001b) or commentary on globalisation (Fairclough and Thomas, 2004) in order to show how our understanding of social events is influenced by representing particular world views as objective, which are then justified and solidified through various textual techniques.

Van Dijk's work has been more focused on unearthing inequalities of particular social groups, in particular, through exploring the reproduction of racism, as well as the theoretical development of CDA. This is mainly concerned with the notion of discourse as
social action, focusing on the ways in which ideology operates within the wider social sphere. That is not to say that other scholars fail to highlight the importance of ideology, or that van Dijk ignores textual analysis; indeed his early empirical studies use a range of textual analysis techniques (e.g. van Dijk, 1987). Rather, van Dijk begins with exploring the ideological reproduction of discourse, heavily relying upon philosophical perspectives drawn from the poststructuralist school of thought. Thus, when he discusses ‘structure’, this refers to analysis at both a linguistic level (such as semantic style and rhetoric), and also how “discursive constructs” (de Beaugrande, 1997:57) neutralise particular beliefs. Through this emphasis on ideology he readily admits to focusing on ‘top down’ domination, rather than ‘bottom up’ modes of resistance (van Dijk, 1993).

A third approach to CDA has emerged within organization studies under the auspices of ‘ICRODSC. Created in 2001, this group of 8 Universities has attempted to develop critical discursive approaches that would facilitate research into organizational processes, examining a wide range of phenomena, including inter-organizational collaboration (Phillips et al., 2000; Lawrence et al., 2002), entrepreneurship within organizations (Muneer and Phillips, 2005) and change (de Holan and Phillips, 2002). Whilst this school of thought often references Foucault’s notion of discourse, it is keen to depart from a deterministic view which limits the potential for individual agency (Hardy and Phillips, 2004). This is achieved by highlighting the position of individuals as existing within multiple discourses that create space in which individuals have the potential to subvert or resist or subvert social modes of control (Keenoy, et al., 1997).

3.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Identity

Whilst top down and bottom up perspectives have concentrated on processes of construction, this has led to a neglect of the exploration of identity. CDA approaches have argued that rather than discuss identity in passing as a product of discourse, identity must be investigated as a unique social phenomenon. Following a social constructionist perspective, CDA views identity as not determined by nature or fixed, but understood in relation to social processes and relationships with others and the self. In this sense, discourses have the ability to construct identities through limiting the subject positions an individual may occupy (Grant et al., 2004), or by the individual being ‘called upon’ to fulfil particular positions, or even through the need for individuals to position themselves
in certain ways, in order to make sense of their world. Discourse is thus seen as playing a key role in how individuals make sense of themselves and others through categorisation, interaction and negotiation (van Dijk, 1997). This is not only through language and interaction at a linguistic level, but also through beliefs and ideals that are used as social resources to understand the world, and create an order for those who inhabit it.

In light of the theoretical commitment to investigating processes of inequality, a key concept which has been used to explore how identity is constructed, reproduced and transformed within discourse is differentiation. This research foci is realised through studies collectively referred to as ‘discourses of difference’ (Wodak, 1996), which explore the construction of marginalised groups through ‘othering’ processes. A concept widely associated with existentialist theory, most notably in de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1972[1949]), ‘othering’ has been developed within contemporary critical theory to describe how a marginalised group is constructed against a ‘norm’, allowing their subsequent characteristics or behaviour to be deemed of lesser importance or not as valuable. This process of comparison is not necessarily explicit, but relies on legitimising hegemonic power through promoting a ‘natural’ social order, where one group is constructed as being more disposed to a particular environment or job through their essence or nature. For example, within gender studies, patterns of behaviour and meaning are normalised and restricted by the distinction between the masculine and the feminine (Acker, 1992). Similarly, racial identity and racism is built upon creating essentialist differences between white and non-whites, where those of another ethnicity are seen as ‘different’, equalling lesser (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Van Dijk et al., 1997). Other studies have used ‘difference’ as a means of defining National identity through nationalist frameworks of culture and space (Eastmond, 1998; Wodak et al., 1999).

3.3 Empirical Studies Using Critical Discourse Analysis

The role of language is an integral part in the constitution and everyday practices of the workplace. Meetings, conferences, memos, reports and day-to-day communication of the work-floor serve to reproduce and construct the meaning of organization. This also occurs within particular uses of language, such as the employment of metaphors and tropes within change management (Deetz and Mumby, 1985), as well as specific genres such as the ritual storytelling of corporate leaders (Boje, 1994). Language itself has become a integral
commodity of modern workplaces where the move to a knowledge based economy has resulted in many ‘products’ being language based services (Wodak et al., 1999). Organizations can thus be seen as social collectives that are defined and reproduced through talk and text (Mumby and Clair, 1997). CDA specifically concentrates on how such instances of power serve to marginalise, either in terms of legitimating bureaucratic hierarchical procedures or through the construction of particular social groups.

The potential to unravel underlying processes of construction which constitute organizational life has meant CDA has already been utilised to help understand the constitution of workplace phenomena and identity. Whilst the vast oeuvre of work applying principles of critical discourse analysis makes it impossible to review all studies pertaining to this approach, a number of themes and arguments which emerge from research areas adopting a CDA approach in organizational studies are of direct interest and should be considered when developing a discursive theory of age inequality.

### 3.3.1 Studies of Organizational Inequality

The cross-disciplinary nature of discourse studies has meant that various approaches to discourse have been employed as a means of understanding the workplace within Organization Studies. It should be acknowledged that whilst age inequality is still a relatively uncovered terrain within critical research, there are a number of studies which may help to situate this thesis in a larger body of CDA literature within organizational studies.

This body of literature offers a number of interesting insights into how formal organizational practices or initiatives which aim to achieve equality may actually reinforce the current social order. Such strategies are particularly potent since they may actually serve to reproduce the structures they are seeking to challenge, as shown in the work of Garnsey and Rees (1996). By analysing textual material relating to the ‘Opportunity 2000’ campaign, they showed how the promotion of women’s opportunities in the workplace was built on essentialist norms and assumptions about gendered lifestyles and behaviours, such as tensions of a work-life balance only being an issue for women.
This challenge has also been examined within studies of diversity, an approach to people management already discussed within Chapter 2. Whilst diversity may ameliorate some of the problems of the ‘blanket of sameness’ approach within Equal Opportunities (Liff and Wajcman, 1996), Litvin (1997) argues that even within academic discussions of organizational diversity, the reliance of biological categories result in discursive constructions which essentialise cultural constructions of groups that are ‘different’ in a particular way (Litvin, 1997:203). Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) also use a critical discourse perspective to show the positioning of ‘the diverse’ often separates them from those who actually manage diversity within the organization; a claim which they state is evident even within academic discussions of diversity. In light of the ‘discourses of difference’ argument discussed in 3.2.2, distinction through diversity may serve to marginalise those who it intends to help, implying they require special treatment or more attention than a ‘normal’ worker. Litvin (1997) has also shown another limitation within mainstream academic publications where diversity is only discussed in relation to a few broad categories of inequality, such as sex, race, disability and sexuality, negating its potential to promote all forms of equality.

Human resource management has also been critiqued in critical discourse studies through exploring the relationship between HR practice and organizational power. For example, Vince and Booth (1996) highlight the contradiction within HR in that it requires control and compliance as a means of ‘getting the best’ from people. As a result, each policy and practice repeatedly legitimises manager’s right to manage and naturalises control as an organizational process. Zanoni and Janssens (2003) also used discourse analytic techniques to examine how HR managers themselves draw on a number of discourses to construct notions of difference within diversity discourses. This allowed managers to reinforce power positions between management and employees. Although a welcome study in terms of focusing on the manifestation of inequality in the talk of manager, its value to this particular thesis is limited since it focuses on the rhetoric of diversity philosophy, rather than how this relates to the construction of particular social categories such as gender or age.
3.3.2 "New" Inequalities

In light of the attention to more sophisticated covert forms of control discussed within contemporary theories of power, CDA studies have begun to differentiate between explicit instances of social discrimination and more subtle constructions which appear to promote equality and reject discrimination, whilst basing their arguments of hegemonic norm about the 'naturalness' of difference between social groups. This is referred to as 'new' isms, a term first coined by Barker in 1981, which draws on a myth of egalitarianism where inequality is denied or rejected explicitly, whilst still perpetuated and reproduced through beliefs and ideals. This is done by constructing arguments that either extol the facts of 'natural differences' between two groups, or concentrate on insinuations about the dominant social group being potentially vulnerable or under threat.

Within gender studies, 'new sexism' has been understood as a key resource for drawing a legitimate 'positive face' whilst still being able to justify the lack of opportunities for women (Riley, 2001). This of course has particular political effects on the identity positions we choose to adopt. For example, the focus on the 'post-feminist era' where society is purported to have already achieved liberation may be seen as marginalising those who regard themselves as feminists and claim the existence of inequality. As a result, women are more likely to ascribe to a 'new sexism' voice which supports feminism, rather than be a feminist (Liss et al., 2000; Quinn and Radtke, 2006). Similarly, 'new racism' signals a move away from concepts of colonialism, fascism and systematic segregation such as apartheid as a means of discriminating (Barker, 1981). Instead, racial inequality is denied yet still perpetuated by encouraging acceptance of natural differences in terms of biology or culture. As van Dijk (2000) discusses, whilst these strategies are different from the overt violence and hatred associated with traditional racism, by naturalising an ethnic hegemony, racial segregation and marginalisation can still exist. For example, black athletes may be viewed as having a 'biological' advantage which takes away credit from their dedication and hard work (Hoberman, 1997; Davis and Harris, 1998, Denham et al., 2002).

This façade of equality serves to drive inequalities underground and limits the potential for unequal practices to be detected through traditional methods of research that require the
individual to truthfully proclaim their views. Indeed, this concept may be of growing relevance to organizational age inequalities where legislative introduction may result in a hesitation to reveal ageist beliefs for fear of retribution. As McVittie et al. (2003) explore, new ageism may serve to allow managers to appear equal, whilst legitimising unequal practices against older workers as outwith their control. However, to date this is the only study carried out referring to 'new ageism' in both organizational and sociological literature, and only begins to introduce the concept in the conclusion to the paper, rather than explore its construction or implication in any depth. It is clear that whilst the study provides a glimpse into the presence of 'new ageism' within organizations more work is needed to explore how this relates to larger organizational processes, forthcoming legislation and wider social and cultural beliefs. Moreover, the concept of 'new ageism' needs to be developed as not simply an organizational phenomena, but a process which affects the construction of older worker identity.

3.3.3 Studies of Identity

As mentioned previously, critical discourse analysis understands the world as socially constructed through processes of language, power and ideology. Not only does this affect how we come to understand objects, concepts and social order, but also self identity and the identity of others (Wodak et al., 1999). Identity under a CDA lens can be characterised in three ways: as relational, fluid and dynamic. Firstly, relational refers to the affect of discourses in the creation of identity. Discourse in effect creates identities, which individuals must relate themselves to in order to make sense of the world. 'Fluid' relates to the post-modern influence through writers such as Foucault, who understand self as highly contingent on context, in relation to context, time and place. However, since the relational and fluidity of self suggest the individual is more constrained by discourses than able to subvert or resist them, CDA discusses identity as dynamic where identity is embedded within a number of discourses, meaning that individual identity is never completely created and thus controlled by only one discourse. It is argued, particularly by scholars working within the ICRODSC, that this creates space for subjectivity (e.g. Keenoy et al., 1997; Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004).
Until recently, identity studies of critical discourse have been primarily concerned with the construction of organizational identity in terms of a management or professional self where employee identity is moulded and affected through organizational processes of control (e.g. Collinson, 2003; Rhodes and Scheeres, 2004). Analysis has been extended to focus on the construction of gendered organizational discourses through using beliefs about behaviour of men and women to neutralise preferable treatment towards men. (Tannen, 1994a). This is by no means based on a biological ‘fact’, but on the false biologicalisation of characteristics associated with women, which are then constructed as inappropriate or lesser to the dominant hegemonic norm. This may be exacerbated through the construction of masculine and feminine identities that seek to position both men and women within an organization (Tannen, 1994a; b; Cameron, 1997; Kerfoot and Knights, 1998).

Recently CDA has also begun to apply discursive techniques as a means of understanding identity construction of older workers, mainly through the work of Susan Ainsworth (2002; 2004; Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004) who employed CDA techniques to examine how older worker identity was formed within documents from the Australian Royal Commission. Discourses which marginalise the older worker have also been discussed in brief by McVittie et al. (2003) where managers made the older workforce ‘invisible’ through primarily discussing their younger workforce. These two studies suggest that both the definitions surrounding the employment of older workers and their subsequent identities present a rich source of investigation into the processes leading to their discursive construction, although these studies stand alone as the sole contribution as discursive approaches to organizational age inequality. However, neither has attempted to explore how the older worker identity may be negotiated at a local level, such as through individual history of experience, or through narratives of ‘older workers’ themselves. Tretheweys’ (2001) research into ageing professional women does attempt to bridge social theory of ageing with workplace empirical research by showing how age-identity work is constructed as an individual’s responsibility, and provides a welcome introduction of age and identity work in an organizational context. However, the narrative approach adopted within the study makes it difficult to assess how the identity construction impacts on the wider production of age inequality at work, such as how this relates to participants conceptions or beliefs surrounding ageism and age discrimination.
3.4 Limitations of Current Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis

Despite the successful acceptance of critical discourse analysis as a method of study within organizational analysis, it is worth noting that current approaches to discourse analysis are not without their critics.

The main charge has been the lack of clarity in discourse analysis, both in terms of its definition of ‘discourse’ and outlining a clear approach to analysis. Ironically, considering its intention to investigate underlying meaning, the term ‘discourse’ is left to fend for itself and often draws striking similarities to notions of culture, institutions or rationalities (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000b; Antaki et al., 2002; Ball and Hodgson, 2004). Of course, ‘discourse’ may capture elements of all of the above, but to what extent each mode of analysis differs is often not explicated. This has led commentators to describe the term ‘discourse’ moving “stealthily like a chameleon signifier, easily changing colour to suit its environment while steadfastly holding on to its name” (Rhodes, 2005:795). Similarly, many studies fail to reiterate a systematic process of analysis. As a result, discourse analysis can often be viewed as a miasmic methodology where, instead of elucidating the data, a vagueness of method undermines the research itself.

In particular, a number of authors have been seen as limiting their potential contribution through their theoretical perspective. Many CDA studies only refer to Foucault as a basis for their theoretical commitments (Reed, 2000), even though his approach has been deemed as too deterministic to allow for individual agency. Fairclough, on the other hand, has been accused of trying to achieve the impossible. This is due to the tension between localised and macro construction where the basic tenet of top-down and bottom approaches are opposing and can not be merged: “investigations of the local construction of discourse treat discourse as an emergent and locally constructed phenomena, whilst the study of Discourses usually starts from well-established a priori understandings of the phenomena in question” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a:1134). However, it could be argued that this overemphasises Fairclough’s adherence to the textual level, when an integral role of his thesis is linking more abstract ideological forms of knowledge within a textual approach.
Another charge is the failure to engage with texts produced at the micro level by individuals. For example, Fairclough has been able to provide systematic commentary on social change, yet his perspective of power fails to explore change at a local level meaning that the individual is ascribed limited potential for instigating change. Likewise, the later empirical work of van Dijk has concentrated on the reproduction and construction of racial inequalities within media (1991) or by those in formal positions of power, such as politicians (van Dijk, 1993). Although his earlier work (1984; 1987) did examine the reproduction of racism in everyday talk, the use of white participants discussing race and ethnicity meant that his work concentrated on the production of race as an object and its ideological relationship with social processes. As a result, both scholars have not developed a comprehensive understanding of the role of identity and the creation and reproduction of discourse within their own work.

CDA approaches to identity also have a number of particular limitations. The first problem lies with the data used for analysis. As seen in van Dijk and Fairclough’s work, there is some preference in CDA studies towards so-called ‘naturally occurring data’, that is, data which exists without the researcher’s intervention. This contrasts with ‘researcher-initiated data’ such as ethnographic studies, focus groups and interviews. Whilst the argument about this categorisation will be discussed in Chapter 4, the more immediate challenge here is the problem in using ‘naturally occurring data’ to examine identity formation. If exploring a particular issue, such as age identity, the amount of data that would have to be collected ethnographically in order to gain enough information for analysis is out-with the realms of many manageable projects. As a result, larger social texts are often preferred since they are easy to access. Not only does this result in identity explored as a collective object, rather than a local achievement at an individual level, but also makes it difficult to assess how the ‘dynamic’ element of identity occurs in practice. In other words, it is difficult to ascertain what role self-identity has in relation to the construction of larger social groups.

The second problem is the dominance of the using ‘difference’ as an analytical concept. That is not to say that the concept of difference is not an important theoretical perspective, but it does not wholly explain identity formation and can lead to glossing over the
inconsistencies, contradictions and tensions within identity construction. Many studies use a research sample that has been predefined as ‘different’. For example, when discussing ethnicity, the research sample will only include the ‘majority colour’ (e.g. Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Individuals being interviewed and producing the data are often assumed as ‘different’ from the identity being constructed i.e. not an AIDS patient, or not a refugee, as in the work of Phillips and Hardy (1997) and Maguire et al. (2001). Even in studies that consider the relationship between the sample groups and the constructed identity, such as Wodak et al.’s (1999) analysis of national identity, there is a tendency to rely on this dichotomy between accepting or rejecting association with a social group. In this study, although attention is paid to the text of individuals through focus groups and interviews, the authors themselves emphasise that “the analysis concentrates on the content-level and on the identification of constitutive elements and reoccurring patterns of argumentation in the subjective construction of national identity” (Wodak et al., 1999:149). This content level is earlier defined as a formulation of sameness and difference (p.31). Similarly, Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) research on race also relies on a dichotomous reduction between sameness and difference. Ironically, this seriously undermines the complexity of identity formation which social construction sought to highlight in two ways. Firstly, it implies that individuals think in a dichotomous way. This goes against the notion of ‘multiple identities’ through being embedded within different discourses and fails to uncover the tensions and complexities of identity formation. Secondly, there is little attention paid to whether the producer of the text themselves views this particular dimension (gender, nationality, ethnicity etc) as less or more important than other socially produced categories.

Finally, whilst a large body of research exists that examines the identity construction of the self in relation to discourses (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Lupton, 2000), few studies within the literature have undertaken a relational or reflexive examination of how the identity of the individual interrelates with the construction of the subject (‘women’, ‘older worker’) beyond the difference dichotomy, or have taken into consideration the need to present one’s own identity as legitimate or favourable. This limits the potential of providing any insight into how the self-construction of the individual may affect the ensuing construction of the research subject. In other words, there is still a dearth of knowledge about identity work in relation to constructing organizational phenomena.
3.5 New Avenues within Critical Discourse Analysis

As a response to the last point, the Scandinavian school of organizational thinking, led by Mats Alvesson has begun to conceptualise a more reflexive form of organizational identity construction which begins to consider the self-identity of the individual in the discursive construction of social identity (e.g. Alvesson, 1998; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Departing from a Foucauldian perspective of discourses, their work aims to focus on the potential for individual agency by concentrating on personal beliefs as playing a key role in subjectification. This argues that “individuals constantly strive to shape their personal identities in organizations and are being shaped by discursive forces” (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165), although they acknowledge that there are some elements of identity which are more in flux than others (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Whilst such ‘identity work’ may serve as a method of management control through ‘shared meanings’ of organizational identity, it can also be resisted at an individual level by, for example being dismissed as cultural ‘hype’, (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Coupland, 2003). It may be argued that this presents a more realistic view of identity, fraught with tension between the potential subjectification through undergoing identity work and at the same time, being subject to processes of further control.

This new avenue of research has begun to conceptualise how the experience or self-history of an individual can be used as a means to self-reflection. Identity work is still heavily reliant on dominant beliefs and discourses, but individual identity is not wholly resultant of the current discourses and context which the individual inhabits, providing a means for subjective action. However, as yet, there is still little empirical research which investigates how this is enacted in practice. For example, whilst we know that identity formation is continuous, there is little understanding of the process of such identity work in practice. Moreover, there is a gap in knowledge in relation to identity work of the self and how this relates to the subsequent construction of other categories or terms that results in a bias towards discourses as affecting individuals, rather than the potential for individuals to alter organizational discourses beyond their own identity work. As a consequence, the potential for subjectivity is belittled to a concept of ‘micro emancipation’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:636) which leaves little space to discuss how an individual may subvert or change discourses on a more sustainable or frequent basis, at least within their immediate context, such as their work place.
3.6 Towards a Bourdieusian Perspective of Organizational Age Inequality

Our discussion has so far established the potential value of critical discourse analysis as a means of uncovering a more dynamic view of age inequality by viewing terms such as 'ageism', 'age discrimination' and 'older worker' as social constructed and reproduced through discourses. However, the main bodies of theoretical literature cited within organizational CDA have not yet allowed us an understanding of age identity as a reflexive phenomenon which opens up the relationships between the constructed phenomena and the identity of the producer of the text. Work by Alvesson and his colleagues has begun to engage in a dialogue between construction and a more reflexive concept of identity construction thereby helping to show the possibility for agency and subjectification. However, this is a limited to a notion of individual resisting rather than transforming discourses in a significant way, and does not provide a relational dimension to how this affects subsequent construction of other identities or related terms.

In response to the shortcomings of current approaches, this thesis develops a discursive framework based on Bourdieu's 'tools of practice'. Not only does this allow the interrelationship between discourse as language, text and ideology to be developed, but enables us to understand the integral role of the individual in the subsequent reproduction of age inequalities. Before offering justification, a caveat should be noted. This thesis does eschew a 'Bourdvin’ perspective, a term used by critics against those who religiously follow his work (divin, meaning divinely being, or God in French). Instead, this discussion highlights the potential of thinking along with Bourdieu, and the potential this has for organizational studies.

Due to the lack of application of his work within organizational studies, this section introduces Bourdieu’s main theses and a short overview of its application within organizational studies. The following two sections then develop a reflexive dimension to discourse analysis by applying Bourdieu’s key concepts.

3.6.1 Introducing Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

In order to appreciate how Bourdieu can help us to further a theory of age inequality, it is necessary to understand that his tools of practice are part of a larger theoretical project in
which Bourdieu attempts to transcend the divide between structure and agency within social theory. This by no means a unique academic objective. Indeed, modernity has seen a number of critical realist-driven theories such as those purported by Giddens (1984) or Bhasker (1986) who attempt to bridge the inherent tensions around structure and agency. For Bourdieu, the “French Flu” (Bourdieu, 1997:450) of structuralism, which was the dominant perspective within his formative academic years, left no room for agency and experience. Yet he also felt uncomfortable with the fragmented reality presented within postmodernism which denied the existence of durable or robust forms. Thus he sought a practice where individuals construct, reproduce or resist the effects and constraints of a perceived structure through both systemic and subjective processes.

Bourdieu’s style of writing has long being criticised for being overly dense and inaccessible. Long sentences, confused even more through translation, have perhaps limited the potential of his work to be accessed by scholars outwith a sociological tradition. However, despite his huge output, spanning over 350 articles and 30 books, his work mainly revolves around three main concepts: field, capital and habitus. Heuristically, Bourdieu (1984:101) represented his thesis in the following equation:

\[ \text{(Habitus*Capital)} + \text{Field} = \text{Practice} \]

Fields are understood as social microcosms that function according to their own sets of laws which map out social relations within that particular arena. Key to this is the construction of objects by their proximity to other objects, underlining the relational emphasis within his thesis. Constructed objects are “like heavenly bodies belonging to the same gravitational field which produce effects on one another from afar” (Bourdieu, 1996b:132). However, not all positions within the field are created equal and the distribution and positions within the field are determined in relation to the amount of capital possessed. These stakes are economic (very similar to Marx’s view of capital), social capital, (the ability to utilise useful social relations), cultural capital (such as skills or competencies) and linguistic capital (possessing the ‘correct’ dialect or language). Each of these is transformed into symbolic capital when they become legitimised and recognised as ‘true’ (valuable) by those who hold power within the field and can then be used to contribute towards the reproduction or transformation of ‘reality’ within that field (Bourdieu, 1977a:65; 1990a:137).
In practice, however, the field structure reaches beyond simple views of domination and subordination. Instead it is characterised by continued tensions between the dominant and the dominated, and disputes over the resources at stake. All positions are involved in a constant diachronic struggle over maintaining or changing who holds power and resources. Moreover, a topological view of multiple fields also means that the overlapping of a number of fields results in a struggle between the difference discourses produced within each social space to legitimise its own version of reality against the rules determined within other fields.

Bourdieu's third concept, habitus, allows us to understand action at the level of the individual. Current contemporary debates in critical theory about structure and agency revolve around the role of structural and institutional influences in shaping social reality and how much potential individuals (and collective groups) have in order to shape reality and control social action. Key to addressing the latter issue is habitus, understood as a "system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action" (Bourdieu, 1990c:13). Despite Bourdieu's numerous and diverse references to the habitus in all of his works, three main features can be seen as characterising the habitus. Firstly, the habitus is generative, in the sense that past perceptions experienced in one field will infiltrate the habitus and affect practice within other fields. Secondly, whilst unique in terms of being created through individual experience, the shared experiences of those from similar backgrounds may result in a number of individuals having similar habitus', or at least similar elements. Third is its ability to bridge the gap between subjective construction of ideals and an objective action of practice. This is achieved through the embodiment of cultural and social experiences of the world being effectively absorbed into the habitus, and the way in which this provides the individual with 'rules of the game', which are viewed and enacted as 'practical sense'.

The disposition of the habitus is conferred through ideologies (Discourses) where the principles of organizing the world are created as a form of doxic knowledge. As a result of interaction with fields driven by particular ideological forms of knowledge, the habitus naturalises itself and its own understanding of the social world, similar to the idea of an interactive perceptual filter. Unequal power relations between classes, groups or social relations are objectified which leads individuals not to question such dispositions but
instead “make a virtue out of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable” (Bourdieu, 1990a:54).

3.6.2 Bourdieu and Organization Studies

A number of scholars (e.g. Everett, 2002) have lamented the absence of Bourdieu’s work from applied research within organizational studies. Considering that his empirical contribution extends to examining photography, sport, gender, education, television and anthropology, consumption and class (amongst other areas), it is surprising that Bourdieu provided no systematic theory of organizations. Whilst some of his work does discuss organizations, the application of his own theory of practice to this realm remains more equivocal than those studies discussing social life. Certainly Bourdieus’ influence on organizational theory is more difficult to trace.

Bourdieu’s three key concepts have appeared within organization studies, albeit in different guises. For example, the concept of ‘capital’ is widely associated with James Colman (1988) or Michael Putnam’s (1995) social capital theory. Both authors cite Bourdieu’s concept as a basis for their own theoretical development. Similarly, the concept of ‘organizational’ field’ is taken up by one of the leading neo-institutionalist theorists, DiMaggio. He uses Bourdieu’s ‘field’ to refer to organizational fields as a set of organizations that cumulatively signify a recognised dimension of institutional life (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:148). A number of articles have also referred to Bourdieu’s understanding of capital habitus and field separately as part of a larger theoretical discussion, albeit in passing (e.g. Witz et al., 2003; Mutch, 2003).

Unfortunately, such a ‘pick and mix’ approach by using one or two concepts in isolation to his larger thesis limits the potential value of his work. The richness and theoretical potential is also watered down through secondary readings of Bourdieu’s work, instead of referring to his original thesis. For example, Corsun and Costen (2001:20) credit Bourdieu’s work, yet describe key terms such as ‘capital’ using Oakes et al.’s (1998) paper, along with Bourdieu and Wacquant’s (1992) more general introductory text, rather than his own key works. The consequences of doing so are evident within their discussion. They ignore that Bourdieu argues the dynamics of the field defined by struggle and tension.
between the dominated and the dominant, and thus critique Bourdieu on false grounds using rational choice theory.

Despite this, a small number of scholars have highlighted the potential to apply Bourdieu’s theory in organizational research. Oakes et al. (1998) embrace Bourdieu’s key concepts and underline how pedagogy surrounding business planning culminates in a mode of symbolic violence through exclusion of particular voices. Similarly Everett and Jamal (2004) discuss conflict negotiation and revolution using Bourdieu’s thesis of power by focusing on the misrecognition of power. However, such studies are limited in discussing organizational communication and processes, rather than relating his thesis to the construction of organizational life. Moreover, whilst Oakes et al.’s (1998) study does mention the potential of such power play to transform organizational identities as part of a larger social project, there is still a lack of in-depth discussion within the wider organizational literature as to how Bourdieu’s work may potentially enlighten our understanding of organizational identities.

3.7 A Bourdieusian Perspective of Discourses

The two key tenets of critical discourse analysis, language and power, form the basis for Bourdieu’s theory of practice, and are integral to the functioning of fields, capital and habitus. Tenets of this thesis have begun to be recognised as providing an alternative perspective of discourse analysis. Slernbrouck (2004) refers to his work on language and power to understand the research interview as a reflexive arena whilst a number of other studies use his concepts alongside critical discourse analysis techniques, although make no attempt to discuss how one body of literature may inform the other (e.g. New and Greene, 2001). Some commentaries have also referred to Bourdieu in passing in the discussion of discourse studies (e.g. Maynard, 1991), although this has been limited to choice quotations which support a more Foucauldian thesis. Later work by Fairclough (1999) appears to signal the potential value of Bourdieu to a critical discursive cause, echoed in Contandriopoulos et al.’s (2004) understanding of discursive reproduction as symbolic struggle.

Aside from these choice articles Bourdieu’s work has not been used as a means for providing any insight into a discursive view of social practice. I would argue that this has
been for two reasons. Firstly, Bourdieu refrains from ever using the word ‘discourse’ and does not appear to engage with discourse analysis as a methodology in his later work, although within *Distinction* (1986 [1979]), he does refer to a type of discourse analysis of magazine literature. Yet his underlying thesis may be viewed as heavily influenced by an exploration of power through ideologies: indeed, many have argued his thesis is a theory of discourse in terms of how social action reproduces reality, and have even referred to “Bourdieu’s theory of discourse” (McGowan, 2002:135). This means that whilst Bourdieu’s attention to language per se is limited in relation to social action, his theory of symbolic violence allows us to allow use his thesis to explore language as action.

Secondly, discourse analysis is a school of thought dominated by a heavy post-modernist slant, which has denied the existence of the material. Bourdieu’s adherence to the field concept may have meant that his work was simply dismissed as structuralist. Yet as Fairclough (2005) writes, a veer away from extreme constructionism to approaches such as critical realism may not only be compatible with CDA’s objective, but provide us with a more dynamic world view of the potential and tensions within reproduction of the social. Whilst I would be hesitant to call Bourdieu’s work critical realism, his work does draws similarities with critical realism’s attention to relational processes and the tensions between structures and processes, rather than reducing organizations to mere discourses.

### 3.7.1 Applying Bourdieu to Discourse Studies: Discourse as Ideology

One key link between Bourdieu and current schools of thought within critical discourse studies is the importance of ideology. His approach may be seen as derived from the work of Althusser, a key scholar in the development of ideology, through their joint interest in material constraints as well as theoretical ideality. Althusser views ideology as akin to the unconsciousness which calls upon “the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to the real condition of existences” (Althusser, 1971:162). Since they exist within the unconscious, agents seek to understand ideology in terms of institutions, which causes Althusser to state they have material effects (1971:165), although are not material in themselves.

Surprisingly Bourdieu does not discuss ‘ideologies’ to any extent, or the idea of discourses as texts, at least using these terms. Critics of Bourdieu may argue that this is indicative of Bourdieu’s arrogance to re-create theory through compiling his own terminology. More
likely is Bourdieu's attempt to distance himself from the language being used within the literature he was working against. For Bourdieu, ideologies belong to the language of structuralism, and imply a form of reproduction and constraint associated with a Marxist form of consciousness. This leads him to argue that "to speak of ideologies is to locate in the realm of representations" (Bourdieu, 1998[1994]:55); an idea he distances himself from, even to the extent that he argues the misuse and abuse of the term 'ideology' may result in becoming a form of symbolic violence in itself (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992:112). To avoid this symbolic violence, Bourdieu uses the term 'belief', or "doxa" which is created from interaction with the social as well as individual disposition.

Like many of his terms, doxa has a multitude of meanings ranging from a reflexive tool used to understand the relationship between the social researcher and their environment (Bourdieu, 1996a[1993]) to emerging from symbolic power and legitimacy. However, it is his notion of doxa as a sens pratique (Bourdieu, 1977a) that is relevant to this thesis. Doxa results in a "universe of the undiscussed" (Bourdieu, 1977a:168) through symbolic power. The symbolic power which influences fields and habitus leads to actors misrecognising the subjective nature of their social 'reality' and thus taking for granted the definitions and constructions it draws upon and manipulates in order to reproduce a certain view of the world. Of course, the view that is reproduced is the one which benefits the dominant, imposing itself as universal (Bourdieu, 1998[1994]:88). Within fields, doxa, (or ideology) constitutes the social transformation of social, economic, cultural and linguistic capital into symbolic capital when they become legitimised and recognised as 'true' and thus construct reality (Bourdieu, 1977a:65; 1990a:137).

Key to this process of reproduction and construction of power is the concept of symbolic violence, understood as the point of misrecognition. In this sense, doxa/ideologies are working at a level which maintains and supports the current social order and are employed as a form of symbolic violence both through what is natural, 'doxic knowledge' and the subsequent discursive formation of 'social rules', that is, "the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit principles" (Bourdieu, 1977a:16). Therefore, through the achievement of symbolic violence, certain unequal practices can "go without saying, because it comes without saying" (Bourdieu, 1977a:167). Indeed, for some scholars, symbolic violence is ideology since "Bourdieu understands
ideology, or 'symbolic violence', as the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting the social world by representing the economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms" (Swartz, 1997:89). This is by no means a misreading, as it appears that doxa is constitutive of ideology in the general sense and draws striking parallels with van Dijk’s theory of ideology, who also chooses to use the term ‘belief’ to highlight the constructive nature of ideology.

However, Bourdieu’s doxa at first appears to foster a rather deterministic view of the social. Whilst there are constant struggles both within and between fields to determine what is valuable and what is not, Bourdieu claims that by entering the field, one initially accepts the ‘rules of the game’: “Players agree, by the mere fact of playing and not by way of a ‘contract’, that the game is worth playing” (1992:98) This is very similar to Giddens notion of practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984:375) and highlights the durability and reproductive power of ideology through illusion where the unconscious commitment to the field thus becomes unquestioned. In some senses, it is difficult to show how the struggle that Bourdieu states defines the field is nothing more than futile, which has led to deterministic criticisms against his thesis (Sayer, 2005).

However, in practice, fields are not as conceptually robust as they appear. Their very constitution is reliant on social agents who create the potential to break from ideological determinism in two ways. Firstly, individuals belong to a number of fields simultaneously. Their multiplicity of memberships means that power can never be absolute and develops Bourdieu’s notion of doxa as being field related, that is, dependent on the particular symbolic systems of space in which the agents are positioned. This creates a hierarchy of ideologies, or doxais (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:22) where particular agents do not only have to constitute the order of the field, but the legitimacy of that field over other fields. In this sense, doxais are more orthodoxic than absolute, and introduce a level of contestation through competing orthodoxies. It is perhaps easier then to correct the discussion to ideology and doxais since they imply a heterodoxical dynamic due to individuals occupying multiple fields. It is this dynamic element which allows fields to be viewed as spaces where various potentialities exist (Mahar et al., 1990:8).
3.7.2 Discourse and Language

Bourdieu’s thesis on language may be viewed as the result of two subconscious filters: the linguistic habitus (to ‘speak properly’) and the linguistic market, that sanctions what can and cannot be said, which is determined by the social field. Thus, he examines language from both the position of the producer and receptor, and not simply as being executed with no meaning, as discussed by Saussure (1971[1916]). This concern arises from empirical analysis of the history of language formation and the role of dialect, pronunciation and vernacular. Intrinsic to the success of this project is the ideal of achieving legitimacy, where the voices of the few are deemed as universal and neutral (and thus their espoused ideas form a mode of doxic/ideological ‘truth’). This is achieved not only in the sense of correctness of grammar or language, but also social acceptability (Bourdieu, 1992:76), for example, through ‘ministerium’, where an individual is given the authority to speak on behalf of a group. In this sense, language is conducive to performativity where speech in naming may be seen as a form of power, or mode of capital in itself (Bourdieu, 1992).

In terms of the current research foci, Bourdieu may argue that the act of ‘naming’ the older worker thus constitutes a form of symbolic violence. Bourdieu acknowledges that the institutions which categorise people are often the same as those who can do things to them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001). He also highlights that those in power, such as the State may have an expressed interest by ‘naming’ older workers: “different groups may frequently attach their self interest to one or other possible meanings of those words” (Bourdieu, 1990b[1981]:97). For example, the older worker is a constructed label which has been placed on individuals by the State, which creates particular opportunities available to those which fall into this category. Thus the government in classifying someone as an older worker means they open up initiatives to particular individuals, whilst denying others (an example of which is the new deal 50 plus where only those over 50 are eligible, since they have been ‘classed’ as older workers). The uptake of such schemes is not only used as a means of confirming the position of the government, but strengthens their older worker classification. Although this may appear similar to the Political Economy Theory of Ageing discussed in 2.1.2, Bourdieu differentiates his approach by suggesting the power of naming the over 50’s as ‘older workers’ may function as a form of symbolic power, where the mere existence of a group, in this case older workers, serves to legitimise and support other discourses. For example, unemployment figures may be
divided between those under 50 and those over 50, a process that is supported by the older worker term. This in turn produces texts that are framed within discourses of the older worker classed as being different.

However, at this level, the power is limited to the level of the speech act, rather than the power of language as able to construct reality. Therefore, language is only able to be viewed as “an instrument of action” (Bourdieu, 1977b:645). In this sense, Bourdieu fails to attend to the difference between linguistic and social practices of texts that he accuses other linguistic approaches of failing to do (Bourdieu, 1991). This performative emphasis results in a lack of link between the description and creation of the words, and their role in producing power relations (Fairclough and Choul iaraki, 1999). Bourdieu only discusses the performative dimensions of language as structurally determined since they are uttered by those who already have power within a particular field (Butler, 1999:122). This is especially noticeable in his later work examining neo-liberal discourses (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001) where he does not discuss the processes through which language and text itself can reproduce such change. Thus it seems impossible that an individual can speak without a being positioned as powerful within the social world; in other words it is impossible to “speak with authority without being authorised to speak” (Butler, 1999:123).

In order to ameliorate these tensions, it is necessary to explore Bourdieu’s larger thesis of power and develop theoretical space to allow language a constitutive effect and agential potential to exist.

Of interest here to a discursive analysis is his larger argument about symbolic power which allows language and texts to be understood as action. Albeit briefly, Bourdieu discusses language as a symbolic form which presents a social space through which individuals construct a ‘legitimate vision’ of the world. Similar to the view of discourse held by van Dijk, texts play an ideological function to “help to create this world by helping to create the vision which agents may have of it and, in so doing, orientating their actions, particularly those aimed at preserving of transforming this world” (Bourdieu, 1991:93). It is therefore possible that the discourses (in the sense of text) used to discuss ageism and older workers not only preserve the power of particular groups but are reproducing age inequality in themselves. Whilst this relies on a diversion away from Bourdieu’s view of language towards van Dijk’s more explicit discussion of language as action, it is evident that van Dijk’s perspective shares similarities with Bourdieu’s larger ideological thesis.
discussed earlier. This is a crucial development to the theoretical commitment of this thesis since it allows us to utilise Bourdieu's work in order to develop a better understanding of social action whilst still being able to undertake a systematic analysis of texts using current CDA techniques, safe in the knowledge that there are no theoretical or philosophical fallacies being committed.

If this journey results in reverting to current discussions and perspectives of language as action, then why apply Bourdieu in the first place? Three reasons may succinctly describe the 'value added'. Firstly by embedding van Dijk and Fairclough's discourse analysis techniques within a Bourdieusian perspective, we have a systematic way of accessing the processes of creation of doxa within particular fields, whilst still remaining sensitive to individual experience and its affect on construction. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and fields helps to place the individual as constrained, rather than determined through discourses. Secondly, it creates potential space for agential potential through individuals past experience in different fields, and their current positioning within multiple, overlapping fields. Related to this is the emphasis on social practice as defined through tension and struggle, rather than muted acceptance of current situations. Although individuals are more predisposed to following the dominant discourses, their experience of other contexts provides numerous doxais on which they can utilise or refer to. Finally, Bourdieu's tools of practice provide an extremely powerful means of understanding individual action and identity through the habitus concept, which will be discussed more explicitly in 3.9, in relation to identity formation of the social individuals

3.8 Limitations of Bourdieu

Whilst recognising the potential value of Bourdieu's work to a critical discursive approach to organizational inequality, one must temper this with the possible limitations or criticisms made against his approach.

Firstly, Bourdieu may be seen as diminishing the impact of his own concepts by applying them to a number of contexts, or ascribing too many definitions which water down their impact. For example, his notion of capital has increased to include institutionalised capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and educational capital (Bourdieu, 1986:105) as well linguistic, academic, intellectual, information and artistic capital, all which could easily be regarded
as sub-species of cultural capital. The introduction of these forms of sub-capital has led to a further decrival of his work with scholars discussing gender capital (Ashall, 2004), ‘physical capital (Wacquant, 1995), sexual capital (Martin and George 1997; Caputi 2003) and ethnic capital (Tabar and Noble, 2003). Whilst the terms allows the notion of ‘currency’ to be introduced into other arenas, labelling these forms as ‘capital’ not only detracts from Bourdieu’s espoused relationship between capital and field, but could lead to an underestimation of the multiplicity of gender, ethnicity and age by reducing them to mere forms of currency which define social position within fields.

Secondly, whilst Bourdieu aims to create a more tempered view of the agent in the outline of his general theory, his own empirical work concentrates on the reproduction, rather than the transformation of power. Although Bourdieu emphasises the importance of struggle within a field between those who wish to reproduce and those who wish to change discourses (Bourdieu, 1983), his studies which range from the education system (1996), to art (1984) to language (1991) all focus on how those in power seek to maintain their dominance, rather than how the dominated may subvert social relations. Whilst he explicitly states he does not want to view people as “tragic cogs” (1998:26), his emphasis on the constraint of fields, rather than the potential for subjectification leaves us with a rather deterministic view of social action. Bourdieu’s view of language has also been viewed as deterministic and over reliant on legitimacy through position. This is conducive to rather unidirectional flow of power where “words have power in Bourdieu’s world, but that power seems only to flow in one direction” (Jenkins, 1992:157). Butler further questions this by arguing whether the achievement of speech can only be made ‘magically’ through authorisation of the speaker when in practice “it is clearly possible to speak with authority without being authorised to speak” (Butler, 1997:157).

Finally, his work has been charged with not fully developing the habitus concept. Similar to capital, his notion of habitus is never precisely pinned down, This is achieved through one of Bourdieu’s self-created loopholes where he only characterises, rather than gives a definitive definition of the habitus, meaning that throughout his work, the habitus is given multiple and contrasting descriptions (Brubaker, 1993). This vagueness leads to a number of loose ends which are not answered by Bourdieu about its relationship to identity or subjectivity. In particular, by being created through past experience, the habitus is a set of dispositions which causes individuals to appear to have a preference for acting or choosing
in a particular manner. This means that practice may be understood as constrained *but not determined* by either past experience or current practice within a specific context, but a conjunction between the two. However, Bourdieu’s preference to discuss social change at a macro level means that this is not fully realised in his studies. This concentration of macro levels of social action thus results in little consideration about the role of the habitus’ at the individual level in relation to the social behaviour and, in particular, in identity formation and subsequent construction of reality, despite being a potentially valuable concept in helping to understand how identity is constructed in relation to ideology.

### 3.9 Bourdieu and Identity

Despite the aforementioned underconceptualisation of the habitus, Bourdieu has provided a valuable concept which has the potential to further our understanding of identity as a discursive or ideological phenomenon. Although his own research was concerned with cultural identity in terms of the collective experience of class (Bourdieu, 1986[1979]), once again, his thesis opens up an active account of how an individual’s identity is constructed, shaped and understood in relation to past, present and predicted future interaction with social. The key to this is two interrelated ideas: habitus, and hexis. This section develops these concepts as a way of understanding age identity as discursively created.

#### 3.9.1 The Habitus as a Discursive Tool

As discussed earlier in 3.6.1, Bourdieu invites ideology to be viewed as constructive at an individual level, through the habitus. Bourdieu’s habitus involves embedded dispositions through which a schema of taste and appreciations are derived from “the institution of the social in the body” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127). That is, they are created through the genesis of perceiving and experiencing the social. At the centre of this process lies the body, where dispositions are learned through the way that our body behaves or acts within particular social circumstances, a point developed later in this thesis. Yet the body also serves to help form the perceptions, preferences and beliefs that we hold through the habitus.

Similar to the constructionist approach used within discourses analysis, Bourdieu views the habitus as both the medium through which identity is constructed, and the perceptual interactive filter through which we understand and make meaning of the world. In some
interpretations, habitus is viewed as a way of re-introducing the social agent into the equation as individuals who construct the world, albeit through schemes of perception. Yet this notion of perception underestimates the full potential of the habitus concept. In terms of discourse, habitus plays a significant role in social construction since it is the means through which individuals come to understand themselves and the world around them. The experiential element of habitus means that rather than be a mere reflection of the world, the habitus has discursive power in itself. This is because the habitus is created through life experiences of the individual.

Bourdieu sees the creation of the habitus as formulating primarily within early childhood (Bourdieu, 1985). To reiterate from 3.6.1, exposed to the social order and beliefs which are embedded within a number of fields in which individuals inhabit, individuals develop a sense of what is important or desirable and internalise such dispositions through ideologies, where the principles of organizing the world are created as a form of doxic knowledge. As a result of interaction with fields driven by particular ideological forms of knowledge, the habitus naturalises itself and our understanding of the social world. As quoted in 3.6.1, unequal power relations between classes, groups or social relations are objectified which leads individuals to not question such dispositions which predisposes agents to “make a virtue out of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable” (Bourdieu, 1990a:54).

3.9.2 Developing the Habitus

Despite its potential to provide an understanding of how identities may be formed through and by the interplay of discourses, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus holds a number of limitations which curbs its potential value. In particular is a lack of understanding of the habitus in relation of identity. This stems from Bourdieu’s assertion that the habitus is formed primarily during interaction and socialisation during childhood. As a result, individuals must be viewed as ‘trapped’ within particular ideals, albeit not necessarily those present within the current fields in which they practice. This has particular limitations for this study if we are to consider an ageing identity which is affected by our continued interaction with the social and how our position in relation to ideologies of age may change throughout out life.
The other main failing of Bourdieu’s habitus mentioned earlier is the determinism which arose from an unconscious awareness of the habitus, where individuals appear blinded to processes of hegemony. In light of these limitations of Bourdieu’s habitus, there are two main areas which allow Bourdieu’s habitus to be developed and facilitate a more cohesive understanding of older worker identity within a discursive perspective.

First is to depart from Bourdieu’s statically defined habitus towards a more developmental and experiential habitus. Bourdieu’s original thesis implies that our current interaction with the world has little effect on the habitus-formulated identity, since the habitus has been formed primarily during childhood. Although some degree of stability is required within the habitus in order to have an integrated sense of self with the social (Bourdieu, 2000), if this habitus constitutes at least in part self-identity through the internalised practice between habitus and field, it is questionable whether this formation is as static as Bourdieu suggests. If identity is dependant on social interactions and relations as Bourdieu argues, it is difficult to conceptualise why the habitus, which appears so sponge-like during childhood, ceases to be affected continually by the field in which it operates.

In light of this ontological fallacy, what may be more appropriate is to view the habitus similar to Elias, where the habitus is seen as continually forming: “for although the self-steering of a person, malleable during childhood, solidifies and hardens as he grows up, it never ceases entirely to be affected by his changing relations with others throughout his life” (Elias, 1994a:455).

Not only does this pull the habitus in line with Bourdieu’s larger thesis on doxa and belief, but the generative capacity of the habitus allows us to further develop the notion of subjectivity and agential potential. Bourdieu’s habitus, which we must remember is concerned specifically with class dominance, appears to work on the basis of self fulfilling prophecy by subconsciously picking out instances which reinforce their predisposed position, whilst disregarding others, underlined in Bourdieu’s work through the utilisation of phrases such as “not for the likes of us” (Bourdieu, 1986). Yet if our habitus is to be modified, taking a more Eliasian perspective, are we to believe this is done without reflection or consciously being aware of difference between habitus and field doxais? It seems that whilst he has provided an adequate account of its objectifying principles,
Bourdieu leaves questions about the potential for subjectivity and individual awareness relatively unexplored.

Yet it appears that Bourdieu's own empirical work was at odds with such a theoretical reading of individuals as unconscious (Brubaker, 1993), considering that his later work takes issues with not considering individual effects and self-awareness. Despite Bourdieu commentators, such as Lovell (2003) arguing that Bourdieu veers away from conscious awareness, his work on researcher reflexivity does provide an opening for the individual, or at least social science researcher, to become a "director of consciousness" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:252; see also Bourdieu et al., 1999). By implying that only researchers may acquire this skill leaves him open to claims of elitism where the privileged position of the research suggests he is able to step out of the unconsciousness, unlike the 'blinded masses'. Yet rather than apply this notion as simply a competency of the researcher, one may argue that this reflexive potential, if considered as part of the habitus, can provide a potential space for individual subjectivity.

To do so, one may turn towards Bourdieu's concept of 'mastery', and in particular, the differentiation between 'practical mastery' and 'symbolic mastery' of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990a). Whilst the former implies a 'doing without thinking', the later implies a level of consciousness. As Brubaker (1993:225) writes:

The habitus governs practice in a subconscious, unreflective manner. The "practical mastery" of the schemes of perception and thought constitutive of the habitus "in no way implies symbolic mastery - i.e., conscious recognition and verbal expression of the procedures practically applied" (Bourdieu, 1977a:88). Practical mastery may even be incompatible with conscious symbolic mastery: self-consciousness can inhibit or even destroy the practical efficacy of the habitus.

Unlike practical mastery, which Bourdieu sees as predominantly governing practice, symbolic mastery requires a level of displacement in order to monitor and reflect on the self and one's actions. One suggestion is that this may occur when there is a 'lack of fit' between the habitus experience and the current practice (Adkins, 2003). To an extent, this is accounted for in Bourdieu's concept of *hysteresis* (Bourdieu, 1990a) where there occurs a 'habitus lag' during periods of rapid social change. However, there is no reason why displacement may also be experienced at an individual level, where changes in relation to
the self and their interaction in the world require more than the improvisatory potential Bourdieu’s original habitus provides.

Whilst this does not lead to critical reflection in the fullest sense (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:130), it allows a conceptualisation of the individual as having the ability to develop a level of awareness which allows them to negotiate between discourses and their own habitus’. This is achieved through symbolic mastery which allows the individual to reassert and position their selves strategically and consciously. To refer to Bourdieu’s idea, “transforming practices and the ‘awakening of consciousness’ takes place “by the direct or indirect possession of a discourse capable of securing symbolic mastery of the practically mastered principles of the class habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977a:83). In other words, during particular ‘crisis points’, the agent is able to obtain a level of critical reflection and utilise the potential of not just one doxic reality, but a number of orthodoxies.

One may further this argument and suggest that experiential improvisation or opportunity for subjective action not only occurs at crisis moments. If the earlier discussion on overlapping fields is upheld, the alignment between an individual’s habitus and the field in which they operate can never be absolute, not only since the habitus is a culmination of past interaction in a number of fields, as well as the individual’s current practice within a number of fields. Thus actual practice is enacted not through determinism, but creative improvisation of what is predicted through the habitus based on the past, transferred into practice within a certain social context in the present, which are drawn upon through a habitus with a level of orthodoxic choices. The potential for misalignment and conscious reflection may be more common that first thought possible.

Bourdieu’s later work emphasises the gaps between expectation and experience and its potential to transform. The notion of ‘Experience’ is incredibly valuable here since it enables us to account for experience and subjectivity within each field where the individual can operate at both a conscious and unconscious level. Whilst action is mediated through what capital we possess and the social context in which we are placed, the habitus allows theoretical space for individuals to realise the possibilities available to them through the shaping of their perceptions and dispositions, which have been formed from a number of different fields. Thus there is a level of consciousness and choice over practice, no matter how constraining the field, where people can devise strategies through the habitus to try
and use the ‘rules of the game’ to their advantage. They also have the potential to explore alternative interpretative possibilities through the habitus, proving a transformative capacity where agents are able to “act otherwise” (Giddens, 1981:4; see also Giddens, 1979). As a result, we are able to provide an ideological underpinning to the habitus but resist to some extent a domination model of power which has plagued ideological discussion surrounding critical discourse analysis (Mumby, 2004).

So how does this help us understand older worker identity and those who may be discriminated against? Already CDA has enabled us to understand the older worker not simply as a convenient tool of classification, but both as a concept which is produced through discourses and a subject, which both identifies other and is used as a means of self-identification. What Bourdieu’s habitus allows us to do is understand the habitus as an identity-constructing tool which affects both practice and conceptions of who we are. As ageing and growing older mean that how we are viewed throughout time will change, our theoretical framework needs to support this. This can be achieved by engaging with the concept of symbolic mastery, which means that the ‘gap’ between practice informed by past experience and actual practice allows for identity to be continually developed and changed over time. As a result, discursive identity can be viewed as not only as relational, fluid and dynamic, as discussed in 3.3.3, but also flexible and reflexive, and able to respond to discourse and context. This allows us to account for subjective and self-interested action not only through being positioned within multiple fields (as reiterated in 3.6.1) but also at the level of individual action through the habitus. In turn, we can avoid a view of those affected by age discrimination as victims, or ‘tragic cogs’, but instead provide space to analyse self-strategies for managing or challenging discrimination.

3.9.3 The Hexis as Embodied Identity

The concept of habitus not only helps to understand the potential for subjectification within discourses, it enables a theoretical consideration of the body as ideologically reproduced without limiting ourselves to performative functionality. This is achieved through introducing the body as discursively contested and constituting. Whilst the habitus is introduced as a schemata of perception “appreciation, and action that result from the institution of the social in the body” (1992:127), Bourdieu discusses the embodiment of such practice through the hexis, literally, the bodily habitus. Whilst this may be explicit
within rules of how the body should be, Bourdieu suggests that this only offers a limited conception of social control of the body: "discipline is enforced by military strength; you must obey. In a sense it is easy to revolt against discipline because you are conscious of it" (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992:115).

Similar to language, the body may be viewed as a symbolic form which is not only cognitive but socially understood and produced. The body is not simply a cultural commodity (Entwistle, 2002) through which one develops a sense of the price attributed to one’s own body (Bourdieu, 1991:82) but is discursively constituted, in effect, ‘built’ through ideology and language, since physical self is constructed within individuals talk as a discursive object. For Bourdieu, symbolic domination and violence can be extremely powerful since the body, through experience, effectively ‘absorbs’ ideology. Yet this interaction of body and discourses can be seen as a two-way process. Discourses gain meaning through the body. Bourdieu argues that the habitus is inscribed in and through the bodily hexis (Bourdieu, 1977a:93; 1990:74). The concept of hexis, literally the Greek translation of habit, appears to emerge from Lingis’ notion of the body as a “product of natural evolution, but also of our own history” (1994:vii, cited in Dale and Burrell, 2000:15). Serving as a memory pad (Bourdieu, 1990a:68; 1991:123) we learn how to engage our body with particular discourses mnemonically, which in turn shapes our understanding. In terms of identity, this operates as a site of history (Bourdieu, 1991). Similar to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of body knowingness (1980), habitus and hexis provide a built-in physical sense of knowledge where new experiences are amalgamated with existing knowledge which inform future practice acting as form of somatic doxa. Doxa is can thus be inscribed on the body through movement, stature or gait. Rather than viewing ideologies as purely “mental objects” (van Dijk, 1998:17), actions, postures modes of physical activity are also embodied and play a key role in understanding ourselves and making sense of our relationship with the world. In his own work, Bourdieu has applied this idea to his discussion of both gender and identity (Bourdieu, 2001) whereby women learn to sit with their legs together, or where men’s military identities are inscribed on their bodies through their stature (Bourdieu, 1986 [1979]).

Yet the body may also be understood as a particular form of text, rather than simply a resource which is drawn upon to create other texts. Practice achieved through discourses is not only realised within verbal interaction, but through the engagement of physical
**embodiment.** This opens a previously unrehearsed argument for the ageing body to also be seen as a site of discursive performativity where discursive formation are realised through particular acts of embodiment. Within the workplace, bodies perform in ways which draws on larger discourses; for example, a muscular frame may embody ideologies of discipline and control within the workplace. In the same way, ageing bodies may potentially be engaged in particular embodied practice, but individuals may also seek to realise particular ideologies in daily practice through their bodies. This of course does not just happen 'naturally': it is a struggle at all levels of discourse to understand, 'read' and interpret meaning, a process which is embedded within numerous fields of power.

Although researchers and authors have only recently begun to embrace the notion of the body as an integral feature of organizations (e.g. Hassard et al., 2000), studies have often been confined to professions where the body is seen as the principal tool for success, and thus an integral part of the nature of work, such as modelling, (Banet-Weiser, 1999; Entwistle, 2002), dance (Wainwright and Turner, 2004) or sport (Wacquant, 1995) where an individual's appearance is the "very sum and substance of their self-identity" (Wainwright and Turner, 2004:332). A small body of literature has begun to develop a more holistic approach, examining 'bodily' aspects of organizations, such as pregnancy (Warren and Brewis, 2004), or weight-watching (Tyler, and Abbot, 1998). However, the ageing body at work remains an unexplored figure within academic studies of the workplace, despite the body often being argued as the principal mode of age categorisation (Laws, 1995).

In some ways, the ageing body has similarities with the gendered body. It draws on a "social construction of the vision of biological sex which itself serves as the foundation of all mythical visions of the world...through the inculcation of a bodily hexis that constitutes a veritable embodied politics" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:172). The older body is therefore 'trapped' within a number of mythological constructions around its limitations, restrictions and lack of control, similar to the female body (see Linstead, 2000) which serve to marginalise those who are associated with an older identity.

Bourdieu's deterministic leniencies once again require his notion of hexis to be developed. According to Bourdieu, the hexis has a permanence of disposition: "a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990a:67-70)
which occurs at the level of doxic unconsciousness (Bourdieu 1977a:87). However, some studies contest this by highlighting hexis occurs at a conscious level. For example, Starrett’s (1995) work which show how Egyptian’s discourses about Islamic hexis consciously contribute towards larger ideological discourses, such as the straight lines of prayer embodying the ideology of order and discipline of Islam (1995:963). Similarly, sportsmen, such as dancers (Wainwright and Turner, 2006) and boxers (Wacquant, 1995) are discussed as consciously creating a ‘productive’ body which is integral to their own sense of identity. This allows space for a more reflexive notion of hexis where “individuals and groups consciously ascribe meaning to – or learn to perceive meaning in – bodily disposition, and to establish, maintain and context publicly its political valence” (Starrett, 1995:954). Of course, this also provides a means through which alternative doxais or orthodoxies struggle to enforce ones ‘corporeal reality’. Body practice and project in this sense can thus be seen as an ongoing process of identity work. In similar ways to the operation of the habitus, whilst individuals are never ultimately free to choose their own identity, the space between doxais is conducive to resistance and struggle, where individuals have an element of negotiating what their bodies mean and the symbolic signals they produce.

This is particularly significant in terms of providing theoretical space to understand our own body changes, through signifiers of ageing such as hair loss or growth or menopause, although the emphasis here is on the symbolic (rather than the biologised) force of this experience on age identity and discourses of ageing. Whilst read from the outside, i.e. by others, the individual also has the potential to seek to control their own identity through their body (Culbertson, 1998). Although we are still able to understand the body as affected through past experience, a reflexive hexis not only views age as socially inscribed on our bodies as in Bourdieu’s original understanding, but assigns space for the individual to attain some form of control over their ageing body, or at least discuss this as potentially possible.

### 3.10 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter has outlined the theoretical commitments taken within this thesis by viewing age inequality as socially constructed and reproduced through discourses and social texts. Weaving together current approaches to CDA with Bourdieu’s tools of practice has
furthered our theoretical understanding of the research area. Moreover, developing Bourdieu’s concept of habitus has enabled an ontological consideration of the ‘active individual’ who is able to engage in mode of resistance and subjective action. To clarify, in contributing to the theory of organizational age inequality, 4 main tenets are outlined below, which have underpinned this discussion:

A. Beliefs, classification and meanings of ageism and the older worker are socially constituted

A discursive view of reality sees subjects, objects and concepts as socially constructed through interaction. Bourdieu’s work permits an elaboration of this relationship by viewing processes of reproduction and construction as resulting from the misrecognition of legitimacy within fields which becomes embedded within the individual, through the habitus.

The attention to context that ‘field’ provides helps to understand that phrases and terms, such as ‘ageism’ and ‘age discrimination’, cannot be viewed as universally understood within academic and organizational life. Instead, they are open to particular processes of manipulation where powerful individuals and groups seek to construct their meanings in order to justify particular practices and reproduce the current social order.

B. Language is not only a communicative device, but can create the social

Within a discursive perspective, language operates as social texts which do not communicate but actively construct reality. This means that particular terms can be negotiated in order to impinge on and often marginalise particular individuals or groups including older workers. If we look at the findings of CDA studies into gender or racial inequality, it may be suggested that this is the case. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992), van Dijk (1993; with Wodak, 1988) and Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) have shown how the notion of racism can be discursively manipulated to reinforce or justify particular social realities. By using an approach which accords the centrality of power dynamics as instrumental to identity and social formation, it allows us to examine age discrimination can be examined as part of larger discursive phenomena which benefits some parties whilst marginalising others.
If we are to consider this view of language alongside Bourdieu, his work may be seen as adding an extra dimension to the enactment of language, where one of the main objectives of language is to create and reassert legitimacy, allowing individuals to assert a view of reality which favours their own position over others. Due to the linguistic market having to present a veneer of equality to the outsider, someone might say they are discriminatory, since the linguistic market censors it. Words do have the ability to change things through the power of social texts, but this is also dependent upon the position and legitimacy of the speaker.

C. Bourdieu helps to understand identity as a culmination of individual experience and social processes

So far, age and employment literature has failed to engage with the notion of the older worker as both label and experienced identity, instead choosing to discuss the older worker as a truism. A discursive perspective helps to restore the individual as an active agent, one who both constructs and is constructed in terms of an ageing identity through the misrecognition of beliefs and values as doxic knowledge. Whilst this may be understood as contextually specific, the experiential and developmental perspective of the habitus allows for ideals to be sustained and reproduced through the self.

D. Older worker construction is not only reproduced within ideologies and social contexts (field) but is also the culmination of reflexive processes of identity work, including embodied forms of knowing.

Previous discussions of self and other within age inequality, e.g. within discourses of difference and stereotypes, present an overly simplistic view of the social processes behind discrimination. We cannot understand how an individual constitutes a group or category without exploring how they situate and understand themselves in relation to that category. The relationship between discourse, identity and habitus helps to avoid a false divide between subject and object. Self and other are not dichotomised and to understand one, we must understand the other – thus to understand the older worker, we must understand the individual who purports this image, and how it relates to larger ideals and beliefs. Therefore, each time an individual draws on particular discursive resources, they do so in light of both the context and their own self-identity. To further develop the relationship between identity and discourse, the notion of a more reflexive habitus can be developed where gaps between experience and current practice create space for subjective action.
This heightened *awareness* of self also introduces a heightened *sense* of self, where the individual can be understood as engaged in an ongoing identity project, which is both realised and enacted through the habitus and the body hexis.

Having now discussed the theoretical framework, Chapter 4 moves on to introduce the research aims and objectives, and outline the methodological implications which were considered throughout the course of the research.
Chapter 4
Research Objectives and Methodology
Chapters 1 and 2 provided a critical assessment of current research on organizational age discrimination and the older worker, discussing the theoretical limitations of current approaches. Chapter 3 then followed on to develop a discursive theory of organizational age inequality which can be used to explore how age discrimination and the identity of the older worker are constructed through organizational and social ideologies. This Chapter now sets out to clarify the research aims and objectives of the thesis, discussing the methodological implications of adopting a discursive perspective and reflecting on the methodological considerations when studying age inequality in the workplace.

The first part of this Chapter will discuss how the theoretical commitments of this thesis affected the fieldwork and analysis of data. Whilst this includes a more generic discussion of qualitative methodology, careful attention is also paid to the practicalities of embedding the theoretical approach within the entire research process. Of particular importance is the consideration of reflexive dimensions of research, including the role of the researcher and the dilemmas confronted when conducting empirical investigations in the area of old work identity and age inequalities.

The remainder of the Chapter provides a detailed account of the systematic process of analysis. Considering one of the main criticisms of a discursive approach is the difficulty in presenting evidence of systematic analysis (Wood and Kroger, 2000), particular attention will be paid to how the theoretical considerations presented in the analytical framework were translated into the process of analysing the data.

4.1 Research Aim and Objectives

The impetus for this study came from a critical examination of current political and academic texts on organizational age inequalities and the older worker. Since these terms were often employed as categories of convenience and accepted as truisms, there was little evidence of how age inequality was reproduced in relation to them. Sensitivity in relation to these terms was developed through viewing age under a critically discursive lens and working towards a more cohesive understanding of ageism, age discrimination and older worker identity by focusing on their construction through the interplay of power, language and social action. Considering the potential value to be added by a discursive perspective, the overall research aim of the project was:
To explore the discursive processes which construct, reproduce and transform organizational age inequality

This was broken down into more particular research objectives as follows:

- To explore how constructions of ageism and age discrimination are created and justified by managers

- To explore how older workers are discursively reproduced and positioned in an organizational context

- To investigate the interplay between self-identity and the construction of the older worker and age inequalities

- To conduct an exploratory analysis on the role of the body in relation to older worker identity

4.2 Collection of Texts

Before discussing the broader research considerations of this project, the mode of collection will be discussed, both in terms of logistics of the data gathering and how this differs from more traditional qualitative approaches.

Inevitably the decision about how to collect data is made both in terms of the thematic and theoretical requirements of the research and also more pragmatic concerns about access and interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In deciding upon which research method to use, a number of approaches were considered, summarised in Figure 6, along with the possible benefits and disadvantages:

(Figure 6 overleaf)
### Figure 6: Summary of considered data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus groups</strong></td>
<td>• Able to access participants faster than conducting separate interviews  &lt;br&gt; • Facilitator’s role less intrusive than in one-to-one interviews (Överlein et al., 2003)</td>
<td>• Difficult to co-ordinate a suitable time for all participants  &lt;br&gt; • Equipment required to correctly record data potentially expensive  &lt;br&gt; • Requires 2nd person to take field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant observation</strong></td>
<td>• Enables researcher to see the emotional and subjective nature of work-floor experience (Fineman, 2004)  &lt;br&gt; • Can discuss incidences or opinions as they unfold during day-to-day interaction</td>
<td>• Gaining full access may be difficult  &lt;br&gt; • Time consuming  &lt;br&gt; • Ethical issues about covert/overt status and informed consent  &lt;br&gt; • Role of researcher/participant could lead to tension (Zuiderent, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-participant observation</strong></td>
<td>• Less intrusive (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002)  &lt;br&gt; • Allows 'naturally occurring text' to be collected</td>
<td>• Relies on organizations discussing age inequality and older workers without researcher intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media texts/television programmes</strong></td>
<td>• Allows an analysis of communication of socially-produced texts  &lt;br&gt; • No intervention by researcher required</td>
<td>• Not enough data available referring to age discrimination at time of collection  &lt;br&gt; • Possible issues with preserving anonymity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Images/Photo-ethnography</strong></td>
<td>• Enables and exploration of mediums other than language through which discourse may be produced</td>
<td>• May require researcher to be immersed in the research environment over long periods of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Archival data or documents</strong></td>
<td>• Data already exist and requires no intervention from researcher (Forster, 1994)  &lt;br&gt; • Can allow historical assessment of how ideas have been discussed</td>
<td>• Forthcoming legislation may mean company policy has changed  &lt;br&gt; • Would not answer research questions  &lt;br&gt; • Ethical issues in using data for different purpose than intended (Corti, 2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The temporal issue of research also affected the decision concerning what research method to use. The research data was to be gathered in 2005, but since legislation does not come into force until the 1st October, 2006, organizations may still be unsure of the future steps that will be taken to ensure their practices are legal. As a result, few managers may not yet have placed this issue on the agenda within formal meetings or in internal memos or documents. Another deciding factor was also connected to the time of data collection. Whilst organizational age discrimination was still legal at the time of data collection, government campaigns had served to encourage a view of age-biased practices as socially unacceptable. This meant that fear of advocating socially disapproved views may have resulted in ageist beliefs already being driven underground, in the sense that they were not discussed within a formal organizational environment and thus difficult to capture ethnographically. Whilst ageism is evidentially a pervasive feature of organizational life as discussed in the first Chapter, capturing discussions relating to age or age discrimination would have resulted in securing full access to a company for a number of months in order to create enough data; a mean feat for anyone, particularly if they are viewed as a junior researcher.

In light of the limitations of the aforementioned research methods, the time at which the research was being undertaken and the need to fully explore the research aims and objectives, interviews were chosen as the main research method. Conducting semi-structured interviews would allow the researcher to focus in on particular topics and themes (Silverman, 1997), whilst still giving the participant the freedom to develop their own ideas outwith the confines of a structured interview schedule. In order to ensure that participants felt at ease to give their own opinions and ideas, questions were left open-ended, with the researcher encouraging them to talk about their own personal experiences or give examples. It was anticipated that this would allow for the collection of rich, relevant data which also allowed for the social processes of meaning making surrounding age inequality to be captured by the researcher without having to gain full access to a workplace.
4.2.1 Using Interviews Within A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Perspective

Qualitative interviews are one of the most important sources of academic research with as many as 90% of research projects in the social sciences drawing on data collected through interviews (Brenner, 1981). A number of typologies exist through which to conceptualise different forms of interview, heavily influenced by the methodological stance taken and the theoretical perspectives that inform the research (Healey and Rawlinson, 1993). Often interviews used within a mixed-method approach are focused on ‘finding out’, and assume that the knowledge gained stretches beyond the context of the interview (Silverman, 2001). To this extent, the interviewer is not seen as having an active role in the creation of data, and emphasis is on openness and non-judgement whereby the interviewer is playing the ‘role’ in the same way as an actor might, ignoring their own personal dispositions for the sake of embodying the essence of ‘neutrality’. Such studies neglect to disclose information about the interviewer within publications, or only gives it an obligatory passing reference.

This has been challenged by more critical perspectives of the interview, particularly within ethnographic and feminist research, where the interviewee plays a key role in the construction of data (Oakley, 1981). This means that assumptions cannot be made in terms of allegiances between interviewer and participant simply because they are of the same ethnicity or gender (Kohler Reisman, 1987).

Using interviews within a discursive perspective requires the interview to be understood as a discursive act where the interviewer is as closely involved with the production of data as the participant (Mischler, 1986; Potter, 1996). Interviews are thus viewed as creating social ‘texts’, a definition which refers to any form of communicative utterance (Fairclough, 1992; Titscher et al., 2000:20). This notion of texts helps us to understand that whilst inferences may be drawn about the utilisation of particular discourses, the data should still be discussed as collected within this particular context. The interviews are thus understood as interactions, rather than just a research tool (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

At the level of the interview then, a discursive perspective of the interview can draw on Bourdieu’s notion of ‘legitimacy’, where the researcher is interested in the employment of particular repertoires and processes of legitimation, as well as the construction of the
particular terms associated with age discrimination. Rather than be interested in the 'genuine views' purported by respondents (Marshall, 1994:95), the researcher concentrates on the processes of meaning making within the interview, as is the focus of any discursive study of social interaction (Wetherell, 2003). Attention is also paid to the construction of terms which draw on particular symbolic resources and ideals, as seen in the work of van Dijk and Fairclough. It is the complexity of this exchange that has warranted a number of discourse analysts to view the interview as an area of research itself (see Van den Berg et al., 2003).

The importance of the context in which data is produced must be considered within the analysis (Hardy et al., 1998). Interviews are a specific “discourse type” (Fairclough, 2001a:25), or genre (Swales, 1990) where there is a specific structure loosely focused around a question and answer configuration. The implicit objective of the interview genre for the researcher may revolve around the research question, although one must be careful not to assume each of the participants of the exchange have the same objective. These objectives will ultimately affect the reception or exchange. For example, in the interviews undertaken for this thesis, the participants understood they were taking part in an academic research interview to discuss their view about organizational age inequality and identity, rather than a media interview, or about another subject. On the one hand, this may have encouraged the participants to give a frank account of their beliefs and experiences due to the perception of strict ethical and confidential procedures being upheld within university institutions in general. On the other hand, the interview may have also been viewed with suspicion due to a lack of understanding or being interested in the objectives of academic research, or dismissed as not relating to the ‘real world’. Whilst it is not in the scope of this thesis to develop these issues, there is still relatively little known about managers' perceptions and understanding of academic research and this is certainly an area ripe for investigation.

4.2.2 A Bourdieusian Perspective of the Interview

Considering the theoretical tenet of this doctoral thesis, it should be acknowledged that the interview may be viewed as reproducing particular forms of power itself. This power dynamic within interviews has previously been explored within feminist research (Oakley, 1981; Bhavnani, 1990) and is by no means unidirectional: whilst the interviewee may be
seen as ‘leading’ the conversation’, the status of the researcher within an organization may also be questioned (Saunders et al., 2003).

Of more relevance to the theoretical commitment of this thesis, Bourdieu’s thesis of power has been specifically applied within a discourse analysis perspective by Slembrouck (2004), who conceptualises the interview as operating within a linguistic market aimed towards legitimate language use (Slembrouck, 2004:93). Both parties are engaged in determining their own status and views as legitimate through language and the strategic play of the habitus. Whilst this allows us to see how the interviewer and the interview itself may have particular affects on the produced text, it somewhat implies that the determinism of the linguistic market of the interview may prevent transferability of discourses.

Therefore instead of concentrating upon Bourdieu’s concept of linguistics, during my research processes I considered whether, in Bourdieusian terms, the act of interviewing is in itself a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1986[1979]) where both parties are engaged in impressing a particular view of the world using certain forms of language and drawing on particular ideological resources. For example, in Ritchie and Rigano’s (2001:750) educational study, teachers were more likely to use theoretical language during interviews which may have been perceived as more acceptable to the researchers. This idea may be extended to the processes of transferring findings into a style of prose considered ‘suitable’ by the academic community by the researcher when writing up empirical findings. Although Bourdieu slightly modifies this position in a later work (Bourdieu, 1996a[1993]:20) claiming that both social proximity and familiarity provide the context for ‘non violent’ communication during the interview, he does not explicitly discuss how this may be undertaken realistically, other than interviewing those who we personally know. Of course, to do so raises a number of other issues. For example, within organizational research, one may not know a group of people who could be regarded as a research pool, and even if they do, this may not cover a range of beliefs, since we are often drawn to people with similar ideals (Pahl, 2000). It may also present the problem of creating a narrow age range of participants, since direct intergenerational relationships are seldom socially created (Cottin Pogrebin, 1995). Moreover, it could further limit the transferability of the data, since participants may be even more eager to recreate a favourable persona, since a personal relationship is also at stake.
Such issues were also seen related to broader ethical questions concerning research. During the research process, symbolic violence was identified as potentially occurring through the difference between ‘academic’ and ‘conversational’ prose used in the interview schedule. In order to ensure this was minimalised, the data from the pilot study was used to find out whether particular terms or phrases prevented the participants engaging with the questions. However, a number of other steps were taken to create a safe environment where participants felt protected against being manipulated, as discussed 4.2.6.

4.2.3 The Fallacy of ‘Naturally Occurring Data’

Within the field of discourse analysis there remains a continuing debate over the use of interview data for the purposes of analysis, although a number of scholars choose to ignore this argument altogether in their work by not discussing such tensions (e.g. Bonilla-Silva and Forman, 2000; Riley, 2003). The conflict centres on the concept of ‘naturally occurring’ versus ‘researcher initiated’ data. ‘Naturally occurring data’ can be best understood as data which would have existed without researcher intervention, such as ethnographically collected field data through non-participant observation, media text or governmental and company documentation. Researcher-initiated data is characterised through the research making an explicit intervention in order to collect data. A number of leading discourse analysts, such as Wetherell (Wetherell et al., 2001:27-28) have suggested that whilst they themselves have used interviews in earlier discursive research, scholars may be faced with a number of challenges in their analysis, such as considering the researcher’s role, which is not as relevant when using ‘naturally occurring’ data.

However, as Silverman (2001) points out, such an opposition represents a false concept of ‘interference’ within the text. All texts are affected by social processes, albeit not directly through the researcher, therefore to discuss naturally occurring data in the purist sense is a misnomer in itself. What may be more valuable is to argue that different forms of text require different considerations. Unlike naturally occurring data, where the text is produced ‘live’ in the workplace, using interviews presents the challenge of ensuring the analysis is not confined to the interview context. This point is often overlooked by many discourse analysts using interviews and in part has contributed towards some purists deeming interviews as inappropriate for analysis using discourse analysis.
In order to ensure this is not the case, one must consider how to allow 'transferability'; the notion that ideas derived from interview data are still relevant within other contexts, such as in day to day workplace interaction. In terms of using interviews as a form of data within discourse analysis, we are attempting to explore the discursive resources individuals have to draw upon, not just within the interview, but within all their social interactions. Whilst we may have to temper our analysis by considering the context, as discussed within Chapter 3, the relationship between overlapping fields and the habitus allow us to understand how cultural resources and ideas are not only situated in the immediate context of the interview but are utilised by individuals within other social milieus. As long as the interview process is considered throughout the analysis, not simply through a passing mention, but integrated into the analytical framework used for analysing data, it is possible for interview data to provide a rich source of data on which to conduct a discursive analysis.

4.2.4 Choosing and Recruiting Participants

In light of the research questions, there were a number of research pools which could have been used to investigate the construction of organizational age inequality. The decision was made once again by considering the current resources at my disposal through previous networks and contacts, as well as the groups who would make a strong contribution to current research knowledge. A selective sampling method was chosen (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) where individuals interviewed could be understood as sharing the same work responsibilities and experiences to some extent. The groups considered are outlined below:

**Policy Makers**

Choosing to interview policy makers would have altered the focus of the study to a more general discussion of those who directly write policy, rather than managers. This would have been valuable, since it would have allowed a more general account of what processes of social construction influenced those who instigate legislation and political policies relating to age discrimination and older workers. However, since the research gaps identified a lack of understanding of age inequality at an *organizational* level, it was decided that this group may not be appropriate. Moreover, gaining interviews or research access may have proven difficult due to gatekeeper issues. One option would have been to gain access to professional or policy networks and then access individuals through
snowballing techniques (Farquarson, 2005). However, this may have proven difficult, considering the geographical distance between those in the research pool, and the issues of confidentiality required.

**Study of One or Two Organizations**

This would have given a deep understanding of processes within one or two firms and would have allowed a multi-hierarchal analysis where interviews were carried out with workers, supervisors and managers. However, initial enquiries into gaining full access to one organization suggested that there was hesitancy for research to be carried out on an issue which was soon to be legislated. As discussed before, the sensitivity of the subject meant that the two companies initially approached may have felt in danger of incriminating themselves, albeit not legally, an issue discussed in relation to other socially sensitive subjects (e.g. McClean et al., 2006). Moreover, there may have been a danger of the resulting data being heavily influenced by the corporate culture, which would have been difficult to separate from larger ideological beliefs held by the individual.

**'Older Workers'**

A number of studies which form the current critical mass of knowledge have used a research pool of ‘older workers’ and have produced valuable findings about their labour market and workplace experiences. However, since one of the aims of the study was to highlight the complexity of older worker construction and identity, it would have been difficult to identify a potential research group without reverting to reductionism through using chronological processes of categorisation. An alternative research call which invited those who regarded themselves as older workers for interviews would have avoided claims of researcher arrogance in terms of assuming who is the older worker. However, this may have prevented an exploration of the inherent tensions and complexities of older worker identity, as well as implying the research focused on them as older workers, rather than organizational age inequality in general.

**All Workers/Managers**

In light of the limitations of the ‘older worker’ research pool, one possibility was to call for workers of any age. This would mean that ideas and beliefs from those across the life course would be gathered. However, in light of the scope of the study, using such a diverse group who have little in common other than the fact that they work may not be classed as a
strategic sampling technique. Moreover, the diversity of workers from different industries, levels in the hierarchy and types of job may have made it difficult to understand the group as having any shared characteristics. Whilst representation and generalisability are issues more associated with quantitative work (Bryman and Bell, 2003), choosing a sample who may have particular features in common may enhance the value of the study by understanding their position within the organization in relation to the management of age equality. Similarly, using managers may draw on too diverse a research pool, with the added complication of gaining access to individuals during their working day.

**Human Resource (’HR’) Managers**

In light of the limitations of the other possible participant pools and the previous research pools used in other Age and Employment studies, it was decided that human resource (‘HR’) managers would provide the most valuable sample. Past research has drawn on human resource practitioners as a sample within diversity studies, both as a means of accessing other employees (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005) and as an interview sample (e.g. McVittie et al., 2003; Zanoni and Janssens, 2003) since their responsibilities often include facilitating equality and diversity programmes within the workforce. Moreover, in light of the objectives, it was considered important to understand the discourses drawn upon by those who are often in charge of implementing, co-ordinating and managing people within the organization. Whilst their role in the management of equality may differ in the level of management, from practical hands-on training to more strategic planning, the integral role of ‘people management’ within their jobs suggests that the issue of equality is directly relevant to their work role. As a result, such managers may be well rehearsed in justifying and defending their equality practices, and also feel confident about discussing such issues. In terms of response rates to a call for participants, it was hypothesized that HR managers would also be more interested in the issue of age equality, since they are likely to be directly involved in the management of forthcoming legislative issues alongside legal and financial faculties of the organization.

Whilst this was deemed as a suitable sample for the purposes of the study, it inevitably discriminates against some organizations. For example, smaller companies are less likely to have a specific person who is dedicated only to Human Resources. It meant that the sample could be inevitably biased towards larger companies with a human resource
department, where time can be afforded towards one person participating within research. Such limitations are recognised and understood as having an impact on the research.

4.2.5 Details of the Research Participants

Two criteria were used to recruit participants. Participants had to:

- Currently be members or qualified by the CIPD or affiliate body, or have been a member in the past
- Have an input into the implementation or management of people policies in the workplace

The first qualification was partly due to the method of accessing participants, which was through the East, Central and West of Scotland CIPD web pages, branch meetings and a call for participants in their newsletter, ‘In Form’. However, since a snowballing technique was also used to recruit participants, this criteria was laid out explicitly to make sure there was an element of cohesion within the research sample. Whilst the method of initial recruitment may have disqualified certain individuals, such as small business owners, it was viewed as the most time-saving approach since it accessed a wide database of people over a short period of time. The second qualification was put into place to ensure that all participants were able to draw on their own immediate experiences as people managers.

From these two methods, 35 interviews were conducted. Although all interviewees were given details about this qualification before the interview, it became apparent that during the interview, two did not meet the criteria. As a result, 33 interviews were analysed. Although a relatively small number for a qualitative study, this does not mean value cannot be drawn from the study. Indeed, small numbers of texts have already been shown to highlight a diverse range of interpretative repertoires in a number of studies. For example, Marshall (1994) only used 18 interviews scripts whilst Zanoni and Janssens (2003) used 25 participants. Likewise, other discursive approaches have focused on a single text (e.g. Woolgar, 1980; Potter et al., 1994).

Whilst no definitive sample size has been determined within qualitative studies, there were a number of indicators to suggest that the sample size was sufficient enough to ‘say’
something valuable. On a thematic level, managers were repeatedly discussing the same
issues and dilemmas beyond the direct line of questioning within the interview schedule.
On a discursive level, patterns of justification emerged as relevant throughout a number of
interviews. Finally, it was possible to identify a number of more abstract repertoires being
used to support and construct the ideas espoused by managers. Overall, these acted as
indicators to suggest that 33 interviews provided a sufficient amount of data.

In terms of the participant details, there was a skew towards females, although this may be
explained by the professional gender divide in the field of people management, which is
heavily female dominated (CIPD, 2006b). Particular attention was given to ensuring there
was no implicit age stipulation in the call for participants. It was stressed in the
advertisement and subsequent snowballing that all ages were encouraged to participate.
Whilst interviewees were not explicitly asked their age, all but three revealed their
chronological age during the interview. Due to the research samples, participants were
from a wide range of industries, although all but 2 had worked in the past within the
service-related sector or department. Whilst other qualitative analysis may have been
interested in the industry-specific difference, I was more concerned with the discursive
alignment and textual effects of ‘Organization’ and how the size or type was employed as a
rhetorical device, rather than any sectoral characteristics.

Interviews were between 45 minutes and two and a half hours long and took place at a time
and place chosen by participants. Each encounter was recorded using a tape machine and
tie microphones. Since all the participants had been notified in the initial contact that
interviews would be recorded, there were no instances of refusal. Each interview was then
transcribed ad verbatim by a professional transcriber, then double-checked by myself.
Although many discourse analysts choose to record every aspect of the interview, such as
gaps, hesitations or intonations of the voice, due to financial and time constraints, the
transcripts were limited in terms of recording the nature of interaction. For example,
whilst pauses were marked, they were not timed. However, all utterances were recorded, as
were any long gaps or overlapping discussion. Whilst it provided a means for analysis, the
process of transcription from interview to written word was by no means a neutralised
process (Potter, 1996; Wood and Kroger, 2000), and inevitably particular nuances within
the interaction were highlighted over others. In order to alleviate this limitation, the first
level of analysis was carried out whilst reading the transcript and simultaneously listening
to the tape, with field notes to remind myself of any particular gestures or body language. However, the limitations of using tape recordings are noted, since there was no way of remembering all facial expressions, body language or gesticulation during the interaction, which may have added value to the analysis.

4.2.6 Interview Design and Location

The interview schedule was designed to allow a free-flowing interaction, whilst still focusing on the broad themes surrounding age inequality and older workers outlined in the research aims and objectives. The interview schedule (Appendix 4) was created using concepts within the literature, as well as the thematic gaps in current knowledge which had been identified in the literature review process. Following other discourse analysis interviews, questions were designed to be open enough to allow managers to incorporate their own views on issues of age discrimination, whilst ensuring that the interview produced enough relevant data (Cassell and Symon, 1994; Potter, 1996). Since emphasis was on the processes of construction, questions were open-ended to ensure that the text produced had not been led by the researcher's own biases. This meant that during the interview, I also had to be extremely careful that questions and probes would produce enough data for analysis, whilst allowing the participant to discuss issues that were not directly related to the questions.

Initially, notes were taken by myself during the first two interviews, but this appeared to cause the interviewees discomfort or unease. Instead, field notes and initial observations were jotted down as soon as possible, usually before the journey home at a café or in the car. Whilst these did not form part of the analytical framework, they enabled me to understand the importance of my role in the formation of meaning-making within the interviews, and produced the discussion below on my position in the interview. They also helped me to remember conversations that had gone on prior to the recording which either myself or the respondent had referred to during the interview.

Since the context of data collection can affect the resulting analysis, the place of interview was also considered an important issue. Herzog (2005) argues that the location plays a key role in the construction of reality and researchers must be aware of the social boundaries which are represented through geography or particular places. For example, who decides
where and when the interview is conducted should not only be pragmatic decision but understood as the beginning of negotiating the researcher-participant relationship (Warren, 2002). In order to ensure both employees and researcher felt safe, all interview locations were decided by the interviewee and were carried out either in the participant’s workspace or a public place, such as a coffee shop. This ensured convenience for the manager, who was often taking time out from their work schedule for the interview, and the assurance that they were not worried about being overheard.

4.2.7 Ethical Considerations

Guba and Lincoln (1994) discuss qualitative research as an ethical endeavour as well as a systematic process. This is not to say that quantitative work bypasses or transcends any issues of moral integrity. However, within qualitative research, participants may be perceived as more engaged within the research process since they are being asked to disclose personal information in their own words, rather than such data being 'impersonalised' and distanced through numbers and statistics.

Interviews as a particularly intensive form of research carry a number of considerations about the professional, personal and emotional welfare of both the interviewer and the participant. Some scholars argue that the intrusiveness of interviews is unethical because the techniques of interviewing, they say, are really ways of manipulating the respondents (Fontana and Frey, 2000:662). In order to alleviate this potentially happening, all participants within this research were either e-mailed or sent a one page outline of the project before agreeing to do the interview, and received a copy of the University ethical guidelines which were adhered to (Appendix 3) prior to the interview. These outlined their rights to confidentiality and the ability to withdraw from the study at any point. They also provided contact details for both myself and my supervisor. Informed consent was given in writing and acknowledgement of the interview being recorded was given on the tape before the interview commenced.

A number of other ethical questions were considered during the research process that related directly to adopting a critical discourse perspective. Some have argued that critical discourse analysis carries an explicit moral imperative: by exploring and uncovering unequal power relations, there is the implication that the status quo is unfair or unjust.
It has been seen to address social ‘problems’, yet it does not actively seek to change them (Wodak et al., 1999) by intervening. In the spirit of CDA, the research was intended to reveal the complexity of processes of age inequality. In order to investigate this, many managers were reproducing ageist norms, and may have objected to being associated with perpetuating age inequality. Surprisingly, this ethical issue has yet to be discussed within the CDA literature and required me to question whether my work was indeed unethical on some level. At worst, it could have been viewed as manipulating managers into incriminating themselves. Yet realistically, it would have been unwise to challenge managers about their views and would have made data collection virtually impossible, since qualitative research ultimately “depends on the participants” (Kleinman and Copp, 1993:3).

However, I would argue that the research interest rests on the subtle distinction between an exploration of discourses and processes which relate to organizational age inequality, rather than the way specific individuals choose to mobilise them. This resulted in no judgement or incrimination at an individual level, since the nature of discourses remains the result of interaction between social fields and past socialisation, and not solely the making of a single individual. Moreover, it is hoped that the resulting findings may be used to help managers understand and manage organizational age inequalities, as discussed in the concluding Chapter. Whilst this may appear to be a rather pithy justification, there did not appear to be any signs of discontent or objection from the participating managers who all received a booklet of the findings. However, this is considered to be a key issue for future discussion, not only within CDA, but within the broader school of contemporary critical research.

4.3 Research Approach

Having outlined the process of textual collection and discussed the immediate consequences of this approach, this section will go on to discuss the more theoretical considerations within the research collection and data analysis process.
4.3.1 Differentiating a Discursive Approach

To some extent, the theoretical approach of the study has explicitly advocated the use of qualitative methodology. The form of analysis requires a detailed deconstruction of language and texts which favours a more qualitative mode of enquiry (Saunders et al., 2003). Whilst some studies emerging from North America have labelled content analysis a form of sequential discourse analysis by quantifying data through word counting (e.g. Merrill et al., 1995; Gonzalez, 1996), it is difficult to see how this sits with such a contextually focused and constructivist form of research and has been largely dismissed by European discourse analysts. As Billig (1988:206) reiterates: “This sort of methodology (content analysis) can count words, but it cannot interpret them. Under some circumstances mere counting can lead to misleading conclusions”.

Discourse analysis along with other forms of qualitative methodology is often questioned in terms of reliability and validity. Although some scholars imply that issues of validity within qualitative research are similar to those of rigour applied within quantitative research (e.g. Mason, 2002), it may be suggested that this falters on philosophical grounds, whereby the language of ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’ can cause tensions within an approach that embraces the notion of a socially constructed reality. Moreover, the concept of validation may also sit uneasily with discourse analysis in terms of assessing ‘one truth’. Should the investigator return to the participant claiming they have made ageist or contradictory marks, this could result in face-saving denial, challenging the notion of credibility, as well as threatening the whole research project. Beyond checking back the script for errors made during transcriptions, the notion of validation appears to cause problems since social construction dictates that the issue of truth or fiction is a false dichotomy. Instead, qualitative researchers have produced their own criteria through which they may produce ‘quality’ data. For example, one could argue that qualitative research should look at issues of trustworthiness and authenticity, as outlined in Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) benchmarks for qualitative methodology (Figure 7). Such concepts are also alluded to in the work of qualitative methodology scholars such as Silverman (2002) and Bryman (1988; with Bell, 2003).

(Figure 7 overleaf)
Figure 7: Tenets of a qualitative research methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthiness</th>
<th>Authenticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fairness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent validation</td>
<td>Are viewpoints equally represented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transferability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontological Authenticity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether results are contextually unique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Educative Authenticity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every step of process documented in an accessible manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmability</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding researchers personal persuasions to intervene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

Whilst this provides a good ‘rule of thumb’ for judging the quality of qualitative research, CDA may view some of these principles as less relevant to a discursive approach. This is due to its explicit philosophical commitment to question the position of the powerful and focus on the emancipation of the dominated (van Dijk, 1997). This often involves dealing with sensitive or controversial topics where specific research participants may be used in order to understand the reproduction of power (making Guba and Lincoln’s issue of ‘fairness’ a moot point). Credibility is also relegated as not as important, at least in the sense of the participant disclosing what they think is the truth, since discourse analysts are interested in the processes of truth construction, rather than whether what they said is ‘correct’ or not.

However, that is not to say that discourse analysis free-wheels or transcends such issues; on the contrary, in both its analysis and its approach, issues of authenticity are particularly important if we are to ensure that discourse analysis results in work that is seen as credible both within academia and by policy makers and managers. This is of particular importance to this study since the research area has been dominated by policy based approaches, and quantitative studies lead by rigour. In order for this research to be seen as valuable and its
findings deemed credible beyond the thesis itself, the systematic practice underlying the research process itself, is discussed in detail in 4.4.

However, because of the theoretical underpinnings of CDA and the particular Bourdieusian approach which has been taken within this thesis, it is necessary to understand the contextual effects of the interview upon the production of data. Not only is this in relation to the location of the interviews (see 4.2.5) but also how recording the data, and the researcher’s presence may have had a particular affect on the production of texts. These two dimensions will now be discussed.

4.3.2 The Role of the Recorder

Within research, recording equipment has been described as “part of the indispensable equipment” available to the researcher (Patton, 1990:388) and has undisputedly played a key part in the evolution of research traditions (Chapoulie, 1987). Recording an interaction not only minimises ‘infection’ through interpretation which field notes alone are often prone to (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) but also allows the interview to be listened to by a third party without them being present (Briggs, 1986:99). Most importantly, it allows the interviewer to engage on an inter-personal level with the respondent and concentrate on using appropriate interview techniques rather than worry about taking notes. This is particularly important when using discourse analysis, since the textual nuances and devices provide vital clues to larger ideological repertoires and should not be influenced by pre-emptive questioning. Yet notably, there has been little discussion within academic literature about the role of the recorder in the subsequent production of the text. This is particularly surprising since interviewer reflexivity has been widely discussed as playing an important part on the production of data. If the tape recorder is seen to have interview effects which ‘produce a dynamic of its own’ (Gubrium and Holstein: 1994:179) within conventional qualitative interviews (see also Fowler and Mangione, 1990:46; Rabinow, 1977), then one should certainly consider its role within the discursive interview.

Throughout the fieldwork process, the researcher found that the recorder did appear to have an affect on the production of data. As well as causing some initial nervousness at being recorded, the tape recorder appeared to be intermittently referred to throughout the
interview, contradicting suggestions that the interviewee soon forgets the presence of the recorder (Seidman, 1998). This led to analysing whether the mention of the recorder was related to the thematic content of the discussion at the time of reference. Rather than being viewed as an inanimate object, the recorder (or recording) appeared to be utilised as a type of discursive marker, where references ‘for the tape’ or ‘rewind that bit’ provided a means of correcting or ameliorating participants’ own talk, without necessarily correcting their views per se. For example, whilst often framed as a humourous gesture, these were often used as an attempt to soften a perceived solecism. This moved beyond Goffman’s (1959) notion of self-presentation, to allow a means through which ageist ideologies could be espoused through the *pretence* of hyper-correction. In other words, referring to the recorder suggested they had stated something incorrectly, but allowed them to continue without explicitly making an alternative statement. This was extremely powerful, since it often provided a face-saving device that ensured their ‘good character’ was not damaged without withdrawing comments which rested on age-related ideologies.

### 4.3.3 Interviewer Reflexivity

Any form of research requires a form of self-awareness about the role of the researcher and their relation with the participant (Cassell and Symon, 1994; Eden and Huxham 1996). This refers to the researcher as the collector of the data, the researcher as a co-producer of data (see 4.2.1) and the researcher as analyser of data. In the case of this study, all three were one and the same person, which presented challenges, particularly since under a discursive perspective I was as a co-producer of the text and thus a subject of analysis. Whilst some qualitative scholars suggest that a number of steps should be taken in order to eliminate interviewer ‘bias’ (e.g. Saunders et al., 2003), discourse analysis encourages the position of the interviewer to be analysed. This may be best understood through positioning theory; a ‘discursive practice whereby people are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines’ (Davies and Harre, 1999:37). As well as considering the role of the researcher as analyst, in the case of this thesis, where the collector of data was also the analyst, I also had to think about my effect on the production of data. Moreover, my attention to the reflexive production of identity within my theoretical development that informed my analysis required me to consider my own role as reflexively as possible. That is not to say that a fully-reflexive approach was embraced within the study; indeed to do so would render the data collected
as limited to the interview context, when I have already discussed the relevance of discourses to the wider organizational domain. Indeed, criticisms of reflexivity have posited such an extremist perspective as nihilistic and self-limiting (Fuhrman and Oehler, 1987; Halfpenny, 1988). Rather, elements of a reflexive approach were seen as both relevant and necessary to build into the research process.

The concept of reflexivity has developed organically within a number of schools such as in the ‘thick description’ discussed in ethnomethodology (e.g. Geertz, 1973) and within studies drawing on hermeneutics (e.g. Ricoeur, 1981; Giddens, 1984). Reflexivity develops from a central tenet concerning the “interpretation of interpretation” (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000:6). Not only must inter- or intra-relationships between researcher-subject-object be discussed, but their relationship to the social and historical milieu must also be considered as impinging on the analysis (Angus, 1994). Reflexivity is by no means something one ‘does’, or a step included during a particular point in the investigation; it must embody the whole research process. In doing so, one rejects any discussion of researcher ‘objectivity’ as mythical, unobtainable or even unethical (Bourdieu, 1999).

Following my theoretical development, it seemed important to consider the points discussed within Bourdieu’s work on reflexivity (1984), which have been widely cited by those who are interested in the theoretical development of reflexive research (e.g. Davies, 1999; Alvesson and Skolberg, 2000). In this thesis, interviews are understood as following a ‘logic of practice’ that is governed by the habitus and field. Both the research participant and the researcher are bound within particular fields, which may overlap to a greater or lesser extent. This is not only to be considered within the context of the interview or if the interviewees participate in the interview for different personal or professional reasons (McLeod, 2003) but also during the analysis, where the researcher’s own set of dispositions may result in incorrect assumptions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu states that this can be pacified through symbolic mastery, the researcher’s ability to ‘step outside’ their own habitus (see 3.9.2).

For example, when I laughed along with a participant, I had to analyse why I had laughed, and how it may have been interpreted by the participant and contributed to the production of data. I also returned to my field notes on a number of occasions. As well as using these as the aide memoire discussed earlier, I saw them as a socially produced text. Here, the
object of study was myself, a past self who had written initial observations in response to an interaction. Thus I was viewing myself as a research subject, who had interpreted particular nuances and written down subsequent thoughts. I had also written down my own emotions after the interviews, for example, whether I had felt frustrated, emotional or bored. In some ways, this was a deeply personal process: as Bourdieu (1993:53) states, it is often impossible to self-analyze without a feeling of discomfort at revealing yourself, and to some extent, I felt it was impossible to completely detach myself from my past self and in effect “objectify one’s relation to the object”, when the object under study is myself. Yet I felt that attempting to take a step back was extremely valuable in at least acknowledging any internal biases I may have which could affect the subsequent analysis.

Throughout the research process, I found a number of ways to remind myself of both the contextual and self-interpretative influences within the research process by becoming aware of analysing myself as a co-producer of text. In relation to my position with the participant, I viewed myself as someone who was interested in the participant’s thoughts and experiences. As I have had no managerial or professional experiences per se, participants were not simply discussing day to day experiences or attitudes as they might have done in the workplace, but also appeared to ‘allow’ for my inexperience (or naivety, as one participant stated) by being contextually specific within their discussion. In this sense being positioned as an ‘outsider’ to their organization gave me the advantage of being able to ask questions that may have seemed to have had obvious answers.

This flags up one of the key considerations within my research in terms of problematising the insider-outside position of the researcher. Whilst the insider-outsider dichotomy is still widely discussed within research literature (e.g. Sherif, 2001; Nilan, 2002) a discursive approach would claim it undermines the researcher’s position and instead should be considered as a more fluid identity. As Alcoff (1995:106) writes: ‘location and positionality should not be conceived as one-dimensional or static, but as multiple and with varying degrees of mobility’. If this is to be considered, the position of a researcher is dictated not only through their own changing concepts of self, but also the participant’s perception of ‘the researcher’. It could therefore be argued that this creates an identity which is continually negotiated between degrees of affinity and distance with the participant, as well as my own identity as a researcher.
Although this has been documented in terms of gender and a researcher-as-academic perspective, as discussed elsewhere (Oakley, 1981; DeVault, 1990; Williams and Heikes, 1993), the role of age identity in relation to interviewees has remained virtually absent within the literature, with the exception of a mention in passing in some studies which explore other ‘differences’ (e.g. Matsuoka, 1993) or research into age-related issues. For example, McRobbie (1993:406) writes about the tension she felt in studying youth culture:

Like Helmut Hartwig, I too feel a sense of acute anxiety at the thought of writing about youth. It is at once too close and too far away. I am too old. I have a daughter of 15 who lives these experiences and in talking or writing about them I feel I am encroaching on her private space.

Similarly, I felt acutely aware that my ‘age identity’ had a profound impact on the produced text. Yet when conducting my fieldwork, I was aware that unlike McRobbie, I had rarely thought of myself as being ‘old’. In effect, I may have perceived myself or indeed been view by some participants as the ‘other’ (de Beauvoir, 1949; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1996). Fawcett and Hearn, (2004:213) stress the importance of critically engaging with the forms of otherness that are most specific the research context. I would further this point and stress engagement with the ‘other’ was implied within the topic of research as well. Yet in this instance, ‘older’ is ontologically different from ethnicity or gender, since it is a category which we all (assume that we will) inevitably belong to at some point in our lives. The relationship was therefore not so much an opposite but a potential future self (Cleary and Packard, 1992).

In some ways, this may have been limiting; at times I felt that participants did not engage with me as they may have with someone who they saw as similar to themselves, or who was perceived as sharing the same age-related experiences. One reading of this could suggest there was an element of power play. As a ‘youngster’ I was effectively being put in my place, and perhaps questioned as to whether my own knowledge and experience was adequate in researching such an area. It is difficult to say whether my response in submitting to this role was ‘playing the game’, knowing this was how I would get the interviewee to reveal more, or if it was a more socially learned response to when someone older than myself appears to be imparting information. Moreover, whilst Coupland et al. (1991) shows that age dynamics affect conversational patterns, the dynamic could just as easily be attributed to my position as a researcher, that is, someone outwith the participants
own organizational setting. Due to a lack of research exploring such issues, it is impossible to categorically conclude how the academic researcher is viewed by managers or practitioners, although one may speculate that this depends on context and the interviewee-interviewer relationship and may range from the researcher being respected for their contribution to management understanding, to the 'ivory tower' analogy where they are dismissed as idealistic or unrealistic.

On the other hand, being viewed as the 'youngster' may have been a benefit. If I was not construed as 'being older', respondents may not have been so concerned about personally offending me when discussing older workers. There also appeared to be some benefits in terms of participants assuming an age cohort perspective. For example, some participants suggested I "wouldn't understand, you’re too young", implying that an older interviewer may be able to relate to their experiences. However, this provided an avenue through which I could ask for further explanation where they would further develop and justify the point they had made. Other participants seemed to do this of their own accord, by explaining their experiences. In these instances, I appeared to have often been perceived by participants as gaining information that most people have to find out by themselves as they age, and was in this sense gaining an privileged insight.

In other cases, participants appeared to relate to me through dual alignment with youth and gender, where I could be conceptualised as being a 'halfie' (Williams, 1996): partly from an outsider's role of a researcher, and partly sharing similarities with the participant through youth or being female. Participants related to me based on their construction of the interviewer having a 'young person's outlook'. This was particularly the case with participants who constructed or aligned themselves with 'youth'. The positioning of myself by the participant was invariably gendered, particular when it came to discussing the physical dimension of ageing, as explored in Chapter 8 (although I must stress here, this is my own interpretation of the data).

Yet as discussed in terms of the insider-outsider falsism, my position was not definitively understood in terms of my age. Another perspective was that many managers identified with me through my interest in age discrimination and older workers. Whilst they personally felt the topic was extremely important, many recalled their frustration with age discrimination being dismissed as an organizational concern. They were keen to discuss
their own knowledge and reading around the research area and many commented that they had enjoyed the interview since it had given them a place and time to discuss the issue, drawing on the concept of the research interview as a reflective or cathartic experience for participants (Corbin and Morse, 2003; Hiller and Diluzio, 2004). Consequently, I would argue that I could be viewed as having a mutual identity with the participants through a common interest in the research area.

4.4 Process of Analysis

The planning of analysis began long before the first interview through the development of the theoretical framework and how this would affect the process of data analysis. The aim was to provide a means of analysis which was systematic, transparent and repeatable, but was still sensitive to the specific medium which had been chosen as a data collection method. The resulting mode of analysis underwent many pre-fieldwork modifications, made mainly during my research masters dissertation, which was a preliminary study into older worker identity construction (Riach, 2003).

4.4.1. The Diversity of Discursive Approaches to Analyzing Texts

CDA is by no means a singular analytical method (Wodak et al., 1999) and scholars using this approach draw on a wide range of tools through which to interrogate their data. One leading scholar has even derided the term ‘method’ with regards to CDA, preferring to call it a “movement of – theoretically very different - scholars who focus on social issues and not primarily on academic paradigms” (van Dijk, 2004). Despite the widespread use of discourse analysis there is still relatively little discussion of the application of its analytical apparatus within most journal articles beyond reference to, or research by key authors such as van Dijk, Fairclough, Wodak and those within the ICRODSC. This may be partly due to the limited space assigned to published articles, where authors using discourse analysis prefer to assign article space to its theoretical underpinnings, or need to allow space for the large quotations often seen as required in order to show ‘discourse in action’. Whilst these limitations may account for the lack of details concerning analysis, it is still surprising that many discourse papers that appear in non-specialist journals do not appear to mention any form of analytical process (e.g. McVittie et al., 2003). This has only added fuel to the fire for commentators who criticise discourse analysis for its lack of clarity in terms of the
analysis undertaken by the researchers. Attempts have been made to stipulate what analysis within discourse analysis entails (Antaki et al., 2003), most explicitly by van Dijk, who in his editorial letter accompanying the first volume of Discourse and Society called for a “explicit and systematic analysis” which relied on “serious methods and theories” (van Dijk, 1990:14).

The need for particularity is even more necessary in this thesis in order to show how the theoretical development, which varies from traditional approaches to discourse, has informed the analysis. Whilst I posit a constructionist approach based on the reproduction of power through ideological repertoires, the habitus introduces a reflexive dimension that must be incorporated into the analysis. This is particularly important within this study, since the texts are created by individuals through ‘live talk’, as opposed to newspaper transcripts, rehearsed political speeches or formal documentation, which seek to objectify and anonymise the speaker. It is this element which largely differentiates my discursive analytical framework from other authors such as van Dijk, Fairclough and Wodak.

The process of analysis within discourse studies is often led by a preference for top down or bottom up approaches. As discussed at length in Chapter 3, bottom up approaches are predisposed to focus particularly on the linguistic or ‘micro’ processes within the text. Influenced by critical and functional systemic linguistics (e.g. Fowler, 1979; Halliday, 2004), scholars begin their analysis by examining the textual level and then working up to larger ideological repertoires (e.g. Kress, 2001). Top down approaches, on the other hand, mean that analysis often begins by looking at macro ideologies and then examines their relationship with textual structures and strategies. Here, the initial focus of academic interest is the interpretative repertoires that are drawn upon (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) which present themselves as “kaleidoscopes of common sense” (Billig, 1992:48) using techniques drawn from a cognitive or socio-cognitive approach to language (e.g. Schank, 1972; Schank and Abelson, 1977). Some of the earliest systematic research using discourse analysis employs such an approach. For example, Gilbert and Mulkay (1990) examine how scientists reproduce and draw on particular symbolic repertoires in order to discuss their own work.

However, what should be noted is that whilst different analytical routes are taken, the process should reap the same findings. An exemplary example of this was van den Berg et
al.’s (2003) study where different methods of discourse and textual analysis were applied to the same piece of text. Despite the differing methods which picked up various discursive nuances, they all have similar findings.

### 4.4.2 Analytical Framework: A Pictorial Representation

Due to the iterative nature of analysis, the analytical framework used in this study is most easily introduced as a diagram consisting of the main elements of my analytical apparatus. My approach was developed through two main bodies of work: through examining a number of existing frameworks, and from my own theoretical development incorporating Bourdieu’s work on language, ideology and power. The particular influence of Bourdieu can be seen in each level of analysis emerging from the theoretical development reiterated in Chapter 3. The textual strategies are derived from the discussion of symbolic violence and the performative nature of symbolic violence, combined with a reading of Fairclough’s work and his emphasis on textual analysis. The discursive repertoires emerged from my development of doxais as ideological along with van Dijk’s notion of ideologies. The discursive strategies draw on elements of Bourdieu’s work on language and symbolic power, and CDA approaches to discourse that help to identify the techniques used to *utilise* symbolic resources. The main development which differs from other analytical frameworks is the introduction of what I have termed the developmental habitus, which emerged from my theoretical discussion and rearticulating the interface between the habitus, field and doxais.

(Figure 8 overleaf)
4.4.3 Summary of Analysis

After interviews were fully transcribed ad verbatim and double checked, they were loaded into NVivo and printed out. The use of computer-assisted programmes (CAQDAS) has been contentious in terms of its coding and retrieval techniques which encourage anecdotes and ignore context (Catterall and Maclaren, 1997; Fielding and Lee, 1998). Its use within discourse analysis remains limited since it is programmed to assist the thematic analysis of data rather a means through which to analyze a multi-level analysis. However, in hard copy, the data was extremely hard to manage practically. Therefore, NVivo was limited to a device which helped organize and access data in order to avoid large piles of transcripts throughout the analysis, rather than a tool for analysis per se.

Initially scripts were read over several times, including listening to the tape recording along with the field notes made immediately after the interview. This allowed me to map my initially ideas out for each interview in relation to the research questions. Unlike some methods of qualitative analysis which use coding as a sole means of analysis, coding was undertaken as the initial step to begin to identify a number of overlapping emerging ideas. Whilst this drew on traditional means of qualitative coding such as identifying patterns, points of contrast and similarity both within and in between interview transcripts, and
questions derived from the research aims and objectives more discursive-related processes were also used. Included in this stage was a thematic decomposition of the text where themes and phrases were identified or noted as missing in relation to what subject was being discussed at the time. All these techniques were used to identify reoccurring patterns within the texts where ideas were discussed, contested, supported, contradicted or rejected. These were gradually re-articulated to reveal a number of conceptual categories which constituted the initial formation stages of discursive repertoires. The next stage of this process was going back to NVivo and putting the initial analysis into the project file, in order to be able to compare the various ways through which repertoires were being employed. This also had the added functional benefit of being able to call up particular instances from the analysis of interview texts during the writing up stage. From here, I then turned to a more focused analysis by identifying the discursive strategies employed. This enabled the interrelationship between discourses to be explored in greater depth in terms of how they supported, balanced or fought against each other. What must be noted is the iterative nature of this process which involved constantly working between the discursive strategies and textual processes in order to understand how each instance helped to build, support, reproduce or contest particular repertoires. After this, attention was turned to exploring the interrelationship between the developmental habitus and the discourses through examining the role of self in the transcripts. This stage examined how discourses were used in relation to the speakers own ‘identity work’ and in turn, how this fluctuated in light of the emerging discourses.

**Discursive Repertoires**

These refer to the ideological level of discourses which sought to construct and reproduce the “universe of the undiscussed” (Bourdieu, 1977a:168). Since this is discussed at length in Chapter 3, I shall only summarise how these were located and acknowledged within the analysis.

According to Alvesson and Deetz (2000:84), the effects of ideology can be seen in four ways:

- the naturalisation of social order
- a universalisation of common interest and silencing of conflicting interest
- the domination of instrumental reasoning
- hegemonic processes
Developing these ideas provided the basis through which repertoires could be identified. This involved the deconstruction of certain terms. For example, within the text, diversity was instrumental in the construction of anti-age discrimination in the workplace. However, the construction of diversity changed within and between texts, and was mobilised by participants to both support and undermine the position of the older worker. As shown in the analysis, whilst the notion of diversity was seen as both ‘liberating’ and ‘restrictive’; both constructions were interrelated and built upon similar discourses.

The discursive repertoires were also analysed through the reproduction of subject positions. To recapitulate briefly from 3.7.1, Althusser (1971) discussed how people are positioned i.e. become subjects, through ideological processes. Such regimes work through subjectification and interpellation, where they are produced, drawn or called upon by particular discourses. This results in particular theoretical spaces and positions wherein agents are enabled or limited to speak or act in particular ways (Parker, 1992).

Two further stages were carried out in order to ensure that the interview texts could ‘speak’ for themselves. Firstly, I examined the emergence of themes which were being discussed within the text that had not been previously identified within the initial analysis by examining what statements had been explicated without further discussion. In other words, what ideas had been left to ‘fend for themselves’, since there was an assumption that this was a universalised ‘fact’. Following this, I sought to identify the underlying assumptions, which then led to the detection of various discursive repertoires. Through weaving between these assumptions, a gradual list of ideals and beliefs began to emerge. By using Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000) characteristics of ideology, I identified particular moments when these appeared to be used as a means of legitimation or an assumption of rhetorical reasoning. Then, I began looking at patterns of textual processes and discursive strategies to identity particular ideals they were resting upon, or fighting against. These resources were then traced in the texts in terms of what they were trying to achieve, or the function they were serving.

**Discursive Strategies**

This refers to the strategies through which the discourse and discursive space is created, contested and defined. Since the interest of this thesis lies in both the explicit and more
significantly, the assumed, unspoken and silenced, it is not enough to use traditional methods of coding as a sole basis for analysis. Therefore, a number of techniques were employed for identifying discursive strategies. These are summarised in Appendix 5.

As in any case when one draws on different approaches, consideration must be given to their underlying epistemological traditions to ensure they do not depart or contradict the theoretical foundations of the research. My use of analytical tools varied; for example, whilst some were applied directly to the text, such as Thompson's (1984:32) "operations of ideology", others were further developed either through the fusion of different authors' terms in light of my own theoretical approach, or in order to fully explain what was happening within the text.

When analysing the texts, a number of discursive strategies were explicit through the form they adopted. For example, it was clear when someone employed a sub-genre within the interview, such as recalling an incident or telling a story (Nye, 1999). In other cases, discursive strategies were more subtle, and required particular lines of reasoning or arguments to be traced throughout the text. In both instances, it was necessary to read the strategy both as an episodic unit and within the larger context of the interview text in order to fully understand its meaning and purpose.

Thematically-orientated techniques were also used. Within each text, I undertook a comparative analysis to explore how particular subjects or phenomena were discussed, positioned or framed (differently), a technique used by Ainsworth (2002). For example, I explored how organizational ageism was defined initially, compared to how it was discussed as the interview progressed. I then traced particular patterns which appeared to evolve within each text, and compared these to strategies used with other interview texts to see if there was any convergence. Whilst this was carried out initially using the themes or short phrases which had emerged within the literature and were directly related the research questions (e.g. 'older worker', younger worker', growing older', 'ageing', 'age discrimination', 'diversity'), as the analysis progressed, other more abstract themes emerged which were related to the construction of organizational age inequality. An example of this is the relationship between the 'nature of the industry' and the employee (see 7.3).
Other discursive strategies were signalled through the identification of textual processes, as discussed below. This was particularly useful for identifying strategies that had not been explored within past research, as well as providing a way of identifying patterns which reoccurred within the text.

**Textual Processes**

In some senses, this level of analysis is very similar to Fairclough’s (2001a) ‘textual’ and Wodak et al.’s (1999) ‘linguistic realisation’, which refers to how ideas were expressed within language. In order to examine this micro-linguistic level, I developed a dictionary of terms which began to unravel the means through which textual processes help to achieve particular ends (Appendix 5). This was derived both from other CDA studies and from revisiting linguistic studies within the humanities I had previously encountered. Initially, analysis was undertaken in light of how particular textual processes interacted with discursive strategies. However, whilst textual processes often played a supportive role to discursive strategies in the construction and reproduction of ideological repertoires, they could also point directly to ideological repertoires. For example, Fairclough (1989) notes that “the expressive value of words are again ideologically significant. A speaker expresses evaluations through drawing on classification schemes which are in part systems of evaluation, and there are ideologically contrastive schemes embodying different values in different discourse types” (1989:119). In some senses, this relates to Bourdieu’s notion of text as symbolic violence. Therefore, it was also necessary to analyze textual processes as indicative of particular discourses themselves.

**Social Contexts**

As an approach to analysing social action, CDA stresses the importance of remembering the context in which the data was collected (e.g. Hardy et al., 1998; Wodak et al., 1999). This contextual sensitivity means that not only must the immediate context of the interview be taken into account but one must also consider the larger historical or political factors that contribute to both the construction and analysis of the text. However, whilst many studies using discourse analysis discuss the centrality of context, very few discuss how this has been integrated into the analysis. Scholars often assume that particular historical discourses are having an unconscious effect on individuals, rather than asking participants explicitly. For example, a participant would not be asked how they felt historical influences within their position affected their practice. Part of this reason is down to the
traditional philosophical perspectives within CDA discussed in 3.4, particularly those underpinned by Foucault’s work, where individuals are subject to subconscious power processes, rather than through reflexive practice.

Developing the subjective potential of the individual, as in the theoretical commitments of this thesis meant that it was important to analyse how the individual themself discussed their own position in relation to the traditions of their profession. For example, a number of managers used the ‘old style’ personnel approach to equality vis a vis the ‘new’ human resources approach as a frame of comparison. They also discussed how personnel management approaches continued to impinge on their practice, emphasising how the historical traditions of particular discourses are not only traceable by the analyst, but that individuals are also aware of contextual influences on their practice.

**Developmental Habitus**

This level of analysis helped to explore how the participants situated and moderated their own experiential sense in relation to particular discourses and to establish if in turn, discourses were challenged or altered. It is important to note that this not only relates to their own identity work, but also influences the world they operate within and past experiences of other social interactions. It is this ability to analyze temporality of experience as discussed by the participants that allowed me to engage in exploring the tensions of a continually changing identity. For example, experience could not only be understood as informing current practice, but provided the participant with a reflective lens which could be used in the articulation of views and opinions.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the habitus allows us to analyze identity formation beyond the notion of constructing subject positions through discursive repertoires. This is achieved by enabling a means through which individuals are not merely puppets to ideology in the Marxist sense, but are able to actively negotiate and create their own subjectivities, particularly in relation to their own sense of self and identity. Through symbolic mastery, agents are able to reflect and react when there appears to be a ‘lack of fit’ between the ideological repertoires being reproduced within a particular discursive arena, and their own experiential self, realised through the habitus. As a result, they are able to attempt to position themselves favourably within the discourse.
This is not to say that the habitus reduces the individual to a stable, fixed identity not affected or realised through such repertoires; on the contrary, identity is constantly constructed and transformed through discourses and interaction with the social. Showing the developmental habitus as *surrounding* discursive processes helps to return to the level of the individual. Whilst grounded within a Bourdieusian perspective, this also draws parallels with a number of concepts used within discursive studies, such as Iedema et al.’s (2004) usage of ‘heteroglossia’, which is derived from Bakhtin (1981). Claiming that some forms of analysis “downplay the importance and prominence of individuals’ personal experience, the tentativeness of their interpretations and the inchoate nature of their meaning making” (Iedema et al., 2004:18), Iedema sees heteroglossia as a way of explaining the multi-positioning of the speaker. Other CDA studies have also tried to account for personal contextual factors within interviews; for example, Wodak et al. (1999:10) discusses taking “individual factors” such as health and age into consideration, although it is not explicit how this is tackled within their analytical process.

### 4.5 Limitations of the Research Method

Before going on to discuss the findings, it is worth reiterating that both the theoretical position that guided the research methodology, and the research method are not without their limitations. In particular, three immediate limitations are noted:

By choosing HR managers, there was an implicit supposition that they may share particular attributes through their job title and characteristics, in effect, some level of a ‘shared identity’. Whilst the analysis sought to take into account the influences of other dimensions of their social domain, such as hobbies, personal life and organizational culture which were mentioned in their narratives, one must be careful of any assumption of homogeneity, even if used as a means of defining a research group.

Secondly, such work is ultimately entrenched within the time and space in which it took place. This is particularly relevant in this study where the introduction of legislation means that the political context in which the individuals talk will dramatically change. That is not to say that the data and analysis will automatically become out-of date after the 1st of October 2006, since discourses and ideologies are deeply embedded within social consciousness, as shown in studies of social change (Fairclough, 1992). However, it does
mean that after legislative introduction there may be slight variations of how beliefs and opinions are presented at a linguistic level of analysis.

Finally, a relatively small sample of HR managers was taken from a number of different sectors. This meant it was difficult to draw many inferences on whether managers from particular sectors drew on similar or different beliefs about age inequality and older workers. During the initial planning stages of fieldwork, it was considered whether this approach should be taken by only recruiting managers from two or three sectors, such as hospitality, or finance. However, during the pilot study, it appeared that there were a number of disparities between my definition of sectors and how managers located their companies. For example, one interviewee who worked for large banking firm referred to herself as a ‘call centre manager’ since all her previous jobs had been in call centres, spanning a number of industries such as charities, hospitality and the health service. Moreover, since the study was exploratory and was interested in the processes of construction, it was considered that any loss of cross-industry comparison was supplemented by the examination of shared ideologies between interviews which transcended organizational or cultural nuances.

4.6 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter has outlined the research process undertaken in this study. Whilst discourse analysis is a mode of qualitative enquiry, its epistemological and ontological commitments mean that some perspectives on qualitative methodology may be argued as less relevant to a discursive approach. For example, interviews are not viewed as being able to access a participant’s knowledge of a subject or collect ‘truthful’ data. Instead, they are a means through which to explore how the individual constructs and legitimises their world view.

In light of the theoretical discussion in the previous Chapter, careful consideration was taken to understand the reflexive dimension of the research, by exploring the role of the interviewer and their equipment on the production of data. This allowed a degree of sensitivity about the researcher-participant relationship to be incorporated into the study. In particular, a consideration of the age dynamics and identity work of both parties involved in the interview meant that the analysis could take into account both the
assertions and constructions of age identity in relation to the researcher-participant relationship.

The process of analysis showed together how the theoretical development has served to inform the analysis of texts created through the research interviews. In order to undertake a systematic exploration of data, the analysis was based upon three interconnected levels, which were all understood as influenced by the social context of the data collection. The framework also allowed the habitus to be understood as heavily influencing the data and enabled social processes to be understood whilst not forgetting the importance of individual experience and interpretation.

The following four Chapters now discuss the findings from the analysis of interviews. Chapter 5 looks at how discourses of diversity serve to manipulate the concept of age differentiation. Chapter 6 builds on this analysis to discuss the marginalisation of ageism and age discrimination as a managerial issue. Chapter 7 then takes a more focused examination of the construction of older worker identity, and Chapter 8 concludes with an exploratory discussion on ageing identity work.
Chapter 5
The Construction of Organizational Diversity and Age Differentiation
This is the first of four Chapters discussing the empirical findings of the research. Chapter 5 considers the how age inequalities are subsumed into a more general discussion of age differentiation in the workplace through the enactment of ideological constructions of diversity.

The research conducted for this thesis showed that when examining issues relating to older employees in the workplace, it is important to discuss one of the key symbolic resources that managers draw upon during discussions of older workers: diversity. Organizational diversity created the discursive arena within which age inequality and older workers were constructed in particular ways. From the field research, three dominant themes served to shape the construction of age inequalities. First, managers discussed their definition of diversity. The concept of 'difference' was drawn upon and regularly negotiated, recognising and celebrating difference as a central tenet of the diversity debate, and also a reason for discrimination. Secondly, since the construction of diversity was focused at a philosophical level, it was possible to uphold a diversity approach even if this was not mirrored in work-floor practice or the age distribution of the workforce. Thirdly, justification for a lack of work-floor diversity in relation to the employment of older workers was rationalized by employing a number of distancing strategies which positioned the reasons for fewer older workers as beyond managerial or organizational control.

5.1 Constructing Diversity

Diversity allowed managers to create a financial rationale for equality by alluding to a cost-driven, business case approach for diversity. This enabled the participants to reposition the organization 'field' as having different sets of values, and therefore participants were able to differentiate organizational diversity from other more social or political conceptions of diversity. Diversity could then be utilised as a form of capital to achieve larger management objectives such as promotion of the company.
5.1.1 Defining Organizational Diversity

A number of managers were keen to highlight the differences between diversity as an organizational model and larger ideals of social justice. They drew on the business case argument by aligning diversity with organizational success.

I think diversity is a big issue for the government, and they are probably right to promote it because they need that kind of strategy to fight against problems with asylum or bigotry or racism or whatever. But these issues aren’t so pertinent for business I think, as least not our business. So I think that yes, we both promote diversity and yes we embrace diversity, but for different reasons... we have to be more professional, that isn’t exactly the word I’m looking for but - about it and see how it benefits the company, rather than benefiting society as a whole, if that makes sense. Those more cynical may say it is directly related to better profits! I don’t think that’s the only reason, and of course we are aware of our need to respond to societal issues, but its definitely a big bonus for us if we can show it improves company performance.

Rose, 44, Retail

I think if employing older workers didn’t make good business sense, there would be little motivation for us to target them specifically in recruitment campaigns.

Jim, 37, Insurance

Argumentation strategies are used to create a differentiation between organizational and non organizational diversity, allowing managers to define workplace diversity in a simple form. Managers purported the government’s main incentive for diversity as a political means to an ends; as part of a larger campaign which attempts to mediate social problems. For these respondents the main objective of organizational diversity is money-orientated, with any political or power issues negated. Rather than distancing herself from this assertion Rose’s derision of this notion (‘those more cynical...’) only serves to substantiate her argument since it introduces this third voice, albeit anonymised, to agree with her claims. Although keen to present the ‘harsh reality’ as the key reason for diversity, Rose also attempts to soften the claim by moderating her comment using compensatory tactics (of course we are aware...).

I wouldn’t be in this job if I wasn’t able to see the value that it brought by employing people from a number of backgrounds.

Marjorie, 40’s, Local Government

If I was to put my business hat on I would say, yes, there are obvious advantages of employing older workers, working parents and younger workers since they are all importance sections within our customer portfolio. And I personally think the workplace would be a dull place if we were all bland suited nine to fivers too.

Jim, 37, Insurance

The negotiation between the business case and social justice case for diversity is created within the continual identity work of managers, who were seen as managing three different
identities at the same time: their identity as business manager, the ‘voice’ of the organization and, thirdly, a more personal, morally-orientated identity. For example, Jim draws on the metaphor of a hat which serves to symbolise a differentiation between his ‘works personna’, signalling a change of paradigm through ‘I personally’, implying that the opinions before were derived from a different system of beliefs. In many instances, this existence of multiple identities and resulting positions was explicitly mentioned and used as a means through which interviewees could ‘safely’ present particular viewpoints without endangering their other elements of themselves. This involved deliberation over ownership claims and value assignment. There appears to be collective understanding that the ‘business manager’ identity is not only able to make particular statements on account of this position, but the statements in themselves serve to sanctify and legitimise this identity. What is interesting, however, is that these three identities are seen as all promoting a positive view of diversity. Not only does it make good business sense, it also sits comfortable with the morally-shaped personal identities of our managers. By working within these personas, managers are able to present a convincing argument for diversity.

5.1.2 Recognising “The Diverse”

Whilst the business case approach was commonly employed, managers were also aware that diversity presented them with other organizational objectives. One of the reoccurring themes when discussing diversity was ‘access’. Whilst the idea of allowing the older worker to infiltrate the organization was forefronted, it also stimulated discussion about organizations realising how they can attract, or access ‘the diverse’.

…it makes us aware of our need to open doors to everyone

Anne-Marie, 26, Call centre

Something we’re learned over the past few years is flexibility and acknowledgement that different people require different shifts, or hours or holiday means we are able to introduce new groups of workers into the company

Anne, 37, Tourism

(the project) allowed us to discover what was preventing older workers from coming to work in our shops and take steps to create opportunities which were more attractive to them

Rose, 44, Retail

Diversity is discussed within a learning paradigm, where the organization is presented as collectively educating itself about diversity, or in terms of the examples above, how to increase access to improve diversity. Although managers elsewhere discussed the actual
practices as benefiting both the employee and the employer, the ‘we’ here refers solely to
the organization as a separate entity from the potential ‘diverse’ workforce. This further
separates ‘the diverse’ from the norm since it requires patience, time for adjustment and a
conscious effort by the organization to accommodate ‘difference’.

Discussion of diversity also creates particular subject positions for those involved in this
learning process. Lexical choices (‘our need’, ‘introduce’, ‘create’, ‘take steps’) locate the
company as the active agent in a position to counterbalance the disadvantaged situation of
the older worker. This has two consequences: not only does it favourably position the
company, but potentially constructs the older worker in a passive ‘victim’ position.

What is interesting is the lack of discussion over the categorisation of those included
within a ‘diversity’ approach. Whilst managers referred to acknowledging ‘everyone’, it
was evident that their reference group was created against the norm of a ‘conventional
employee’ who was seen as not requiring any dispensatory treatment. Similarly, ‘the
diverse’ are assumed to be implicitly recognisable. So whilst diversity as an organizational
concept is experiential and inclusive, ‘the diverse’ is naturalised as a certain ‘group-type’.

5.1.3 Diversity as a Promotional Resource

A third dimension was evident in the use of diversity as a potential promotion device.
Managers would refer to particular promotional events or awards in connection with
diversity which served as a means of upholding the companies’ reputation. This also
enabled managers to present ‘empirical evidence’ of their own diversity success through
their attendance at such occasions:

I was actually at an equal opportunity and diversity awards last month ... all the big names were
there, you know, and it’s important to show your face at them.

Susan, 43, Finance

Were you at the age Positive awards last year at the (location)? (Interviewer nods) well, we bought a
table at it, and I remember the speech by (name of speaker) ... so I did take a few notes and brought
them up in our last departmental meeting.

Michael, 52, Catering

We had one of the national newspapers call us up and offer to do a story on our recruitment
campaigns for older workers which couldn’t have happened at a worse time in terms of my
workload (laughs) but you can’t say no to these opportunities.

Rose, 44, Retail
There was an ambiguity about promoting diversity and attaining diversity. Diversity was being manipulated from a way of achieving organizational success (a business case approach) to indicative of or a by-product of organizational success through the use of a primitive syllogism (i.e. where two events are linked together to become causally related). Rather than talk specifically about diversity, participants create causal linkages to promotion of the business with reference to networking, assimilation of information and PR. Occasions which either involved an external organizational event or person are used as empirical evidence of their commitment to diversity. This distorted the distinction between attending diversity events and managing or achieving diversity successfully within an organization. Such an amalgamation allowed a rhetorical reduction where the consequences of one can also be substantiated as the consequences of the other. ‘Diversity’ therefore served as a symbolic strategic tool which allowed managers to construct a favourable image of themselves and their organization. Managers utilised such events as symbolic episodes that serve as testament to their practices. To draw on the Bourdieusian framework, Diversity then operated as a form of capital not only in terms of being a valuable resource to proclaim one has, but a means of gaining access to other valuable resources, such as business networks.

5.2 Defining Difference: Justifying Differentiation Based on Age

Whilst diversity was introduced as a general concept in the previous section, the interest of this study lies with age diversity. As discussed in Chapter 1, diversity as a concept works on the basis of difference. Ironically, managers also discussed this as a fundamental feature of discrimination. This presented managers with a potential problem about how this ‘difference’ may be created and justified in order to reduce, as oppose to exacerbate discriminatory practices.

5.2.1 Reasons for Age Diversity: The Time Bomb

Whilst age diversity was also discussed within a more general diversity debate, it was also constructed more specifically in relation to particular discourses. One recurring theme within the discernable argumentation patterns was the impact of the ageing population and as a reason for promoting age diversity. This is not to say that the effects purported truth or non-truth: what is of concern here is how this is used by managers in the creation of their arguments.
Erm, the economy being able to afford an ageing population and my fear is the provision is not being made now, to be able to afford the ageing population. So in terms of people are living longer. They are erm probably going to be working longer but if they live longer and work longer and it's proportionally the same that's fine. But if they are living longer, retiring at the same time or even earlier, then there's not going to be enough money in the pot for the health requirements the ageing population would bring.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

It (time bomb mentioned in previous sentence) is going to put the government under a huge financial strain to supply all the promised pensions. And I don't think people will take too kindly to all of a sudden being told they have to work an extra decade. So its not hard to see there's going to be a problem at some point.

Joanne 38, Health

I think it's really fascinating and it's so relevant at this time when we have this ageing population and it's going to change the whole dynamics of everything and I think we're still struggling to know what is the best way to do this because there's almost this question about do people actually want to work beyond 65.

Tara, 40, Finance

I know that we are worried about the effect of the time bomb and the pressures on the organization. So first we need to assess how bad the situation is – I don't know if that has been done properly yet; then we need to see what the economic implications are; then the role of businesses should be considered in this fight against economic problems should be addressed... don't you agree?

Susan, 39, Education

The schematic landscape presented by the managers assumes 'demographic pressures' to be problematic. The demographic 'time bomb' metaphor was explicitly mentioned by a third of managers, and alluded to by all except one. Purported within the media, the connotations are particular significant by implying a catastrophic and symbolic world changing event. Syntactically, 'time bomb' is solidified as an epistemic reality. Auxiliary verbs help to create semantic emphasis ('to do', 'are') of its inevitability. Statements are also declarative and absent of any modulatory adverbs (i.e. 'usually', 'perhaps', 'maybe') which fails to establish any dialogical space for alternative perspectives to appear. Lexical choices include words such 'pressure', and 'strain' implying the impact is both negative and coercive.

Using the 'time bomb' argument has particular consequences for age diversity. One effect is age diversity is discursively compromised in its impact as a business objective. Unlike the business case argument, which forcefully argues that diversity is a means of organizational success, the impetus for age diversity is discussed here as emerging from external factors. This emphasis on the reactive reasons for age diversity is implicit within the semantic construction. The last excerpt (from Susan) is more subtle in its call for a solution. Presenting a number of 'facts' as a step by step process works as a rhetorical implicature without explicitly stating what should be done in any detail. This is
particularly powerful as the answer has already been created by the bombardment of propositions, but by asking the audience (the interviewee) to vocalise the answer, they further objectify their argument:

(discussing the DWP report on age discrimination legislation) In one way it's good for us since we have the pick of workers from a growing resource pool. But it's all very well saying 'employ older workers', but they don't see the limitations and possible challenges in this.

Martin, 43, Finance

It's hard to know what we should do or are expected to do. I know we need to do something, but is it enough just promoting the recruitment of older workers -- I'm not sure. I think we need to have some clear advice set for business which goes beyond vague guidelines set by Age Positive.

Patricia, 54, Utilities

Within the ‘time bomb’ discussion, three subjects are constructed and positioned in a way which is insightful. First, the government are constructed as the ‘figure for change’ who have the access to key information and resources about the extent of the situation. Second, the organization is placed in a relationship of reliance with the government for guidance. Whilst modal auxiliaries (‘should’, ‘must’) position the organization as having an obligation in ‘solving’ this problem, responsibility is placed on the government as a body for leading this change. The third subject position is the older worker themselves. As the earlier quotations show, older workers are also presented as a possible barrier to solving the time bomb through not wanting to co-operate or work beyond a certain age. Both the older worker and government positions place the organization within a passive role which allows the managers to negate an active role in dealing with the ageing population.

The effects of the ‘time bomb’ on organizations were discussed more generically:

The labour force is going to get older definitely now we rely heavily on Eastern European countries, so with the lack of generation X generation Y, we have to look out with because we are going to run out of people for jobs, that's evident. So yes we do. But I think we will fundamentally have an older workforce anyway in the next few years. So discrimination will have to stop. People will have to fill those positions.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

Of course, I'll admit there are some cases where we see people being interviewed for jobs such as waitresses who are 15-20, even 30 years older than say a couple of decades ago, but I don't think that's indicative that we have reached crisis point yet -- it not as if we're advertising for bar staff and we are getting no applications from the under 30s!

Catherine, 42, Hospitality

As employers we're going to have to plan plan plan! It's hard, because the whole company has to be on boards with this within its business forecasting strategies, and that's hard to do when something is not perhaps as imperative or easy to see the economic effects.

Joanne, 38, Health
Although managers did discuss the current influences of the ageing population on their businesses, this was often structured within clauses as a moment of interviewee self-repair or concession, rather than fore fronted as an important issue. Alicia positions the issue as being managed through alternative employment resources, employing from Eastern Europe, which solves the lack of labour supply, rather than the issue of an ageing population. However, what was interesting to note was the temporal emphasis of the argument for age diversity. Whilst the time bomb was created as inevitable, the effects of this were positioned into a non-defined future. One reason for this may be the media’s influence to present such an effect as a metaphorical event, i.e. a bomb as a temporally finite incident. It may be argued that the metaphor in itself distorts the subtle and gradually emerging top-heavy demographic. As a result, the lack of critical incident or episodes which may be compared to a ‘bomb’ meant that managers used vague hypothesis or extreme case formulations to exaggerate the effects of the ageing population without resulting in a loss of legitimacy. This also meant that managers did not have to ‘properly’ deal with age diversity until they perceive it to have reached a critical level, which again was positioned as a vague and eternalised future event.

5.2.2 Legitimate Vs. Illegitimate Age Differentiation

One of the key discursive ‘achievements’ for managers was distinguishing between legitimate age differentiation as age diversity, and illegitimate age differentiation as age discrimination.

So it's ok to, well, recognise that some people may not have the skills as a by-product of their age but that's nothing to do directly with their age, and I think that's fair. But denying a job simply because of their age is not fair – I would call that age discrimination.

Terri, 43, Telecommunications

It's very difficult because people have their values and they have often been developed over many, many years and have often been influenced by their upbringing and their own life experiences and what they've seen, their relatives, their friends. What also can happen with managers is that one bad experience puts them off completely. So for example, if they have one older person that comes in that can't work at the same speed then they say I don't want any older people because you know they've all got that habit ... And so you tend to find they do hold these, that when you actually talk to them about it erm, they can see the logic behind the argument but as managers they can still be fearful of the outcome and until they've actually dipped their toes in the water and experienced the fact that you can employ an older worker and it's not that the world's going to come crumbling down, in fact this will give you access to a lot more good people that you didn't really consider before, you know so until they've actually had a good experience of that it can often be very difficult to convince them other than actually coming down hard arm of the law and saying you cannot do that.
I think they may not say in the advert that they have an age bracket in their head, but I think if someone could come along and prove it, it wouldn't be a problem but I think its just to make the search easier, if you like, and to save time, rather than be truly discriminatory.

Tara, 40, Finance

What you've got to recognise is that people are almost working against everything they have learned about interacting with someone. I mean, we are taught not to ask someone's age when they are older, and to respect our elders, and you could say these are discriminatory practice but it depends on whether they are meant as such and I think 99% of the time they are not.

Jim, 37, Insurance

As the excerpts show, managers used the notion of 'intention' as a key classifier between legitimate and illegitimate age differentiation. This is particularly important since it focuses the argument on the *internal* motive which can be strongly justified by the actor rather than age discrimination as an 'event', which is subject to interpretation by many. In other words, those who have seen, heard or experienced the event have as much right to comment as the perpetrator. By focusing on intention, power is directed away from the argument of outside commentators, who may view the practice as discriminatory in order to strengthen the speaker's benevolent view. Distinction was thus determined by the *causal motive* rather than the outcome. Managers adopted emotive or pragmatic strategies in order to promote looking at motives rather than outcome by focusing on the reason as to why such beliefs exist ('it can't be helped', 'it saves time', 'it's a habit'). What was key to these arguments is the baseline assumption that 'people' have no malevolent agenda. Since malicious intent is not compatible with the 'ideal type' of person presented in the manager's talk, discrimination becomes marginalised and instead is seen as a misunderstanding, rather than an issue of prejudice or bias.

One recurring theme which supports this idea is the reproduction of what may be called 'accidental discrimination'. This is where discrimination is discussed as arising from folly or misinterpretation. As the excerpts show, this justification often rests on the naturalisation of age typing i.e. that we 'naturally' use age as a classifier. The use of naturalisation serves as a means of legitimising the argument. Since 'everybody' does it, the universal affect becomes a form of normality. This is semantically created through factually framed statements, which are strengthened through the passive voice serving as an ideational function. The argument follows that if 'everybody' does it, then it cannot be seen as deviant.
5.3 ‘Doing’ Diversity

Managers were well rehearsed in the rhetoric of diversity and were able to discuss how it could be related to a business perspective. However, a lot of their discussion and definition focused on the theory of diversity. When it came to explaining how this was enacted in the workplace, it was necessary to undertake different discursive strategies in order to justify their version of how this transferred into practice and counteract any disparity between their espoused belief and organizational ‘reality’.

5.3.1 Culture as a Symbolic Resource

In interviews, participants discussed the notion of diversity within their organization as a mean of achieving equality, not only for older workers but for all employees. This was often done on an abstract level, positioned as a social, rather than bureaucratic concern.

There is a recognition that organizations need to be able to attract a diverse workforce and part of that diverse workforce will be older workers and I think that is not only good business sense but an organizational duty.

Christine, 31, Finance

Yes, we have a number of ways to promote diversity...mostly in order to ensure that everyone is given an equal chance so we are fulfilling basic employee rights. On every level of our business, we promote the idea of an equal chance for all, not only within our services but within our internal structure – I think that’s why I’ve stayed in the job so long because you can see that people are given this right

(KR) In what way can you see this?

Its played out in all aspects of the business, its something very close to the values of the company and I make sure I do all I can to uphold it.

Anne, 37, Tourism

These examples highlight the use of language to prioritise diversity in philosophical, rather than pragmatic terms. Diversity is formed as a discursive representation of larger ideological formations of equality. Managers place strong emotional attachment on such policies, using the first person to align their own beliefs with those of the company through the deictic personal pronoun ‘we’. Words such as ‘rights’ (Amy, 38), ‘duties’, ‘obligation’ (Terri, 43) and ‘honourable’ (Alicia, 36) were aligned with diversity; almost devout language which places the organization into a position of upholding social responsibility and human rights. Unlike factual representation, beliefs, by their very nature are subjective and experiential. It is unsurprising that organizational culture is discussed as a realisation of these beliefs.
I think what helps us immensely is that our values are so ingrained within our business and within all of us that the norm is for people to be treated fairly. I mean we acknowledge that there are differences, so older workers for example, and I hate that term for the record, may have different needs than say, single parents, but everyone can bring something to the party.

Amy 29, Insurance

Culture facilitates an epistemic ‘leap of faith’ between the philosophy of diversity in itself and notions of equality within the organization. Just as religion requires the follower to change belief into truth, culture is used as a resource which transforms claims of equality into statements of fact. As with other participants, Amy draws on organizational culture as a symbolic resource which is deployed as a means of legitimising their argument. By using a shared value, claims can be universalised, aided with the use of a collective passive voice (‘within all of us’). This claim enforces the strength of the argument using a chain of reasoning. Since diversity is manifested within culture, and this culture is not simply manifested in the organization but within people; culture (and thus diversity) is embodied, lived and practiced through the people. Such an argument has strong implications for equal opportunities interventions. If culture is omnipresent, within all and yet belonging to no-one, and the key to ensuring equality, then who is responsible for regulating or changing a culture?

Although a strong rhetorical argument, diversity is created within a utopic vision of the organization, bound by social and moral ties, rather that financial means. One reason for this may be related to the research setting; an interview could be seen as a context separate from the workplace where managers were able to either wax lyrical or make claims which under workplace or other conditions would require to be substantiated. However, when questioned about the make-up of their workforce, and its relationship to their diversity philosophy, there appeared to be contradictions between the declarative ‘nature’ of diversity and a more rationalised account of their workplaces. The interviewer was aware that a request for a more quasilogical discussion may present tensions for managers between espoused diversity theory and practice, and create a rhetoric and reality debate echoed in other areas of human resource management (Legge, 2005). Three main discursive techniques were identified as tools that managers appeared to commonly use to negotiate the tensions presented between by rhetoric-reality contradictions: paradigm changes, tales of success, and searching for the older worker.
What should be noted is that this execution between ‘doing’ diversity in a philosophical sense and ‘living’ diversity through work-floor policy and practice may have direct implications for interventions to promote older worker equality. If managers are able to ‘preach’ diversity and still negotiate or justifying contradictions with their practices, it allows companies to still ‘be’ diverse, at least in theory, without challenging the status quo or making any pragmatic changes to daily practices.

5.3.2 Paradigm Changes

The first technique used was to negotiate a paradigm change from a larger social notion of equality to a business belief system. This facilitated the use of an alternative discursive practice where the construction of, and assumptions about, diversity were mobilised and aligned with a managerial perspective focusing on cost rationalisation and bottom line performance, rather than reference to any emotive or philosophical framework.

Well, I don’t know about figures for those over 55, but our recruitment of those for ethnic minority groups is around double the Scottish average. I have been part of a very successful programme in helping single parents return to work by offering them special packages with flexible hours, and we have improved employment by about 21% in that group, which is remarkable. And the sheer amount of policies we have in place and have been in place for some time – and as I mentioned earlier, we have been seen as an example of best practice by the Scottish executive.

(KR) And do you keep records of the profile of your employees, in terms of gender ethnicity etcetera?

Yes, by law we have to collate figures and profiles. And we do try to accommodate everyone, and come up with solution which help to ensure everyone has the same opportunities... the problem is which group should be prioritised, I mean, how much money should be allocated to focused recruitment campaigns, to coming up with new ways of showing how we welcome everyone as potential employees, should we focus more on women, since they constitute nearly half the population so would potentially target more people, or because older people face more discrimination perhaps? - all these sorts of issues. I know that within (name of her organization) there was at one time an incidence of what you might call an older worker claiming he was being discriminated against because he was not able to take advantage of a scheme specifically designed for disabled employees because he wasn’t state registered disabled. But of course we are aware of such problems and I think everyone in the company would say we are a fair company.

(KR) and how was that issue tackled?

Oh, I don’t think it was a formal complaint. I would say it was probably out-with the control of the organization and they were probably getting money to fund that particular project from an outside funder so had to toe the line.

Rose, 37, Tourism

Rose’s example exemplifies the paradigm change within many interviews which were necessary in order to discuss diversity at a practice level. Examples and justification rest within an organizational focus and an emphasis on systematic processes led by
rationalisation, rather than emotions or beliefs. ‘Truth’ therefore is based on facts, statistics and practices. This repositioning allowed managers to legitimise their assertions about what constitutes ‘good diversity’ through the use of figures (‘16%’; ‘double the average’). And economic realisation also justified the introduction of resource issues. Through the use of objectifying strategies, there is the implication that there are limited financial resources that set up limited choices or policies that can be implemented. Rose is thus able to suggest that the prioritisation of ‘differences’ is a necessity that needs to be rationalised in some way.

Discussing diversity in terms of economics also shows the difficulties involved in attempting to rationalise difference. In particular, Rose’s discussion of diversity as limited by financial restraints results in different forms of ‘difference’ (gender, ethnicity) competing against each other, even though the members of each group may belong to different categories as different points in time. The economic rationalisation may also have consequences for certain groups since it may lead to objectifying reasons for particular diversity programmes. For example, Rose suggests that focus should be determined by the size of the ‘diversity’ pool. Following this line of logic, it would make more ‘sense’ to focus on encouraging women, rather than those with a disability, since the target group is larger. If this argument is followed, then older workers would definitely be a group to consider. However, this measurement is steeped in subjectivity over the criteria concerning the ‘type or ‘level’ of diversity within an organization where ageism may be marginalised as an ‘ism’ too far, as discussed in the next Chapter (6.4.3).

Interestingly, Rose theoretically negotiates a story which challenges her claims of good practice. The complaint is down played through hedging (‘probably’) and euphemising the seriousness of the claim (wasn’t formal). An outside body (the funder) is also introduced which further nominalises the organization to a position of dependence and determined by constraints, allowing a transferral of blame and attribution for the event.

5.3.3 ‘Tales of Success’

The second method used to justify differences between their philosophy and practice was the use of stories which exemplify ‘equality in practice’. By emphasising particular instances, they allow the transformation of what may be the exception to become the norm.
In other words, the audience are invited to take such stories as illustrative models which are indicative of wider practices, rather than one-off instances. Typically, this was undertaken using a first person narrative. The example taken from David, below, echoed the espoused views of a number of managers:

When I started, right at the beginning of my apprenticeship (laughs), I was more really to do with Trade Union negotiation because that was such a big part of the job, and because of that, we didn’t really have time to do a lot outside legislation. So it was yes we know about paying the same to men and women and yes I knew I couldn’t discriminate, but it wasn’t as in our faces then. Now it’s an issue everywhere, in the press, on the television, are we employing the right faces, are we giving people a chance, and its now something that I think about in every decision I make, you know, as soon as we’re about to implement a new policy or whatever, its something I just automatically think about, right, are we considering all out employees here, is everyone getting the same opportunity? And I think that’s definitely a good thing, of course, why not?

David, 50, Local Government

By using a temporal narrative, David is able to differentiate through the use of past and present and thus dichotomise between a passive and proactive, positive approach. The ‘then and now’ allows him to present equality as a sidelined issue in the past to universalised and embedded within current work practice. This is of course a biased argument. Since measurement is inevitably judged using the criteria from the current social climate, it is inevitable that the past is seen as lesser and the comparison is not a fair or equal measurement. Despite this, it creates a contrast structure through which interviewees could present a mediated comparison which highlights the favourable characteristics of the organization.

He said ‘Look, I’m not really happy with working full time and its not that I don’t like the job, but I’ve got grandchildren and want to enjoy them’. I obviously didn’t want to lose a good worker so we offered him a more flexible option where he is required only to work 6 hours a week, although most weeks I think it’s more, but this is of course his choice. Now as you’ll know this involved a change in contract a bit, but obviously we did this just to keep us right and make sure he could safeguard those hours. Its great because we’re both helping each other out so he gets to fit work in with his family and hobbies, I have someone on call.

Michael, 52, Catering

Like other managers, Michael was keen to emphasise instances where the company had reacted to a particular request. Such stories are often constructed using the notion of overcoming a difficulty and emphasising the successful result. Reciprocal pronouns help to construct the relationship between employee and employer as equal, and are involved as active participants, emphasised in this excerpt through the use of quotatives, literally giving the worker a ‘voice’. By grounding the event within experience, Michael is able to objectivise his own position using ‘I’ and ‘we’ intermittently, creating an ambiguity between his own opinions and those created by more formalised policies within the
organization. In order to credit the action taken he calls on the listener and appeals to their own knowledge of organizational processes (obviously, as you'll know). In one sense, these acted as short cuts; they assume a common knowledge between those involved in the interactions which allow the story to be told without being interrupted by additional information. However they also serve as syntactic claims and a means through which Michael can justify presenting the actions taken in a particular way as natural, allowing him to forefront the positive, collaborative aspects and euphemising more negative consequences. Despite drawing on two contrasting managerial epistemes (business driven vs. pastoral), they work together to co-construct a favourable image of the organization as caring for their employees. For example, the first claim ('Obviously didn't want to lose a good worker') serves to support the third claim ('Obviously we did this (contract change) just to keep us right') by positioning the organization as a people-focused company. This authenticates the claim that the contract was changed to protect the employee, rather than the organization. The change in contract is also surrounded by hedging ('just', 'a bit') which again softens its impact and silences possible negative consequences to contractual changes, such a loss in holiday leave or pension provision.

5.3.4 Searching for the 'Older Worker'

The final technique used to remove tensions between espoused diversity and workforce make-up was used specifically with regards to older workers. A number of accounts emphasised the difficulty in obtaining an age diverse workforce despite conscious efforts by the organization.

...one of my objectives over the last year or so was to look at diversity within the store. That not only included disability, but also age and we have targets as a store that we want to reach as I was saying. Over 60% co-workers being about 40 by the year 2007 ... I would go to the job centre and just find me all your over 50's and I'll come along to the Job Centre and talk to them about working in (name of company). And just give them an informal chat, starting at the beginning about 15 turn up. Obviously specifically directly just to chat to them about this employment and have you thought about (name of company) and this is what we do etc. That then transpired into making more organised events in the store where we would have a coffee morning and just open up the open day, open up the staff restaurant and invite people in via the Job Centre, people who are over 50 to come along to just pop in, see us, have a coffee, find out more about us and apply if you wish to. To some degree, quite direct and having to go out and source these candidates by age erm and you continue over the year and try to now go and have a relationship with other organizations to help us source candidates and again to get the name (of the company) out there ... working again with the local Job Centre to try and source candidates for that. so yes, I can have a direct impact on practices if you like. What we need to do here is get the policies there, that we don't discriminate if they apply to us. However, we can then go and actually do something a bit more pro-active to increase that.

(KR) And do you think that kind of pro-active role is necessary?
Yes. Possibly for (name of shop). Possibly for the organization that we are and the perception, again, who we are erm, with, erm people of an older age. And what we do. Not just people on the checkouts and it's a wide variety of different jobs you can do. So that is difficult to do so I think it is necessary to do it. We've found it necessary. Before we even started that we were thinking why aren't we getting anybody applying to us. So therefore it was a conscious deliberate effort that we chose to do that.

Gillian, 30’s Retail

As with other manager’s accounts, Gillian draws on a number of assumptions related to the current employment context. Initially they imply there is a limited pool of ‘diverse’ workers compared to the potential pool of ‘normal’ candidates. For example, James states ‘they choose to work somewhere else’, whilst Rose mentions ‘the number of those applying for jobs over 50 compared to under 50 is going to be about a 1:3 ratio’. By presenting the older worker as a scarce resource (in the face of discussions about the ageing demographic), managers are able to distances themselves from the lack of diversity by referring to the external pool of potential workers. Gillian’s claims of going to the job centre also supports this by the exaggerated statement ‘just find me all your over 50’s…’, again suggesting that this number is small enough to manage as a group. Then, because they are a scarce resource, organizations are placed as the active agent within the recruitment process; in effect, it is the company that are looking for their workers, rather than older workers seeking employment. Extreme case formulations are employed, often accompanied by jokes to illustrate how organizations are in a difficult position despite their best efforts:

We are unfortunately unable to kidnap people over 50 just to keep our figures right.
Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

It’s not - we’re not able to force older workers to come here.
Marjorie, 40’s, Local Government

In such cases, humour has the double intention of self-repair through softening the situation and also acting as a means of drawing a close to the subject. By implying there is an element of ridicule and impossibility about the situation the importance of the issues at a topic of discussion is diminished. Such discursive practices culminate in the older worker being constructed as a ‘special other’ who is hard to find, compared to the ‘normal’ workforce.
5.4 Summary and Conclusions

The findings of this Chapter have served to understand the importance of diversity as a resource that shapes how age inequality is discussed within an organizational context. The positive framing of inequality discussed within a diversity perspective had the effect of creating a positive paradigm through which managers can discuss a push towards achieving equality, rather than challenging inequality. As Prasad et al. (1995) argue, this may lead to a failure in attempting to actively look for discrimination.

The employment of the term ‘diversity’ by managers in this study was not confined to a discussion of achieving equality. In fact, diversity is often qualified and justified with reference to business objectives. The analysis shows that diversity is often used as a form of capital to achieve broader business goals above and beyond the quest for equality. In relation to Ely and Thomas’ (2001) research, which states only certain approaches to diversity result in workplace equality, it could be argued that diversity as a mode of social and symbolic capital detracts from the equality agenda. Indeed the diversity may be seen as marginalising age inequality since the emphasis on equality does not allow space for a more negative discussion of problems.

The disparity between diversity philosophy and practice was also justified through a redefinition of paradigms and challenges. Reasons for age diversity appeared to be heavily influenced by larger social discourses of the ageing demographic discussed in the introduction. Although managers did allude to moral or ethical reasons for equality, these were often mentioned as an afterthought since it was difficult to justify within a business paradigm defined by financial gain. Examples of success were highlighted and positioned as the norm, whilst evidence of unequal practice was not mentioned. The text also revealed that, should disparities occur which could not be dismissed, managers attempted to distance the reason away from possible unequal organizational practice by using narratives techniques which serve to underline the difficulty in recruiting older workers, once again distancing the company for possible blame.
Chapter 6
The Relegation of Age Discrimination and Ageism
Chapter 5 examined how age inequality was contextualised and positioned within larger discourses of diversity which allowed managers to accentuate more positive dimensions, such as organizational achievements, rather than on the explicit management of inequality itself. This Chapter builds from the complexity of age differentiation and discrimination established in the previous Chapter to explore the social processes involved in defining, constructing and subsequently marginalising ageism and age discrimination.

In discussions relating to the management of age inequalities, the construction of ageism and age discrimination are shown to be easily manipulated through the repositioning of age inequality in relation to the formation of subject and object positions, such as 'the victim' or legislation. Questioning the motives behind particular parties delimits their legitimacy and can reduce the impetus and importance of ageism and age discrimination itself. The Chapter then moves on to examine the key symbolic resources used by respondents to define and characterise age inequality, considering how they support their particular ideas and positions. This demonstrates the ways manager's draw on certain arguments to marginalise the importance of ageism and age discrimination in their own organizations. This situates age inequality within a broader spectrum of 'disadvantages', which allow managers to question the relative value and importance in managing age inequality.

6.1 Managing Age Discrimination

As previously indicated, the concept of managing age discrimination led to a number of insights into how ageism and age discrimination were understood in terms of responsibility and accountability. Surprisingly, there was very little discussion around the manager's own role or identity in relation to managing age discrimination beyond the diversity discussion. Instead, managers chose to discuss age discrimination and ageism in relation to 'other' individuals.

6.1.1 Age Discrimination – Not Here!

It is unsurprising that the managers interviewed denied any form of age inequality within their organizations. To do so would have both compromised their own professional identity and possibly held some unpalatable consequences for their organizational position, despite
the researchers assurances of anonymity. One key resource which managers used to validate this denial concerning inequality was the organizational culture:

I think for our organization, what we do rely heavily on, I don't have a huge issue with ageism or age discrimination within the organization but what we do have is very clear values within the organization and those values are extremely visible in the work that we do and extremely visible throughout the building and they're also visible when we come to do appraisal and competency based questions, they're there, the values. And I think if they weren't there even I would have problems. And I think the organization we work within is open and if we had issues with inequalities, you know treating younger or more mature members of staff unfairly we would deal with it.

Irene, 36, Engineering

As far as I can see age discrimination isn't a problem - I've never had anyone come to me and say they feel they were unfairly treated, and I know for a fact that they could and they would (laughs) - they come to me with all sort of things, you saw as you came in the two women complaining to me about the coffee machine!

(KR) Ah, I wondered what that was about (smiles)

But that's one of the down sides of having an open door policy throughout the organization, but also one of the great things, you get to know about any hiccups before they become issues.

Martin, 43, Finance

Here organizational culture is constructed as a means in itself of avoiding discrimination. Objectification is created through the declarative syntactic claims which serve to transform the epistemic form of culture, i.e. that the values are not simply abstract but described as physically manifested and embedded within the company and its practices. Culture is also used as a symbolic resource within the second quotation as a means of denying the presence of ageism through rhetorical clause work. This was often achieved by using a scenario to exemplify the company culture, strengthened by referring to an incident the interviewer witnessed. Although the interviewer was not aware of the nature of the earlier discussion, it is still used as a testimony to strengthen Martin's argument. The ambiguity of the final clause using the pronoun ‘they’ creates a synergy between the two instances (age inequality and the coffee machine incident), where both are presented as ‘hiccups’. This has the added effect of euphemising the severity of ageism.

Self-referential work also serves to position culture as a form of management intervention by drawing on universalisation strategies where the first person is intermingled with the collective to create the illusion of common practice. The switching between the personal and inclusive pronoun (‘I’ and ‘We’) were used as a means of cohesion between the individual and the ‘organizational’ voice. Thus when the Irene claims she may have problems, there is an inference that due to the heavy reliance of culture, everyone else in
the organization would also have problems. This is complimented by the use of the emphatic particle ‘even’ to draw on her ‘expert’ position as HR Manager as a means of underpinning the importance of the role of culture in managing equality. Martin on the other hand, presents his practice as embodying organizational culture through his ‘open door’ policy. Here, the role of culture reduces age discrimination as a phenomena which requires a pro-active approach to being managed through policies associated with the organizational culture.

What is important about these two excerpts is that they exemplify how culture is used as a means of displacing or negating responsibility concerning the incidence of age discrimination. The individual is thus placed in a position where they are responsible actors directly related to the incidence of age discrimination. On the other hand, there was no mention of possible perpetrators in relation to discrimination by referring to age discrimination only in relation to the victim. Doing so aligns the action with the ‘victim’ creating a causal linkage that suggests that if these individuals were not present, neither would age discrimination.

6.1.2 Differentiating Between Ageism and Age Discrimination

Although denying any form of age discrimination within their own organizations, the interviewed managers did view age discrimination as a pervasive organizational phenomenon. However, there appeared to be a lack of distinction between ageism and age discrimination. Even when asked explicitly about how they would define these terms, some would reply that one was the same as the other. The uncertainty around the lack of definition around terms of age inequality led to participants clarifying or justifying their own descriptions as distinguishing between ‘doing’ and ‘thinking’:

To me age discrimination is something that the organization does, or doesn't do. Ageism I think is a perception, where you class someone as being more mature or young. I don't think ageism sometimes is an action, whereas age discrimination I think is perceived as an action by either an individual or a company.

Irene, 36, Engineering

Age discrimination is in someone being treated unfairly such as not being hired or promoted...I think ageism is more about people’s own beliefs.

Anne-Marie, 37, Call Centre

It’s easy to legally define discrimination, but it’s harder to prove that people are ageist.

Patricia, 54, Utilities

199
Whilst age discrimination was defined within a professional discourse, ageism was discussed within a social-psychological arena. Syntactically, this differentiation is aided using different degrees of modality: when talking about age discrimination, managers adopted a declarative tone compared with the more emotive, subjective language (‘I think’, ‘probably’, ‘maybe’) used when discussing ageism. This distinction influenced the way that age discrimination and ageism should be managed:

Well we have a general equality policy which is in all the contract and application forms, which covers race, gender, age, disability – all of that – but I think it's harder to change people ideas, especially with ageism because we live in such a youth-orientated society.

Barbara, 47, Consultancy

Although there’s no legislation for it yet, it’s coming in next year as you know. We have some really well developed quality policies that we use...

David, 50, Local Government

For age discrimination, managers maintained the rationalistic focus with emphasis on the importance of policies and management at the structural level of the company. Procedures were discussed as the main way of preventing age discrimination: 22 participants mentioned the importance of their equal opportunities policies. However, this structural argument leads to non-transactive positioning where the negation of a causal process as produced by an individual meant there was little discussion of how these were implemented or enforced at a work-floor level.

I think ageism will sort itself out, to an extent anyway, in the same way as sexism did – my grandfather still can’t believe that women can earn far more than men, but that’s just his generation and it’s a lot easier to just let him get on with his moaning (laughs).

Joanne, 38, Health

The problem is that a majority of my working life there’s been a push to get into retirement, rather than keep them working so it’s going to take time for people to think differently.

Linda, 59 Civil Service

My wife was saying that ageism just now is like racism in the 60’s – she’s a bit older than me (laughs) and was a flower child!... the idea of being racist was very hippyish at first and because of the increase of non-white employees, people coming from Pakistan India (pause) and until people got used to it, there were problems – but before that happened, you know, it didn’t exist, it was ok, well, when I was growing up I was given a golliwog! (laughs).

(KR) And you think ageism –

- well ageism em, I think its now important because its become a front-page issue because the population is growing older.

Michael, 52, Catering
One key theme employed by managers in the discussion of ageism was the use of time. Managers present ageism arising from cultural lag, the notion that collective memory will be gradually modified. Many managers drew similarities with ageism and other forms of bias (racism and sexism) as ‘evidence’ that ageism will fade away gradually. Rather than mention the interventionalist action which promoted gender or racial equality such as legislation, they allude to a gradual change of mindset which occurs ‘naturally’ over time. Presenting an evolutionary change allows managers to justify their own lack of intervention since ‘wrongs always eventually right themselves’ (Alf, 44, Construction). This of course is questionable, and one could contest that race and gender inequality still exist today and relying on such a passive organic approach is a dangerous tactic to adopt.

Michael’s narrative also highlights the ‘emergence’ of ageism as mirroring his portrayal of racism, which has consequences on its subsequent construction. By positioning his wife as ‘the radical’, Michael depicts racism as appearing from the increase of a minority figure in the workplace. Examining the level of action, it can be seen that the thematic focus is on those subject to unequal treatment, rather than those who are deemed as racist or ageist. This is strengthened by using his identity as a child to construct such racism as deriving from naivety rather than hatred. This self-identification as a child in a passive position (‘given a golliwog’) also helps to diminish responsibility, and distance himself from the ‘racism’ of today as an unfavourable label. In contrast, fore fronting the semantic location of immigrants through active verbs (coming in) as change agents means they are positioned as an active irritant that ‘created’ racism.

What was interesting was the relationship between ageism and age discrimination. Managers were split in determining whether ageism led to age discrimination. Whilst just under half asserted that ageism did or potentially could lead to discrimination, the rest of the group argued that it was difficult to establish such a direct relationship. Such uncertainty often derived from the distinction in definition which saw the two as operating within different discursive paradigms (social and professional). This distinction meant that in around half of the interviews with managers, there was a lack of a causal relationship between ageism and age discrimination:
You can have personal thoughts which may be *construed by some as a little* ageist in the way that they are related to age, but 'y'know that doesn't mean that they are automatically going to sack all your older workers! (laughs).

Jim, 37, Insurance

I'm not sure…. It would be hard to say that Jimmy in security would refuse to work with Bobby even if he does think he is a bit over the hill. Or just because he knows he is 50.

Terri, 43, Communications

In Jim’s citation, the definition of ageism is carefully controlled. Rather than be associated with negative influence, ageism is euphemised through pragmatic markers which contribute to the dismissal of Jim’s extreme case formulation. Hedges such as ‘a little’ soften the impact whilst subjectivising the perspective as only held by ‘some’ serves to belittle the opinion. The laughter that accompanies the statement and the extreme case formulation further ridicules both idea of the individual as incontrollable and distances the relationship between ageism and age discrimination. Similarly, Terri questioning whether the enactment of ageism is as blatant as resulting in age discrimination, by implying ageism refers to *any* views that are associated with age, rather than only negative views.

6.1.3 Constructing the Perpetrator

What was surprising was that despite agreeing to the existence of organizational age inequality, there was a distinct absence of managers discussing *who* specifically discriminates on account of age in the workplace, despite being explicitly asked. Instead, participants managed the conversation by focusing on who is ‘responsible’:

We all do. Erm, everyone is, the media. It's chicken and egg. It's so difficult to point the finger at anything because it's too difficult to split and say "right that was responsible for that" because you know, you may hear, who first introduced the word "wrinklies and crumblies" which I use myself, you know "oh that crumbly" or "they're a wrinkly". And it's about, your talking about the person's mindset and how far away they are from your mindset but where do they get the words to describe that? It's...so I think everyone's responsible for ageism.

Tara, 40, Finance

I think we all do. We all hold a view about what it is, what it looks like, how it manifests itself and that can be some good stuff as well about being older means some good positive things, as well as being older means some not so positive things, so I think we are all responsible. In what ways? Well it depends on how we apply it.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

The Scotsman had this damning article stating that Jack McConnell was preaching that we need to think about ...get the image of old grannies out of our heads – my husband thought this was a bit rich as the picture with the article was of an old women sitting by herself on a park bench and then we had an argument about what picture they could have used.

(KR) What picture did you think would be more appropriate?
As discussed earlier, van Dijk (1995) sees one of the key modes of ideology as rationalising social injustices through the unification of beliefs. When evaluative beliefs are represented as the consensus of the majority, they normalise the situation and thus seek to marginalise any alteration of this world view. This is very much the case here, where managers avoid constructing a perpetrator figure through arguing that ‘everyone’ is potential responsible. The employment of constative statements and collective pronouns forces this world views (‘we all’, ‘everyone is’). In Tara’s citation, ‘it’s’ is not only adopted as a syntactic marker which alerts the listener to a new idea, but the repetition also serves as a cohesive device to join together the different ideas into one overall argument.

Another technique to universalise this view was validation through alluding to different forms of genre such as government reports or the media. Both Catherine and Tara present the media in a way that assumes their legitimacy and position of power as a social commentator. Whilst Tara directly connects them with this responsibility, Catherine highlights their role of as potentially ageist through reacting to the contradictory message sent out by the newspaper in her narrative. The ‘voice’ of the newspaper is at first presented as non-discriminatory, although Catherine’s exaggerated word choice (‘damning’, ‘preaching’) appear to mock, rather than align her with this opinion. Catherine then sets up the accompanying image against the textual meaning, which serves to invalidate the message of the text through the 3rd party consensus her opinion, by introducing her husband who also enforces this invalidation. By using the more subtle conversational implicature that implies media articles are just as likely to draw on stereotypes not only discounts the articles right to moralise, but also presents discrimination as impossible to escape, with neither of the active figures in the story (Catherine and her husband) able to suggest an alternative illustration.

Although constructing themselves as participants within this group, effectively taking responsibility, using the collective pronoun, ‘we’, which helps to both universalise the opinion and marginalise it as a serious or unacceptable issue. Managers, however still have the problem of this affiliation affecting the professional identity, which they rely upon in order to legitimise their opinions and views throughout the interview. One strategy used to amend this possible loss of face was drawing on the Scottish identity to suggest that that
these opinions are a result of ‘Scottishness’, rather than their own personal individual bias. This was not by any means commonly used in this context (only 5 managers referred to it when discussing age inequality) but it is interesting in showing how calling on a larger collective identity helps to distance or qualify negative self-presentation.

It might take longer to combat discrimination...I’ve noticed people are more stuck in their ways than back home (participant is originally from Australia), when I work in some companies here they seem to find it harder to get used to new ways of doing things in general.

Barbara, 47, Consultancy

Being from Bathgate I’m sure you know what it’s like – East coast banter, its all harmless – you’ll be calling them wee bam pots and they’ll be like, aye right old man.

Jim, 37, Insurance

Aye, they give them a hard time, these young ones that come in as I said before, wet round the ears, and they are given all the shitty jobs for the first month or so, to see if they stick it, to prove themselves like.

(KR) Why is that?

Well a lot of our boys used to work in industry likes, that’s what made Scotland’s workers, heavy industry and the shipyards like, so they had to go through this, a kind of apprenticeship likes.

Alf, 44, Construction

Rather than be seen as occurring through maliciousness, managers discuss issues which arise from cultural dynamics rather that ageist or unfavourable bias. This allows them to justify the usage of stereotypes as not ageist. Instead, the idea of ‘Scottishness’ is used to make sense of the behaviour. Calling on the interviewer not only allows Jim to create collusion between himself and the interviewer, but transforms what is his opinion into a form of collective knowledge shared between two people, even if this is not explicitly endorsed by the interviewer themselves. Jim directs the discussion away from instances of discrimination to instances of intergenerational talk, dismissed as ‘banter’, stressing the innocuous nature of such age-related talk through its reciprocations by both groups. Alf also uses national tradition as a structuring influence on work processes, portraying this as mutually beneficial, since it allows younger workers a chance to ‘prove themselves’. Barbara’s also uses the notion of ‘Scottishness’ as a challenge changing attitudes in general. However, by self-positioning herself as an ‘outsider’ enables her to present an objectified viewpoint.
6.1.4 Constructing the Victim

There was agreement that 'older workers' were likely to be victims of age discrimination, with no contestation to this when discussed in an abstract, hypothetical way. However, managers were keen to highlight the difficulty in pinpointing those who may be vulnerable. This was achieved by setting up particular arguments which problematised any form of criteria which could be used to categorise the 'victim', such as biological age (as discussed in 7.1). Although 'biological age' had been dismissed as a categoriser by managers, there was no other form or marker which replaced this, meaning managers found it difficult to differentiate between the 'older worker' who is susceptible to age discrimination and the rest of the workforce. Because of this, there was no definitive construction of a 'victim' since they could equally be a person who espouses ageist opinions, supported by the universalisation of the perpetrator discussed earlier. This was developed in the talk of managers who discussed what I have referred to as 'self-discrimination', which involved building on the perpetrator construction as encapsulating everyone. As a discursive achievement, it meant that older workers could not only be assigned as 'victims', but 'perpetrators' who may discriminate against themselves, or do something which exacerbates their chances of being discriminated against.

People before they get to the job centre are already thinking "I wouldn't apply for a hotel because I'm too old". In a classic example when we opened we had somebody apply for a job who said she felt because she'd never worked in the hotel industry was too old to start her career in an industry she didn't know.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

I think it's like anybody who wants to be proactive and minimise the affects that may bring on ageism can try to (fades away)

Christine, 31, Banking

(KR) Is there any one who is more likely to be susceptible to age inequalities?

(pause) people who probably can't, people who are probably feeling negative about being older themselves. You know I think that, you would feel older therefore I think that shows. I think that shows if you can feel that age doesn't matter yourself, then I'm sure inequality wouldn't exists.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

Erm, they can't do anything about their age. No. The older workers can continue, if they are a productive employee they can continue being a productive employee, applying them selves, being reliable. Whether that's related to ageism or not is more about performance than age. I would say they can't do anything about their age but what they can do is about how they apply themselves.

Amy, 38, Printing and Communications

The subject position of the older worker is of particular importance here, as introduced in Bob's earlier quotation where he says 'So I think as long as you're doing something useful you don't get accused as being seen as old'. In the narratives within interviews, the older
worker is located as an agent within the exchange who has some *active role* within the
discrimination. This associates the blame and responsibility for their discrimination onto
the older workers themselves, rather than onto the organization or those who are ageist. In
order to construct a criteria which determines who is discriminated against and who is not,
ageism is reconstructed as derived from the *behaviour* of older workers. A myth of
equality is promoted where it is assumed they themselves have the power and ability to
change their own situation. In reality, this belief has serious implications for anti-age
discrimination policies as it implies that the older workers, rather than workplaces, are
responsible for self-behavioural modifications; an argument which opposes the diversity
perspective discussed in the previous Chapter.

**6.2 De-Legitimising Legislation**
The timing of the interviews was particularly relevant. Due to age legislation being
introduced the following year, managers discussed becoming increasingly aware of the
legal consequences of age discrimination. All our managerial respondents were aware of
the impending legislation to outlaw age discrimination. Three main arguments were used
to form their discussion about legislation, although managers often drew on more than one
of these in their interviews. What was interesting was despite the positive clausal work or
apparent support for legislation *per se*, all three arguments presented legislation as having a
negligible or questionable effect on organizational practices.

**6.2.1 Negating the Impact of Legislation**
Despite anti-age discrimination (AAD) legislation being presented as a positive move by
the government, many managers regarded it as superfluous to their own organizational
practices.

Oh God this is hard. I would probably say it’s a good thing that’s coming in but I don’t know how
much benefit it will be for me in all honesty. Because I think we’re pretty fair in what we do. I
don’t see it having a huge impact. It will have an impact but I don’t see it having an amazing
impact. I don’t know what other sort of responses you’ve had from other companies. It doesn’t
cause me concern.

_Irene, 36, Engineering_

(KR) *Do you feel that new legislation to outlaw age discrimination will have any effect –*

- *Not really. As I say, we really don’t have an issue. Having said that there’s probably certain
individuals within all businesses that need to be encouraged to consider, you know, people and that*
needs to be something everybody is aware of. That people aren’t being screened out for other reasons because of their age. It’s covert discrimination. But on the whole I think there doesn’t need to be any sort of drastic change in policy.

Julie, 34, Hospitality

It’s not going to be a big deal for me here, since we’re a new organization so we’re not having to deal with a load of old policies we need to rehaul and have managers who are up to date and forward thinking about that kind of thing. There may be some people, one or two and their approach is not so good and for other companies that must be the majority since the government must have reasons to introduce it...but it’s not an issue, and as I say no big deal.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call centre

Marginalising the impact of legislation relied on managers creating a contrast structure between their own organization and other organizations through employing organizational culture as a discursive resource. In terms of modality, managers use personal testimony to support this view by using first person referral (‘I’) to increase the declarative certainty of statements. Sentences have a positive tone with their own organizations portrayed as already upholding age equality. Any concession to possible discrimination is concentrated on the minority of ‘individuals’ and the presence of ‘rogue individuals’ is universalised as occurring in any business, and idea further euphemised in Anne-Marie’s case through the use of litotes (e.g. ‘not so good’). The syntactic position of possible instances of inequality are further relegated by being enclosed in between promotional statements which helps to dismiss and outweigh less favourable judgements.

By constructing their organization in this way, legislative impact can be positioned as a moot point for their own organization. Examining the expressive value of language, the choice of words to deny its effect also serve to relegate the impact itself by rejecting hyperbolised words (such as ‘amazing’, ‘drastic’, ‘huge’ and ‘rehaul’), and suggesting nip and tuck changes, rather than introducing new policies and practices. That is not to dismiss the introduction of AAD altogether; managers moderated their talk by suggesting a greater impact on other organizations. By appearing to reflect on the situation, both Irene and Anne-Marie position themselves as commentators and are able to promote the introduction of AAD without affecting the positive image of their own companies. However, this commentator’s position also served to further legitimise their own ability to assess their own organization position, and therefore reinforces the favourable view of their own company.
6.2.2 Mixed Messages

The second argument trivialised AAD legislation by focusing on the construction of government intervention. 8 managers used this argument solely as a way of problematising AAD, whilst a further 15 used it to support other arguments, or mentioned it throughout their interview.

60, 65 – why is there discrimination between males and females, the whole idea now is that we don’t have sexual discrimination, sexual equality, so why is there a difference. The government and everybody I remember at one stage was encouraging you to retire early but now they’re saying the retirement level’s going to go up to maybe 70 or something like that you know so from my own point of view I think I’ll probably be still working when they need to put that last screw in the coffin, like, you know, but when I’m talking every now and then I have a wee wild dream that I’ll retire 10 – 15 years or whatever.

Alan, 44, Construction

When I went down to visit home at Easter my mum was saying she can get her pension before dad even thought they’re both teachers, and it might actually work out better for them, for her to do that (pause) she was talking about going to work with her friend, who’s a florist in Wentworth I think so for people like her, its not going to matter because the governments already given them a way to leave work so they’re hardly going to believe it when they want them to come back or stay teaching, are they?

Anne, 37, Tourism

I think it’s more to do with economic pressures than anything else –the 80’s and people using the early redundancy (sic) schemes have left them in a pickle, they are worried no-one’s going to be around to pay the pensions they’ve promised so this is their way of trying to fix it. Anyone who says its to do with equality is a bit naïve I think, it might be a small part but the biggest reason is the pensions problem.

(KR) Do you think it will ‘fix it’ as you say?

Who knows! (laughs) I don’t think it’s more than a cursory nod.

Linda, 59, Civil Service

Ach, I don’t believe for a second it’s for the any reason other than self serving or promoting them in time for the next general election

Jim, 37, Insurance

The excerpts above were taken from the discussion which followed after managers had expressed negative feelings about legislation. Key to this construction of the introduction of AAD was the fore-fronting of politicising age related issues. By focusing upon experiential or personal thoughts, managers were able to control the topicalisation of the discussion away from the interviewer’s question, which was related to age legislation, and onto other age-related political matters. In doing so, it was easier for participants to manage and legitimise the claims within their discussion since it allowed them to deride current political policies by emphasising negative consequences as evidential, rather than forecasted problems of AAD. By creating a link between the past related policies and
future AAD through a thematic link (policies related to age), managers were then able to ascribe the same cynicism to the forthcoming AAD and support their predictive statements about the success of legislation.

The construction of the ‘government’ is important to this argument. There is a textual merging of all parties into one political identity through the use of the pronoun ‘they’. In some cases, who is encapsulated within the ‘they’ is even more ambiguous since there is no overt antecedent and the listener is required to construct who ‘they’ may represent in light of the context. However, their position is questioned through setting up a conflict between preached and covert intentions for AAD. Whilst explicit reasons for the introduction of AAD are not mentioned within the text, looking at the context of the interviews and the dominance of the social justice discursive ideologies drawn upon within other parts of the text, one may suggest that the government are seen as promoting AAD in relation to larger ideals of equality. The preached ‘message’ of AAD is thus positioned as contradicting other past policies and practices and helps managers to question the intentionality as political, rather than a commitment to challenging social injustice. Questioning the position of the government as authoritative and ‘for the people’ also serves to question the impact of legislation itself. Moreover, emphasising the lack of a unified approach by the government lessens the perceived impact of the AAD, since it is offset by the underlying message of past policies.

6.2.3 Misunderstanding Age Inequality

The final argument presented the view that the impact of AAD was negligible due to its misunderstanding about the ‘nature’ of age inequality:

I think people can be quite cute when it comes to covering tracks (laughter) and yes, I think quite a few of these discriminatory activities the difficulty sometimes is actually proving the other party guilty of it with the evidence that you have. I think what the law will do, as I say the penalties, hopefully the penalties will be quite tough, so that if a company thinks it can get away with it it might think twice about it because it could end up paying out a lot of money if it gets found out and the employee or potential employee is actually successful in winning their case. Erm, it might drive stuff underground, or more underground than it is at the moment. Erm in my experience in looking for work at the moment, what I find when I get letters back from organizations, and/or from agencies they cover their backs. They say all the right things and maybe I’m just getting a bit cynical with the processes but I read these and I think that doesn’t actually mean anything at all. You know one I had recently, it was an agency, that interviewed me on behalf of a client company and in fact it was pretty dreadful because it wasn’t even a letter, it was an email, which I think was a pretty appalling way to tell someone they haven’t got a job, but anyway. Erm, thank you for your application and for the interview. You know we had so many really terrific candidates it was such a big decision to choose which ones and you know we really felt that other people had more
experience, blah, blah, blah, blah. So this is the kind of corporate speak that is churned out. So an agency can say well that's true. They did have a lot of experience. They would be asked to prove that. We want to see the applications of all the other candidates that applied for this job so that we can see the evidence for ourselves. I wouldn't get access to that. That would need to be done through a legal process I would imagine. So I imagine if someone's intent on discriminating they will always find a wee loophole somehow to get through it.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

(KR) Do you think age legislation will have an effect?

I think the racial discrimination act has probably helped. The only thing I can align it with is people used to drive quickly. And I drive very quickly. But I don't break 30 and 40 limits any more. Not because the legislation's changed but it's now socially unacceptable to speed in urban areas. And I see it all the time. The traffic has definitely slowed in city centres and I think because it has become, people didn't boast but people used to be quite proud to say they'd been done for speeding doing 52 in a 30. people don't tell you now what they've been done for doing 38 in a 30. so I think it takes time, but they didn't legislate. They've had the same legislation of 30s and 40's for 50 years but it's taken a long time. Partly through publicity and it's bad and they show people getting knocked down in these adverts and things so I would rather see an education process rather than ... because if they made the speed limit out there 20 none of us would obey it because we'd all think it was unfair. As long as the speed limit for the road looks logical, I speed on country roads because I don't see the problem I think it's fair game, but killing someone I would hate anyway but knocking someone down now is really bad, your neighbours would think it was bad, and you'd think it was bad yourself and I would rather that's the sort of approach we take.

Bob, 50's, Brewing

When the law does come in next year it will be interesting to see what changes, because we still have cases that go forward on the grounds of sex discrimination, of racial discrimination, it's still happening out in the workplace despite the fact that people know it's illegal so I don't think age will be any different. I think it will still happen in a covert and underhand way. The danger will be now, if employers are caught then there's a legal hook to hang them by - *if an employee can prove that*.

Linda, 59, Civil Service

Managers used a number of ways to justify their dismissal of the AAD impact. One reoccurring argument was the inability of legislation to seriously challenge biases, supported by emphasising the failure of current legislation to tackle other forms of discrimination. The presentation of organizations as 'one step ahead' implied that managers were keen to present the law as naive and unable to tackle discrimination with any force. Instead, the role of legislation is negated to serving as a warning to employers, although the likelihood of its success in this capacity was also questioned, as indicated by the grammatical mood (italicised).

Bob's narrative is particularly interesting in its use of allegory as a means of justifying his argument. Although he initially appears to use the example of race legislation as a way of supporting the argument for age legislation, he then introduces a new analogy to distance the causal relationship between change and legislation. One reason for the introduction of the driving story is he is able to use experiential narrative to strengthen his argument,
which he may not have felt possible if using race (it is worth noting that Bob is Caucasian). Within the narrative, change is presented as possible, but as evolving over time and changes in social attitude rather than the legislative intervention. This is aided by the construction of two voices: 'they', the instigators of the law, and 'the people' who are discursively represented by Bob and often referred to as 'we' or the synecdochal reference to 'people'. The 'they' voice is not positioned as controlling the process which helps to contradict the ideological notion of law as the definitive change agent within society. The relationship between change and the 'we' are linked through transactive clauses. Within this story, Bob sets out some key criterion which facilitates this change: time, education, fairness and logic. The last two are particularly important since they are presented as universally agreed: 'if they made the speed limit out there 20 none of us would obey it because we'd all think it was unfair. As long as the speed limit for the road looks logical'. Thus the instigator of change relies on a theory of perceptual equity. As a determinant, this is rather fragile since a reliance on social conscience as a catalyst promotes a laissez-faire approach to age discrimination.

6.3 Prioritising 'the Young'

Despite both the letter of invitation and research brief (Appendices 1 and 2) emphasising that the interview was concerning older workers and age discrimination, many managers were keen to discuss discriminatory issues relating to younger workers within the organization outwith the questions which specifically referred to younger workers. This is perhaps not as surprising as it first seems. Interview effects may have meant managers were keen to show their generic knowledge of issues surrounding age discrimination. Imparting their 'wisdom' may have been seen as a way of legitimising their own position, and served to strengthen their position as an authoritative voice.

This section explains how constructions of 'the young' affect older worker inequality. A differentiation is made between 'young' discrimination and 'old' discrimination, although the underlying essentialism of such terms does not flow into the analysis. Throughout the interviews, the emphasis on 'young' age discrimination had a marginalising effect on constructing discrimination and ageism against older workers. This was done through prioritising 'younger' age discrimination as having more significant effects than 'older' age discrimination.
6.3.1 The Young as Discriminated Against

Like older worker discrimination, young age discrimination was presented as a universal occurrence that could happen to anyone. However, the interviewees were extremely keen to highlight the negative effect that this could have on organizations:

I'm trying to think of recently when we discussed it. Yes, we are looking at a policy at the moment to do with our company sick pay for instance. There are different policies around and there was one potential redundancy, reappraisal of skills if I give this one as an example. To go through any consultations on redundancy we would actually apply a skills matrix and at the moment in that skills matrix there is something that's agreed through the unions as well. At the moment length of service actually comes into it. To me that will have to come out of it because you're discriminating against someone who is 17 someone been in the company a year because they've just left school and might not want to join us as a result, so that means we are potentially losing a worker who might stay with us for 30 odd years. So automatically you're going to lose points because of their age. So the length of service will be taken out of the skills matrix. So that was a recent conversation.

Amy, 38, Printing and Communications

My assistant went for a job recently and it was to be a regional HR manager. She maybe didn't have as much experience as they were looking for but as far as suitability, attitude and energy and passion, she had it, but she was 24 and it was very relevant they were looking for somebody a lot older than that. I mean he mentioned her age and they mentioned, you know, do you not think you're rather young to be going for it? Which it think is totally irrelevant. So yes, I do believe when you go for maybe a senior position and if you aren't over a certain age then you shouldn't be going for this job. And if she leaves the company, the company have lost themselves a valuable asset just because of stereotypes. That's just last week.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

The wee guy straight out of school aye he faces loads of problems, I saw it with the lad across the street, he might be keen and beans but employers will look at him and think he's a bit wet behind the ears we'll just leave it, so he's stuck, no experience so no job and all the time he's probably having to collect the dole even though he wants to work. And then he gets bored and canny be fussed going to all the interviews, so he stays on dole and there you have it, you've created a doler just like that.

Jim, 37, Insurance

These managers projected the view of 'young' discrimination as a common and widespread problem. By relating personal narratives where they themselves have an active position as first person witnesses, rather than hypothesised stories, managers were able to use these incidents as 'proof' of its affect on business. However, whilst the action in the text is focused around a particular incident, the effect of that incident was a hypothetical judgement made by the manager. The subjectivity of this opinion is shrouded using a number of additional techniques. Amy repeatedly uses the word 'so' as a discourse marker to indicate new ideas and link together her argument. This repetition also serves to enforce the strength of her argument and conflate her interpretation of events with her conjecture as to what the possible consequences may be. The sequential structure of Jim's story also makes it ambiguous as to whether he is chronicling the events of one particular boy mentioned, or talking about young boys in general. The introduction of the boy within
parenthesis is collapsed into the synecdochal reference to 'the wee guy' used to collectively represent male school leavers which allows this narrative to be presented as a 'typical' scenario. This is strengthened by the use of the present tense throughout the narrative, making it difficult to assess whether this is a hypothesised event or actually happened to the 'lad across the street'.

Examining the discursive patterns used to discuss 'young' age discrimination reveals a difference in the employment of professional and social justice discourses. Similar to older worker arguments, the economical and business implications were foregrounded as important reasons to challenge discrimination against the young. However, this appeared as the sole discourse, and arguments relying on ideals of social justice were negated completely. One may argue that managers deem professional discourse as more pervasive in supporting their view, and do not require support from more emotional or ethical principles.

If it is indeed the case that economic and business reasons are seen as more convincing, then why does the social justice argument play such an important part in the construction of older worker age discrimination? One reason may be the influential affect of governmental messages on social consensus. The moral arguments within political campaigns against age discrimination affect the manager's perceptions as to how age discrimination against older workers should be discussed. However, although younger workers are also covered by legislation, the issue is very rarely discussed within a public forum. Because of a lack of influence or pressure to use social justices discourses, managers revert to the language and rationales that are employed when discussing organizational matters.

6.3.2 The Life Cycle of Work

The second technique used to prioritise 'young' discrimination was to use the amount of 'working years' left as a measure of severity of consequences.

I remember, this was awhile back now, when there was a round of people being sent for their MBD and when I wasn't put forward for it I was absolutely fuming. So I took a few days to calm down then set up a meeting with the HR director. He was very sympathetic to me and offered me a CBA course that could lead to it, but I wasn't really completely happy with it... where was it, yeah, so later one about month later, I found out who was being sponsored by the company and surprise
surprise, they were all at least ten or fifteen years older than me, even though some hadn’t been in this line of business before, so I think that was an example of age discrimination that I’ve experienced.

(KR) So you think your age was significant?

I’ve no doubt about that, and it doesn’t really make sense to me, it doesn’t make good business sense since I had already shown my loyalty to the company and they would be able to get more out of me (pause) no, I don’t mean that someone should have not went because of their ‘cos they were, you know, getting on (laughs) but that realistically, I’m going to be working longer than they are.  

Joanne, 38, Health

When I have children, and they have children, I can imagine that I won’t want to be having to go away for as many weekend courses down in Leeds as I said I was last month, because I’ll have an certain amount of experience by that point.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment

I remember in the late 70’s I was constantly going on courses, working towards qualifications, going to conferences around the world to learn about the business — there’s absolutely no way I could do that now, although I do have some meetings away, but if I hadn’t been given those opportunities just because I was seen as too young, I wouldn’t be nearly as competent.

(KR) Why not?

Well, life I think (slight laugh), two dogs, a homesick daughter at University, one trying to organise a wedding, these type of things that I wouldn’t want to miss (pause) I still go away occasionally or do the odd bit of IT training but nowhere near as intensely as it was at the beginning of my career.  

Patricia, 54, Utilities

In a number of interviews, managers referred implicitly and explicitly to a chronological path of working life. This was strongly underpinned by the biologisation of ageing discourse which promotes a linear model of development and decline. Various clues given by the thematic fore-fronting of particular issues suggest that managers assumed a normative model of the ‘bulk’ of training as happening when employees are younger. Through enthymemical reasoning, where the major premise that supports the argument is left implied, managers emphasise this early ‘bulk’ of learning is necessary in order to create successful managers. Conducively, it can be argued that ‘young’ discrimination may effectively prevent organizations ‘getting their money’s worth’. This can be seen in the quotations through the dominance of discussing training and development as an intrinsic part of work for younger employees promoting the idea that this is the ‘right time’ for such activities. Although the life long learning theme is given a concessionary mentioned by some participants, this serves to highlight the comparison between the intensity of learning at the beginning of a career being aligned with younger employees.

Of course, this argument is essentially constructed to favour younger workers ipso facto and the promotion of such a view is problematical in promoting training and development
among older workers. Managers are skilful in avoiding making any statements which could be interpreted as ageist and use other indicators which avoid explicit references to age. For example, like Patricia, Rose and Garry mark their own biographies using decades: ‘after university when I was in the financial sector in the eighties, I was on a steep learning curve’ (Garry). Other managers refer to life stages, rather than age per se. Of course, age is implicit here, since life stages imply particular age groups. So ‘grown up children’ and being a grandparent are used as an indicator of individuals who are at least older that 35. Characteristics such as being able to work long hours, being able to travel and therefore implying that employees must have the energy to engage in this lifestyle are consequently aligned with youth and the beginning of a career. This construction is then pitted against the construction of an older individual who is presented in the text as openly rejecting these conditions. In Lucy and Patricia’s text this is done through first person and projected first person hypothesis in order to suggest such conditions would become unacceptable as they grow older.

6.3.3 Differentiating ‘Young’ and ‘Old’ Age Discrimination

Although many of the questions were focused on generic issues around ‘age discrimination’, virtually all the managers sought to construct differences between discrimination across the age spectrum. What was also interesting to note was the focus of discussion at each end of the spectrum. Unlike other studies which suggest age discrimination occurs throughout the life span (e.g. Duncan and Loretto, 2004), managers only discussed age discrimination as derived from being perceived as older or younger.

I think if you're younger, coming out of uni, you're probably are penalised on your age, on the basis of your qualification, you don't have experience to back it up, which you get quite soon with graduate programmes. But I think at the other end it's more to do with the job that you're doing. The qualifications are not important as you become more mature and older in terms of number of years. So I think at that stage when you're looking at someone in mid 50's the qualifications are not important but they will probably be discriminated against on their age at that stage because they're not seen as the dynamic young person driving the business forward.

Irene, 36, Engineering

A lot of it's about stereotypes, the idea that if you're young you're flighty, going to come into work with a hangover and if you're old you're just sliding down into retirement and waiting for your pension. I think to some extent I've seen both but there not by any means exclusive, you can get older people who have are flighty and young people who are lazy, but a lot of the time its to do with the worker, rather than say, right that's your verbal warning or stop them from being promoted which could be seen as age discrimination, with a lot of our employees in their early twenties, they're just getting used to the world of work so you've got to remember that.

Catherine, 43, Hospitality
I think it must be difficult when you’re younger because you might be up to date on all the computer packages and all charged up and whatever but your subject might not directly related to your job and you have no experience of working – that’s why the big companies have structured graduate jobs which help them with this so come out the other side as both qualified and experienced.

Terri, 43, Telecommunications

At first, Catherine’s attempt to swap around stereotypes appears to be a mediating function in challenging these perceptions. However, in condensing her argument, Catherine transforms the older stereotypes into laziness, whilst the younger stereotype is kept the same. In terms of the language used, ‘flighty’ is more colloquial and ambiguous compared to ‘lazy’, and is more definite in its relation to employee productivity.

One interesting trend was the focus of reasons behind age discrimination between young and old. This had a direct influence on how managers discussed the ways of challenging discrimination. Young age discrimination was presented as derived from more pragmatic barriers which can be challenged and managed. So for example, lack of experience is amended through graduate programmes, and ‘young attitudes’ can be modified by adopting a pastoral approach. There was a clear causal interaction here between possible discrimination and steps to ameliorate it where either the manager or the younger individual was positioned as able to ‘manage’ this discrimination. On the other hand, older worker discrimination, as discussed in 6.1.2, is seen as more difficult to challenge, since participants suggest they are discriminated against for psychological or age-related characteristics, which are seen as directly resulting from their life stage (for example, nearer towards retirement). In some ways, this condones discriminatory practices, since no participants explicitly suggested such characteristics were completely false.

6.4 ‘Another ‘ism’: The Relegation of Ageism as a Management Priority

It would be unrealistic to assume that ageism was the only concern of HR managers. As shown in the previous Chapter, ageism is subsumed into a larger concept of diversity. Yet there were a number of other repertoires which served to reduce the importance of ageism as a management priority that used the particular characteristics and context associated with age and age inequalities as a means of reducing its overall importance.
6.4.1 The Personal Affect of Ageism

A number of managers sought to propose that ageism had less personal impact on individuals than other forms of discrimination. This relied on concentrating on the effect particular forms of discrimination had on the victim, rather than the act itself.

I think there is such a thing as racial hate, you know, such as the big group picking on the small group but I suppose everyone is going to get older, like it or not, well, it's not all of a sudden I won't be surprised when I'm seen as an old fogy and they want me out!

Michael, 52, Catering

You could say because everyone will grow older it should be tackled, but in another way, if it affects everyone, then its not strictly speaking a minority issue, you know, I'm not saying that makes it excusable, but it might mean people are more sensitive about it, its not like I hear of any stories of people complaining about jokes about age or old grannies...no I've never heard of that, but me myself I have heard about sexist jokes causing offence to certain people.

Anne, 37, Tourism

I've been here for 3 years now and I've never personally seen anyone upset about their retirement or whatever, unless it’s complaining that the women get to retire earlier than the men, but I think that's stopped now.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call centre

(participant made redundant at 60 then rehired part-time a month later), and when I came back all these folks were worried I'd be upset of whatever, I mean I've had a good turn of it, so actually it didn't bother me.

Bob, 50's, Brewing

Managers sought to redress the importance of ageism through topicalising the personal effect of age discrimination. This was presented as having a lesser psychological or emotional effect on individuals. Experiential modality was extremely important here and can be seen as drawing on the principle of quality in conversational maxim i.e. that first hand experience provide substantial ‘proof’ that participants claims were backed up by adequate evidence. This allowed managers to effectively contradict their past discussions of ageism as an important issue. Within the excerpts, the common employment of pragmatic markers (italicised) signals this turnaround in the argument or a counterclaim, even though the two sides of the argument are not explicitly mentioned.

Whilst it is a limitation that we must refer to an individual’s biological age in discussion, it seemed to play an important part in using their own identity as a symbolic resource to verify this belief. Those who were closer to SPA appeared able to draw on immediate first hand experience, or use the subjective personal pronoun to position themselves as the subject of the narrative. Their ability to do so is of course as much to do with their physical embodiment as their chronological age: such stories would have been less credible if they
were told by someone who is 26, since it is unlikely they would have any physical ‘clues’ to substantiate their age identity. In comparison, younger managers used conjecture and hypothesised the effect or portrayed their stories as witness accounts. The topics, however, were often less to do with instances of direct age discrimination and more generally age related accounts, such as jokes or retirement, as seen in the excerpts above.

A final discursive technique was employing the discourse of ageing as inevitable and universal. This was presented as a rationale for discounting its importance as an equality issue through the thematic introduction of ‘minority’. The minority argument is of course fragile and its boundaries of definition were carefully managed by participants. As shown in Michael and Anne’s extracts, participants create a lexical cohesion between ‘discrimination’ and ‘minority’ through creating chains of logic. Those who are ‘protected’ by discrimination law are synonymous with belonging to a minority group. Managers then stated that since ‘everyone’ is expected to become older, it can not be viewed as a minority. This in turn compromised its importance.

### 6.4.2 Benchmarking Inequalities

Considering the interview was specifically about age inequality and older workers, a surprising amount of time was given to discussing other issues of inequality. As the previous Chapter mentioned, ‘diversity’ often encouraged the bundling together of all forms of inequality as one genre. This served particular strategic purposes for managers, especially when asked about their discrimination policies.

> There’s no reason why somebody who’s black is any different to somebody who’s white. There’s no reason why somebody who’s 70 and somebody who’s 25 is any different.  
> Alicia, 36, Hospitality

> I think it is important to think about age but I do think behaviour towards each other is important and that should be on the basis of any model. Differences. So age is just a difference or not, but no different than height, or sex, or you know, race, religion. Everybody is very complex but it’s a factor.  
> Marjorie, 40’s, Local Government

> We cover all forms of discrimination in our policies, age, race, sex, religion, what else...yep, disability, so we’re sure all our employees are aware of them. Our training programmes also cover equal opportunities because people need to see it’s all to do with treating people unfairly no matter what.  
> Joanne, 38, Health

> Well in recruitment it's my responsibility to make sure we put in practices that do not discriminate against people because of their age. So we actually have, we don't have equality policy, I think we
must be one of the very few large financial services organizations that don't. There's historical reasons for that, but we do, in our recruitment documentation state that we do not - we appoint on the basis of merit and we do not take sex, race and age into account, so actually practices and selection decisions, it's my responsibility to make sure that erm any development of our policy, changes in documentation and education and training amongst people in HR and the advice and training we give to managers ensures we're not discriminating against people based on anything.

Christine, 31, Finance

As shown in the examples, age discrimination was sidelined through strategies of cohesion and convergence. Situating age discrimination within a larger generic issue favourably allows a view of all discriminations being the same. The amalgamation of all forms of discrimination together as a homogenous management issue also allowed managers to control the depth of the discussion from discussing one specific topic, age (where they may have to qualify their discussion in detail), to the more general level (where they were able to talk in generalist, abstract terms). This meant that they could justify their ambivalence towards AAD legislation, as discussed in 6.2.1, and also avoid focusing on the differences between inequalities and instead focus on their similarities. This allowed the more generalised theme of 'discrimination' to become the subject within the conversation, rather than age discrimination.

Another interesting development within texts was the discussion of racism and sexism compared to ageism. Managers positioned racism and sexism of greater importance as a managerial issue, which resulted in the relegation of ageism. One of the key rhetorical devices in diminishing the importance of age discrimination was the employment of contrast structures:

Erm, I just think there are so many inequalities in the workplace that age is just one of them probably.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

My ears are also pricked up listening for rumblings of sexist behaviour or people thinking they are being treated unfairly because they have kids. That's not to say that age discrimination is not important – it, erm, just, I know, and this might be wrong, that I would take it more serious if someone claimed racism, just because, well, if the press got hold of it would be *** (name of company) branded a racist, or whatever, you know. But I don't think that would happen if we were accused of discriminating against older or younger people (pause) but maybe that will change soon.

Anne-Marie, 44, Retail

I think age discrimination is mostly kind of a touchy issue. With race discrimination it's more "oh my God I can't believe you said that" and it will cause outrage, whereas with age discrimination it's not exactly seen as such a huge mistake, so it may be frowned upon, but it's not such a big wow panic.

(KR) Why do you think that is?
I don't know. I mean, honestly before I read your brief I'd never even thought about it. It was just one of those things. I thought "oh God that's actually a fair point". It's just not something we're exposed to a lot and until somebody actually presents you with the facts and you talk about it, it's just not something you think about.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment

I think in some ways age is probably the least nasty end of discrimination. Discriminate based on sex, and based on disability and race is on a scale of 1 - 10 is ten whereas age discrimination is still seen as something that's not a good thing for those individuals or for business but I think it's maybe not seen in such an extreme way as some of the other forms of discrimination.

Christine, 31, Finance

This marginalisation was achieved by managers creating then justifying what may be understood as a 'hierarchy of inequalities'. This was achieved through benchmarking the importance of certain forms of discrimination by calculating the impact of the consequences. By setting up this contrast structure, the negative impact of race is emphasised as more severe than age, and therefore more important to manage. What is interesting is that this reaction is not seen as attached or personified to a particular person such as the victim, but is anonymised as a collective reaction. Lucy's 'oh my god...' is prefixed by the personal 'I' but is structured within parenthesis signified by a change in voice, promoting her own self image and ability to reflect. Anne-Marie is more explicit by referring to creating bad brand image. Yet by introducing a third party who consider racism or sexism as more newsworthy, she also endorses the view that they are more important than age discrimination. In order to further validate this perspective, the interchange between personal and collective pronouns helped to objectivise manager's opinions. Personal judgements are transformed through the introduction of the deictic personal pronoun 'we' which enables them to constitute a larger common group culture signifying either 'the workforce' or 'society'.

6.4.3 Ageism as Excess

Although all managers acknowledged preventing age discrimination as part of their formal organizational role, they also expressed their concerns over becoming, as Martin puts it, 'PC-obsessed'. Whilst other forms of 'ism' were essentialised and positioned as more significant, ageism was also employed as an illustration of hyper-sensitisation in the workplace. However, to negotiate this discussion, managers were extremely careful to present themselves as fair, equal individuals for fear of damaging their own professional identity. In order to do this, one key discursive strategy was the use of humour, both to set the conversation tone within the interview and as a theme within experiential narratives of
informal workplace interactions, such as jokes or humour to support their value statements. The move from a formal business discourse, where political correctness is consistently upheld within a bureaucratic ideal type, to a focus on more interpersonal processes within organizations enabled managers to problematise ageism as indicative of excessive political correctness:

I am fully aware I can't discriminate against race, age, whatever the heck they call maternity leave, paternity leave and God knows what else.

Alf, 44, Construction

It's really difficult nowadays actually. For example, we have cards in the deli there, we probably shouldn't have because they make ageist jokes. Like, you're over the hill or something like that. It almost comes down to harassment, whereas in the eyes of the beholder: if I found that joke funny, but I could equally find that joke not funny so do we take it away at the risk of offending the few or do we leave it there. But you could say there's ... and you're almost getting a backlash against this excessive PC if you like and it's very difficult. I mean, we struggle, how small businesses cope, they probably just don't or are unaware of it and carry on in blissful ignorance until they hit a law suit but it's very difficult.

Tara, 40, Finance

Yeah, there was this one case that I heard about when this guy in IT, a bit of a character I think, you know, the joker of the pack, well I heard that he had one of those Dilbert cartoons up about someone getting a retirement clock and was told to take it down in case it offended someone. So at the risk of offending one person in an organization of thousands he had to take down that sign.

(KR) Who do you think it might offend?

I'm not sure to be honest – maybe someone who doesn't like clocks! (both participant and interviewer laugh).

Garry, 45, Finance

Like many interviewees, Tara mentions the dilemma of negotiating between providing some light relief to the workplace environment and cultivating discrimination. However, whilst it appears that she is presenting a measured decision and appears to weigh up the pros and cons of each side, the argument is constructed in such a way that serves to promote the idea of 'excess PC'. Those involved are called into two polarised subject positions; those who complain and those who don't. An unequal contrast structure is created between the two groups with favourable connotations applied to the non-complainants who are able to take the joke in the 'right way', i.e. as a simple intention to amuse, drawing on the cultural ideal that a GOSH (good sense of humour) is a favourable personality characteristic. This in itself is also culturally defined, with British humour favouring self depreciation and an ability to 'laugh at yourself', a dimension which possibly strengthens the argument for such humour in the workplace. Using numerical reasoning also weighs the argument favourably towards the non-complainant. Both Garry
and Tara present the complainants as in the minority; only ‘a few’ or ‘one within thousands’ to verify their account and further separate the ‘deficient’ few from the norm.

However, a third subject position was often created by managers in order to protect their own professional identity constructed throughout the interview. Managers were hesitant to explicitly place themselves in either of the constructed categories since they defined a key part of their job as objectively dealing with such complaints. Tara appears to contradict her own constructed position by using the personal pronoun ‘I’ to suggest that she would be equally as likely to find it offensive. This also serves as a form of identity work, by forefronting her ability to look at both sides. The ‘friend of a friend’ anonymised story is a particularly successful strategy in allowing Amy to disguise her own views without affecting her own politically correct identity that she strived to maintain throughout the interview. The use of ‘he’ as an objective pronoun (i.e. without mentioning a name) helps to further distance her since ‘he’ is not referred to as a personal friend or close colleague. Yet at the same time, both managers align themselves with the group of non-complainants. Tara creates a connection between herself and the non-complainants through condensing this behaviour into the judgemental statement ‘this excessive pc’. Garry also aligns himself with the non-complainants in two ways. Through his own use of a joke about the clock in the excerpt he is displaying a possession of the defining personality characteristic (humour) of the non complainants. This joke has the added effect of allowing him to ridicule the situation using humour as a softening device to his criticism that ensures his professional, politically correct HR manager identity is not jeopardised.

Exaggeration and compression were also used to great effect within such humorous exchanges. Both these devices serve as a persuasive function which helps to deflate the importance of such ‘equality’ subjects. Alf’s ‘god knows what else’ umbrellas all other forms of discrimination and equality, implying they are too arduous to mention. Garry’s exaggerated use of numbers also works in the same way by presenting a ratio (1:1000’s) which presents the action in the story as unreasonable. Garry’s manner, however, is more satirical which allows him to gradually snowball the situation into a claim (maybe someone who doesn’t like clocks), which serves to further ridicule the situation. By replacing the assumed subject matter (ageism) with another idea from the story, Garry is able to create a cohesion which implies that the likelihood of one finding the carton ageist is as likely as a person who finds clocks offensive. Both the manager and interviewer are
well aware that this is not a literal comparison but a symbolic analogy which disparages the claim of the cartoon being ageist. On another level, it may also serve to ridicule the interviewer's question which the manager feels is implicit within the story, or simply provide a form of social cohesion between the interviewer and participant.

6.5 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter sought to explore how age discrimination and ageism are socially and politically constructed, not only through explicit definitions but also the employment of numerous discursive strategies that marginalise the importance or severity of age inequality.

The respondents were keen to refute any hint of age discrimination as occurring within their workplaces, and framed their justification by drawing on the concept of culture as a defining force. The enactment of culture is of course, discursively constructed in itself and actively employed in order to regulate and discipline organizational behaviour (Casey, 1999; Alvesson, 2004). Culture in this sense is used or mobilised as a project of homogenisation, putting forward certain beliefs or versions of truth as 'best practice'. Yet this study also shows that 'organizational culture' as a concept may be construed as having ideological properties which individuals can draw on to influence, support and justify their statements. As a discursive device, it allows the manager to validate their own claims as imbued by a larger collective force, yet assigns responsibility of upholding this notion to both everyone and accountable to no-one. The creation of the 'victim' and 'perpetrator' figures were also used to great affect in merging the discrimination between those who discriminate and those who are discriminated against. Managers recognised the falsity of this divide and used the ambiguity of who was discriminatory in presenting the difficulty of their own situation as having to manage ageism. Discussing this as an impossible task thus decreased their own responsibility in failing to take a pro-active approach.

The introduction of legislation was also met with disparaging comments or outright dismissal. The value of upcoming law was considered to be negligible within their own companies, since the managers already perceived themselves as adhering to best practice. By questioning the 'real' reasons for the introduction of legislation, participants were able
to belittle government efforts as either inauthentic, or simply impotent in helping to tackle inequality.

Although the focus here is primarily on older workers and age inequality, it was noted that managers also took time to discuss age discrimination as it related to 'young workers'. Using rationalistic arguments that called upon the number of potential working years or the wider extra-organizational reasons behind age discrimination against 'older' and 'younger' employees, many managers were able to argue that 'young' age discrimination was a more serious issue.

Situating ageism in relation to other forms of inequality also served to lessen the importance of discrimination based on age. It was rationalised that since 'everyone' aged, 'everyone' was susceptible to ageist perceptions. However, rather than this resulting in increasing its importance as a workplace issue, managers argued that this made it a 'fairer' inequality, a contradiction in terms. Ageism was further demarcated by arguing that other equalities were extremely important and that limited resources meant that there was a need to prioritise through what would be most necessary to the business. This was often accompanied by satirical remarks about ageism as indicative of the paranoia surrounding political correctness which led to discussions of ageism as 'another ism', further dismissing its importance to organizational processes.
Chapter 7
Constructing the ‘Older Worker’
This Chapter explores the motifs and themes used to construct and define older worker identity. Rather than take the older worker category as a given, discourse analysis enables an examination of how managers justify, legitimise and influence particular characteristics or impressions of older workers in their talk, through the utilisation of discursive strategies and processes.

The discussion begins by outlining the parameters used to define the older worker identity. Such characteristics are value-laden with assumptions about how a ‘normal’ older worker may, or should behave. This identity was then further substantiated through positioning the older worker in relation to work trajectory and retirement, which served to differentiate older workers as having especial concerns or priorities. Finally, managers used their construction of the older worker to create a ‘lack of fit’ between their own organizations and older workers which pertained to dimensions of work which were ‘out of their control’ to change, such as type of service, or culture of the organization. This allowed them to justify why older workers were not employed in their company whilst still upholding principles of equality and diversity.

7.1 Who Is the Older Worker?

One of the key areas of negotiation was in terms of determining who the older worker actually is. This initial classification was vital in order to understand how managers could attribute beliefs about behaviour of older workers in subsequent discussions by building upon older worker taxonomies. Unlike the academic reference to an older worker, managers drew on forms of behaviour or characteristics as a means of designating who may be termed an older worker.

7.1.1 Definition Through Attributes

One problematic issue was the discussion of stereotyping in general. As mentioned, managers were keen to dismiss the relevance of negative stereotypes. However, whilst these were explicitly refuted, there was still value assigned to the use of generalising characteristics:

So it's to try and build common ground. I mean you can use stereotypes to try and build rapport with people quickly. I mean we use a personality profile tool called Insights and we do it to try and use people's behaviour to understand their motivations, because once you understand their
motivations you can start relating to them better and build bridges and connect with them and make them happier. So you can use it but it's dangerous there's always a risk involved but most of the time you get away with it ... so stereotypes aren't necessarily a bad thing, so your concept of age isn't necessarily a bad thing, it's when you use it in a bad way.

Tara, 40, Finance

It's a tough call because on one hand we try to avoid encouraging stereotypes in any way whatsoever, but in another way you can't help but think about people in certain ways, I mean round here a person who's mid thirties is more likely to have children than someone who is in their early 20's and it is more probable that people in their 20's have grown up with more technology around them that those who are older, and the question you've got to ask is when does thinking like that, which I would say is a logical way of thinking, but it could be seen as stereotypical.

Jim 37, Insurance

In order to account for their acceptance of stereotypes without compromising their own managerial values of competence, Tara and Jim create an argument that averts focus from the inappropriateness of stereotypes to the general premise behind stereotyping; categorisation. This is done through disrupting the implicit assumption that stereotypes are deviant and instead purporting that they have a number of 'business' benefits. In order to objectify this line of reasoning, managers focussed on the business reasons for classification by referring to a number of managerial tools. Tara’s reference to the psychometric programme is particularly powerful since it creates cohesion between stereotyping, normalised as a subjective process, with a legitimate and integral management tool, which is perceived as a means of objective testing. Other shared propositions created cohesion between stereotyping and formal management processes, such as the strong emphasis on the reciprocity within stereotyping processes, which helped to shape the idea of classification as stimulating mutual benefits for both parties involved. So in the same way that psychometric testing, meant that staff will be better motivated and happier, stereotyping could be legitimised through created a better rapport between people.

Jim also manipulates stereotyping by distancing it from its connections with power and control to more pragmatic and managerial objectives. Presenting the voice of 'common sense', Jim portrays himself as weighing up the argument as if presenting both sides of the debate. However, this is unequivocally biased, shown both in the amount of narrative given to justifying one point compared to the other, and how the conclusion of his argument affiliates stereotyping as resulting from 'logical' chains of thought. This logicality is imbedded within the modality of the argument, and can be seen in the structure of the extract. However, the examples he uses present stereotypical assumptions as 'typical' and effective in mirroring reality, aided linguistically through the employment of
superlative 'more'. This rhetorical syllogism allows Jim to imply that stereotypes are indicative or have some relevance to the group to which they are attached.

As discussed in Chapter 6, although there was a tendency for managers to dispute definition through chronological markers, there was an implicit reliance upon them as a means of sharing understanding between themselves and the interviewer. However, managers also shaped older worker identity through representing particular personality traits as universally shared by older workers. This was more developed than previous research into stereotypes suggests, with most managers openly revoking negative stereotypes, although this may have been due to the lack of 'informal anonymity' that was mentioned during the methodological discussion in Chapter 4. Instead, managers used positive stereotypes to define who they classified as an older worker. One such common theme was 'experience':

I think they're just as capable and have a wealth of knowledge and history that maybe the people at the other end just simply won't have.  
Kate, 26, Hospitality

Older workers I guess bring a different view of the world, experiences into the workplace because they've gone through most of these situations before.  
Christine, 31, Finance

Experience. Experience of life. And experience of having worked at other places and learned things over their working career.  
Lucy, 41, Retail

I think they definitely have experience, so are more worldly–wise and have more knowledge and have can give a different perspective about what we're doing.  
Marjorie, 40's, Local Government

Well the nature of the age they've probably got a lot of experience, maturity, if they've been with the organization a long time, and are staying on, then there's a lot of experience about challenges in the organization, they've seen them before they've got a lot to offer about how it's been dealt with before and all. That's if they've been in the organization, but if they come to the organization as an older worker then I think they've got a lot to bring from other organizations, different ways of doing things.  
Ingrid, early 50's, Broadcasting

As mentioned previously, the first thing to note here is the emphasis on positive attributes, rather than more negative stereotypes. This in itself is unsurprising, considering the context of the interview where managers were keen to present a positive view of themselves and their organizations. However, although encapsulating them within positive references or statements referring to maturity or experience managers were still relying on generalised stereotypical statements. In this sense, the stereotype serves to further differentiate older
workers from the ‘norm’. This is most noticeable in the psychologistic claims made by Marjorie and Christine which imply that older workers think differently. However, all excerpts appear to use a contrasted ‘norm’ to structure their arguments, which separates older workers from a collective. ‘Different view’ and ‘different perspective’ therefore semantically distance the older worker from the ‘typical worker’, and in doing so contribute to essentialising the imbedded ‘difference’ between older workers and everyone else. For example, Ingrid mentioned their ‘different ways of doing things’, whilst Christine talks about older workers as having a ‘different view of the world’.

The problem with ‘experience’ is that the term itself can be manipulated to suit any number of means and as a result can mean everything without substantiating anything. This is the case where managers talk about experience at a very generic level. There is also little mention as to how this experience may be transferred into employee performance or attributes; ideas which are substantiated by managerial Discourses. Instead, ‘experience’ is relegated to an intangible ‘soft’ characteristic that is difficult to justify as just as relevant as other skills required. This aligns experience with other ‘typical’ characteristics of older workers such as ‘good people skills’ (Rose) and ‘calmer’ (Gillian) with such characteristics helps to position older workers as suited to particular jobs (see 7.3). So whilst there is little discussion of older workers entering professional levels of the organization, managers concentrate on defining their attributes as beneficial within customer facing work.

Well you know you just need to look at the recruitment policies for people like B&Q is the one that springs to mind. I'm sure everybody gives you that. Where they specifically decided to look at people over a certain age who perhaps had a lot of experience in a particular field and they could be on an advisory capacity to their clients and that's what they felt was missing from the young people that were perhaps doing the jobs previously before they came up with that policy.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

I've already mentioned experience, and I think that's probably one of the critical things that an older person brings. Some examples give are, looking at companies such as British Airways and B&Q to name two, who realise that, well, one of the intentions is if someone comes into a B&Q store and they're looking for some advice about DIY and a young lad who's very bright and very enthusiastic but hasn't a clue about building whatever it is they want to build - a garage, or whatever extension - and I use the term loosely, the guy, or the woman, who is maybe 40+ for example, who's maybe had an experience of that is more likely to think carefully about it and give them the time and advice that's practical and helpful to the customer. So I think that's probably the intention behind it.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

As well as experience, managers are aligning what are fundamentally personality characteristics as a way of homogenising the ‘older worker’. By referring to a well known employer of older workers (B&Q), managers were able to objectivise their own voice
within the narrative. This objectivity was supported by the absence of personal pronouns such as you, I or we, except for framing the story or humorous interjections, which helped to portray the views as factual, rather than the managers own interpretation.

Gail also universalises her viewpoint through claiming a collective knowledge referring to the other interviews carried out ('everybody gives you that'). Thus the 'interview group' becomes indicative of widely held socially-shared ideas; a strategy which helps Gail to present her view as universally understood. As in many interviews, both Gail and Jackie set up a contrast structure between older and younger workers. The construction of the young is illuminating for older worker identity. Jackie, for example, ascribes younger workers with particular stereotypical traits. Although this appears to be a concessionary statement on behalf of the younger workers, it also serves to further promotes the image of the older worker as methodical, supported by the notion of older workers 'thinking carefully' and 'give them (the customer) the time'. Again, this supports the psychologistic claims purported in Marjorie and Christine's text by inferring that ageing changes identity and personality. The key consequence of this is that older workers are constructed as 'fitting' into customer serving roles by aligning the constructed characteristics of the older worker with the promotion of the particular 'skills' required for this type of work. These jobs of course are characterised as low paid, contingent, low skilled workers who have few career prospects.

7.1.2 Definition Through Deficiencies

The negative stereotypes are widely mentioned within academic literature (e.g. Warr and Pennington, 1993; Taylor and Walker, 1994; Loretto et al., 2000; Chiu et al., 2001; Redman and Snape, 2002; see section 1.5.2). However, what is of interest to this thesis is how they may be understood through their linkages with wider themes. In developing this analysis of 'experience', one key feature of the texts was to explore the relationship between experience and other textual motifs. This not only allowed explicit interrelationships to be realised, such as the one discussed above, but also the identification of themes that did not at first appear to be interlinked. One of the most surprising features was a lack of correlation between older worker 'experience' and training. This shows how experience may be a moot attribute used to promote older workers;
It’s wrong to say that they are scared of computers – I know in our head office a lot of people use it to contact children who have moved away, or older friends – but I think if anyone has been working in a job for a long time, twenty five years in one job and then you move to find you have to do things differently, it’s naturally going to be harder to learn than if you don’t have any habits to re-learn, for your brain to correct the bad habits, if you see what I mean.

Rose, 44, Retail

You know, they like to get it just right rather than rush over it, you know they’re quite slow, meticulous if you like. I think it’s - it means that when they get on the phone they have fewer problems, although it can mean the trainers complain that they have to sit with them over their lunch break, which we should be paying them extra for. I know this might sound quite insensitive, but because its technology based, there’s always a lot of training in new systems and new features of the (product) and some of them, not all of them of course, but I would say more of them struggle than anyone else.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

Training was used as one of the key areas which served to differentiate older workers. Again, this appeared to work from the older worker positioned as less able compared to ‘normal’ workers. Two key strategic means of doing this are shown in the examples above. The first was justifying ‘trainability’, a widely cited stereotype within academic literature (Warr and Pennington, 1993; Taylor and Walker, 1994; Warr, 1994), by linking it to social discourses of ageing. Anne-Marie draws on the concept of slowing down as a means of substantiating her claim; an idea which is encased within biologisation discourses purporting biological truth claims (Katz, 1996). Although she appears to be making a balanced judgement by mentioning the benefits of this (as well as the problems), her later qualification of the ‘nature of the work’ positions the benefits as irrelevant to her organization. Moreover, using a third person qualification (‘the trainers’) allows Anne-Marie to validate this weakness as a possible burden on financial resources, rather than a mere inconvenience. The use of vague formulations to refer to the group Anne-Marie is discussing (they, them) both distances herself from ‘them’, and helps to create a homogenisation through syntax. Although she does consolidate that this may not be characteristic of all older workers, this is more an isolated interjection into her narrative which does little to present a balanced counter-argument. Such interjections are more likely to serve as face-saving devices in order to maintain a favourable self-identity (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Rose also uses mitigating devices to prevent being seen as overtly discriminatory. For example, she takes a number of steps to try to avoid referring to the ‘older worker’ explicitly by talking about ‘anyone’, rather than simply the older worker and uses the inclusive pronoun ‘you’ in her example. This plays on the potential inclusiveness of the older worker identity in that it could possibly apply to anyone at some stage of their lives.
Setting up the scenario as a normalised cognitive process was a common strategy within many interviews (as seen in Rose's quotation), since it helps to legitimate claims made through adopting a pseudo scientific voice outwith the realms of subjectivity. However, by qualifying the 'anyone' with years of service, it is clear that this example could only refer to older workers. The structure of this excerpt also has implications for older worker construction. The beginning of the passage refers to a particular relationship, the older worker and computer usage. Here, transitive clauses position the older worker as active and in control of this process. However, this then moves to a more generic discussion about the wider assumptions of older workers and change, which is used to justify assumptions about retraining. To use a colloquialism, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. This idea, of course, has connections with the opening statement, where computer usage is presented as one of these 'new tricks'.

It appears then that the basis of the same stereotype manifests itself in different and contradictory ways. What appeared to be the same stereotype was at some times immediately disregarded or derided whilst other times was promoted and used as a strategic resource within the participants dialogue. One way to explain this contradiction is to conceptualise two forms of stereotyping: those that are derived from being old per se (illegitimate), and those that are seen as consequential of their age (legitimate). This distinction was contingent upon the semantic construction of the argument in which the stereotype was being mentioned. Whilst explicit stereotypes (computer usage) may have been challenged, larger ideas and beliefs about hesitancy to change were not. To further conceptualise this link would be to view computer usage as a 'second order stereotype'; a typecast which is symptomatic of larger unequal discursive repertoires. Even though the second order stereotypes were upturned in the text, there was little sign of contesting the larger discursive beliefs on which such stereotypes are reproduced.

7.1.3 Generational Age Cohort

In order to justify their construction of the older worker as subjective or biased, managers were keen to distance themselves from referring to characteristics as resultant from exact chronological age per se. One strategy often employed to avoid this (whilst still creating an essentialised 'difference') was to use generational age cohort as a form of understanding:
Look at older individuals, they've got resource skills, work ethic you don't see in other generations, sense of responsibility in their role. My experience is better time keeping, better attendance, and actually in a lot of respects more adaptable and accommodating. I think they get a lot of flack for being miserly or too cautious, but I suppose it different values and everything wasn't as easy to get when... as it is for you or me.

Julie, 34, Hospitality

I don't know if it's just this is the first generation of old people that hit the speed at which our world is changing, and so they're struggling with it, and maybe as we age we'll be more adaptable to change, the speed of change as it hits us.

Tara, 40, Finance

Generations are thus constructed as an actuality, a means of justifying particular ways of acting or behaving. This enables managers to formulate particular positions for older workers. A causal link is created between 'generation', and older workers that constructs behaviour as resulting primarily from collective experience. This is, of course an exaggerated proposal. Whilst psycho-social perspectives such as age stratification theory (Riley, et al., 1972; Riley, 1987) assume generations may have some form of collective experience which is shaping, more current perspectives have contested that individual experience has a dominating influence on identity. The managers in this study have framed age-cohort personality in a positive way, as a means of 'excusing' the older worker for their deficiencies. For example, 'it's just this generation' (Tara). However, this results in positioning older workers as helpless in adapting or escaping such influence; they are presented as victims of their era. In some ways, this is more powerful than categorising older workers through chronology, since the markers between different generations are fluid and subject to individual manipulation.

Another consequence of adopting an age cohort strategy is that one generation is invariably compared to another. Those not within the 'older worker generation' are at an advantage since they are positioned as temporally more suitable. Characteristics such as speed of change, and the antonyms of 'miserly' and 'caution' are forefronted as the more favourable, or in the case of Tara's citation, necessary characteristics of 'today's society'. However, the generational argument is not used to suggest that new challenges will arise for this current 'generation Y'. For example, Tara suggests generational differences will be ameliorated in the future. This further problematises the current older worker by that suggesting future generations will not face such issues.
7.2 Positioning the Older Worker

Another strategy used to aid the construction of the older worker was through their ‘role’ and place within the workplace. This is partly achieved through the application of stereotypes as discussed earlier, but also by introducing particular issues as more relevant or less relevant to older workers vis-a-vis the ‘regular’ workforce. Doing so allowed managers to justify or reinforce limited positions of older workers as preferential by emphasising the autonomy of the older worker who chooses to adopt these positions.

7.2.1 The Conceptual Work Hill

As discussed in Chapter 3, managerial discourses not only serve to shape the subject directly, but use particular ‘objects’ to position and organize individuals. One such organizational object is career trajectory. Within the interviews, career trajectory was introduced as a key motif which served to construct the ‘average’ individuals working life. Amidst this, older workers were seen at the ‘other end’ of a spectrum of working life:

I think that once people get to late 40’s, 50’s there probably is a perception of OK they’ve done their bit, they’re maybe not going to be able to give the same amount of commitment or the same energy to a job.

(Later in interview): I think that in contrast to some younger people, but definitely not all, some older people because they've maybe had their careers or what they consider to be the main part of their career.

(Again, later in interview)

If a man’s not achieved a certain position by a certain age, then perhaps he's looked on slightly differently.

Christine, 31, Finance

I’m not saying its fair, but I think there’s this perception that once you’re about 40, say 45, you’ve reached a plateau where you’re either rocketing up through the ranks, or (pause). I see it time and time again, it everywhere, my friends feel they’re being left in middle management and there’s not much they can do about it now, since they are still in secure jobs with good pay, and they’re not willing to take the chance and go somewhere else where their situation might be the same.

Martin, 43, Finance

I'm too old to worry about my career. But age affects your career. If you haven't made it to the top levels by I would think funny enough I would have thought early to mid 30s if you haven't been seen as growing you're not going to get there. The odd exception I'm sure people could prove to me, but it's very exceptional for someone to come out the woodwork at 42.

Bob, 50’s, Brewing

You could have somebody who starts off really enthusiastic in their 20s, progresses up through the business and suddenly gets to their 40’s and then goes nowhere, so they hit this plateau.

David, 50, Local Government

When people get to a particular age in an organization, it's - depends where you are, what level you are in the company, of course, you can be seen very much as the person with a lot of knowledge and a lot of experience, and I think that's good if you are, you know, manager status. But I would think that certainly in the organization I came from, it could be perceived that if you hadn't really
This range of comments from managers of all ages highlights how the construction of a career trajectory relies heavily on the use of chronological age markers. This in turn normalises particular workplace positions as age specific. What is interesting is that the construction of the worker places impetus and responsibility on the older worker themselves, rather than the organization to achieve career success, or avoid the subsequent plateau.

Using the generic pronoun ‘you’ to apply to ‘any person’ helps to place responsibility on the individual for their own position. Idiomatic language is also employed, with the idea of career trajectory as vertically ascending normalised and fore fronted. Common allusions to moving up (italicised) are cohesively linked with development, as if this is the sole way of progressing. Constative language such as 'certainly', 'odd exception' and 'everywhere' also helps to reproduce this belief and increase declarative modality. In many interviews, a key age around late 30's to early 40's marked the point at which a successful career should be acquired by the individual. This sets up an either/or objectifying fallacy. Either you are marked as an achiever by this point, or you are neglected. This is presented as an undesirable state using emphatic language, such the tropes: 'middle management' or 'woodwork'. None of the managers aligned themselves with a particular position explicitly, although again there are subtle markers of distance from the plateaued manager. For example, no-one calls on personal experience and instead relies on the generic ‘you’ or refers to third person experience. Moreover, they may also feel that the very qualification for being interviewed (the call for participants explicitly asked for managers) acts as an enthememe and the listener assumes their exclusion from this undesired category.

### 7.2.2 The Precedence of Retirement

Although retirement was introduced thematically within the interview schedule, the resulting discussion was particularly insightful in terms of determining older worker construction:
People nowadays want to enjoy retirement. I know my parents are getting to that age where they’re like “please offer me a retirement package, I’ve had enough, I’ve been doing this” especially because they’re the generation that started work at 16. You got into a job and you worked through. You stay in that job, you don’t move about. So she’s worked for the civil service now for 40-odd years and she’s just “I want to finish. I’ve had enough”. If she wants to work up till retirement fair play to her, but I know she doesn’t so I think if somebody wants to leave then they deserve it.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment

I agree with early retirement because I agree you work long enough if you start working at whatever age you start working and reaching from your 20s that you’ve done 30, 40 years anyway so therefore early retirement you actually reap the rewards of it. However, I do appreciate that the earlier somebody retires then the experience is gone and there is a good 20 years left in somebody. If they were to retire at 45 then, or 50 on average, there is a good 15, 20 years more that they can give to a company or society as a whole because that experience, whereas it’s not being wasted, all these years to make a choice to go off and do something differently, to retire. So there’s that sort of balance were I wouldn’t want to say yes it’s important everybody has to work up to retirement age whatever you want to say that is, I think there is a choice, a balance of it. Yeah.

Gillian, 30’s Retail

Well to tell the truth because I think personally you should be able to make the decision whether or not you want to work on. But in our field, it’s a contradiction, but in our field we maybe have to look at it and say well ‘no you've reached 65 now that's it’. Because then maybe your fitness or physical level maybe wouldn’t be capable of doing the job that us young ones have to do if you like, getting off machines, and all the rest of it you know.

Alf, 44, Construction

But I think people should be allowed to work as long as they want to work, as long as they are still contributing. And that's at any age. Because I know my sister works with an older person who just can’t cut it. Who literally cannot do the job and they won’t performance manage this person. They’re not adding value, but that's not about their age, that’s about their performance. So I think whoever it is continues to contribute to the job they're doing they should be allowed to do that job if they wish.

(KR) And who judges that contribution?

It should be, erm, a joint decision. It, of course, has to be monitored in the workplace by a manager but they should be able to provide evidence, and if performance is falling down and they’ve provided evidence then training and coaching should be offered, but if that doesn’t work then they have to be performance managed, probably out of the position and that’s at any age.

Tara, 40, Finance

The lexicalisation of retirement shaped both its own meaning and the relationship to work in the sense of being framed as compensation and a reward for working hard. Using words such as ‘deserve’ and ‘reap the rewards’ within the above extracts echo similar sentiments by other managers who discuss ‘enjoying’ early retirement (Patricia), ‘deserve a rest’ (Tara) and ‘earning’ retirement (Michael). A key strategy within this construction was to position the older worker as making the choice to retire. Examining the transitivity within the extracts, the older worker is directly involved in the causal processes associated with entering retirement. By drawing on social justice Discourses, managers were able to prioritise notions of personal freedom and choice. Presenting the argument in quotatives (Lydia) or the inclusive ‘you’ (Gillian) promotes this idea by imitating the voice of the
older worker whilst the use of comment adjuncts, such as Alan’s ‘to tell the truth’ served to add credibility to the argument, as well as promote a favourable self image.

On the other hand, there was evidence that managerial prerogatives shaped how retirement was constructed. As in Gillian’s extract, a number of managers discussed early retirement in managerial Discourses as a loss of resources. The switch between the two ideas is demarcated by Gillian in the change from discussing older workers using the inclusive pronoun ‘you’ to 3rd person personal pronoun ‘they’, to mark a distance from herself and the older worker who she had earlier positioned herself with. This often led to the discussion of managerial intervention as necessary. Tara’s extract is particular insightful by setting up certain qualifiers which somewhat contradict the notion of older worker choice.

Examining the anatomy of the text, two ideas are interwoven: choice versus performance. In order to facilitate this change, the third party testimony allows Gillian to problematise the former idea whilst using it to build an argument against older workers. In order to substantiate the claim ‘can’t cut it’, there is careful negotiation to avoid being seen as ageist. Therefore, Tara takes ownership of the idea (which was previously brought up as her sister’s claim) and carefully develops and justifies the argument using managerial vocabulary (‘performance managed’, ‘adding value’) which serves to present this as a rational, objective measurement rather than because of age discrimination per se. Tara also attempts to further objectivise her argument by explicitly removing ‘age’ as a qualifier. Considering the argument is framed within a managerial paradigm which advocates the legitimization of hierarchy, it is unsurprising that the managers are presented as ‘knowing best’. As seen in Alf and Tara’s quotations, a number of managers employed an implicature to suggest that older workers are unable to assess their own ability. Again, this was achieved primarily through transitivity by positioning the older worker as subject to performance-related degeneration. However, the discussion of performance is still left ambiguous. Alf’s ‘all the rest of it’ and Tara’s ‘provided evidence’ are used to substantiate their claims, but provide no detail as to how these translate into practice. This leaves a subjective space for personal and discriminatory beliefs to take hold and result in ageist practices.
7.2.3 Reasons for Working

As seen in the above discussion, an argument for freedom of choice was used as a driver for retirement. This also had a strong influence on accounts of why older workers may want to work.

The type of work we do, it's unfortunate but people do burn out, but then also a lot of people enter into it after their 50's and they've got a big pay out or redundancy package or whatever and then want to start off a wee business as a hobby and do something that keeps them active.

Michael, 52, Catering

It's expected that as you grow older, as I'm experiencing it now, your priorities change and you want a job that you enjoy, you know its not enough waiting around for your pay cheque at the end of the month.

Susan, 39, Education

So to give an example, look at B &Q, older people go there and really enjoy it because they have the opportunity to incorporate their interests into their job if you see what I mean. And its good because it also provides a social meeting place as well.

Anne, 37, Tourism

Preference for seeking self-actualisation within work is naturalised by referring to a change in outlook as a direct consequence of ageing, as shown in Susan's excerpt. Susan's initial truth claim appears to be made from an omniscient position and presented as common knowledge, which is further substantiated by her own appropriation of the claim through personal experience, thus reinforcing its validity. There were a wide range of reasons purported as to why older workers do work. Although not made explicit within the texts, these all appeared to compensate socially recognised fears of old age as encapsulated within social discourses of ageing such as loneliness and inactivity. For example, a number of managers discussed the social and health benefits of working for older workers. It was difficult to establish whether this referred to pre or post State retirement age workers, a distinction made within the academic literature. As a result, many of the reasons established in the literature as reasons for working beyond retirement, such as filling time, enjoyment and social reasons were used to apply to all older workers.

What was also noticeable was that there was little reference in the interviews to financial pressures as being a reason for working. Any inference to this incentive was made through discussing personal experience, and was presented as the exception:

I have a wife who likes spending money so I need to work and I'm aware this will run out. It was running out in June, it will now not run out till October I suspect.

Bob, 50's, Brewing
I think it'll be different for me because I've only just started the family and I think they'll be draining me until I'm about 80, so I'll have to work on.

Martin, 43, Finance

Unfortunately my daughter's family broke down so we're a special case, in the sense that we're supporting her two children financially which I never expected, of course, you don't begrudge it at all, it's fantastic having them around all the time, but it means that my plans are probably different from my friends in the sense that I know I'll be working a while yet.

Patricia, 52, Utilities

Although the reasons purported may be increasingly common, such as maintaining a standard of living, or family commitments, no managers presented these as generic reasons or themes. As the examples show, language such as 'special case' and, 'different for me' was used to separate the participants from the norm. If we are to consider this outwith the immediate context, one explanation may be a reticence to homogenise their own experiences as typical at the risk of being aligned with a typified older worker. Therefore, drawing on their own experience they can use their own experiences as a distancing strategy to avoid embodying a particular older worker identity.

7.3 Employing the Older Worker: the B &Q syndrome

Out of the 33 interviews, 27 respondents mentioned B&Q as a key employer of older workers. Whilst this figure is not intended as evidential proof of B&Q's success, it is indicative of the tendency for managers to promote the employment of older workers in other organizations rather than their own. This emulates a 'lack of fit' model where the construction of individual characteristics is seems as mismatched with the organization. The importance of fit was mentioned by a number of managers explicitly:

For me if I was to take a step back, I've done a lot of recruitment over the last 10 years and I think the whole thing for me is the right fit for the job and the right fit for the organization. So for me I'm looking for personality, the right competencies, the right experience and the right drive. And I really want someone at interview to shine. I want them to want the job. I don't want to have to sell it to them, I want them to come and really have thought it through and almost in a way to sell themselves to our organization.

Irene, 36, Engineering

Although a pithy example, Irene mentions two key dimensions where fit was seen as important by managers: the job, which could be called 'nature of work' and the organization's 'personality', which have been conceptualised as 'cultural factors'. A discursive perspective can thus elaborate on how a lack of fit model operates as a discursive device by employing particular modes of rationalisation. In the interviews this was a key technique through which managers were able to justify their employment
practices and absence of older workers that transcends sector or industries. A third heading, ‘services’ was also discussed by many participants. Each of these aspects will now be discussed in turn.

7.3.1 Cultural Factors

As introduced in Chapter 5, the construction of the organizational culture was extremely important in providing a means of objectifying or justifying particular practices which may appear ageist.

I suppose in a positive way at the moment. I think I came in at a good age to this organization and will progress quite quickly. So it's working at an advantage just now. Going forward 5 - 10 years, I really don't know how high up or how far I'll be able to go, so that's a glass ceiling, but I'm not there yet.

(KR) Do you think that glass ceiling's there in terms that you're female or your age, or ...

I don't believe it's anything to do with being female. I'm not overly convinced it's to do with age. I think it's just the organization we work in. So it's the organization more than age, more than sex.

Irene, 36, Construction

It's just a lot of people have grown with the organization and they are, I would say, probably of the 35 plus bracket. Other ones who have probably joined the company more recently are in the 35 and below, apart from two actually recently who were 45+. It's not really a conscious thing.

Amy, 38, Printing and Communications

Whilst not discussing age inequality, these excerpts are indicative of the value assigned to the importance of organizational cultures. One of the main discursive strategies used is to present culture as an influence which is outwith the control of anyone within the organization: as embodying everything but belonging to no-one. Managers craft the concept of culture as not only serving an ideational function as discussed earlier, but a structuring force which shapes and determines organizational activity. As shown in the following examples, culture can thus be used as a means of validating the mismatch between older workers and the organization:

When they come to us looking for somebody for a permanent position especially, they know basically they can't say to us we want somebody in their mid 20s, female who enjoys going to the pub after work on a Friday. But that's what they've got in their head and you can send them over CV after CV after CV and they'll just look at it and look at name, date of birth. You send one for the first interview, you ask for feedback, "what did you think of her skills?" "she just wasn't right. She just wouldn't fit" and it's only when they get that person that they can see in their minds eye who they are looking for, who would fit with an organization, and you can say “yeah, OK that person”.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment
We don't employ anybody over 50 in this organization. That's how it is around here”. You know, not that anybody would be blatant enough to say that, but you know that's the kind of attitude and it's how things are done around here is the culture of the organization.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

I can't see any attempt to change -the company has grown up providing opportunities for younger workers in our stores, and anyone who came to mess about with that would probably find themselves out on their ear.

Michael, 52, Catering

An awareness of the legal implications of discriminating were inherent within manager's talk, and they were careful to moderate any explicit statements of beliefs that could be construed as discriminatory. Jackie uses self correction (‘you know not that anyone would be blatant enough’) to moderate her extreme case formulation which also serves as a face-saving function. Managers also moderated their language using words such as ‘just’ and ‘probably’ as sentential adverbs which served to mitigate claims. For example, the quote from Michael shows he is careful to frame the culture favourably as ‘providing opportunities for younger workers’, rather than excluding older workers. This is even the case when alternative voices are used, such as in Luc’s extract, where she chooses to focus on the required candidate, rather than the excluded or party discriminated against.

One powerful rhetorical strategy adopted by managers here was the discursive representation of 3rd parties, which allows managers to distance themselves from a potentially unfavourable or discriminatory view. Even though it is unlikely that the quotations are exact, the direct voice increases the declarative modality of the statements. What is interesting though, is that whilst participants do not seek to explicitly agree with the statements, neither do they seek to contest or oppose the ideas. Challenging the status quo which emerges from the culture is not framed in any argumentative form; it is presented as an assumed fact which does not merit challenge, or cannot be challenged. Employing the concept of ‘culture’ in this way consequently contributes to the nominalisation of managers as active agents who are able to change current practices where all sense of subjectivity is removed or, if included, as in the latter quotation, deemed as deviant. Culture is thus justified as the definitive regulator of who works for the company and how, rather than managers having the autonomy to choose.

7.3.2 Service

Although the interviews spanned a number of sectors and industries, managers often concentrated on discussing the interactions between the consumer and employee. Focusing
on the client demands, managers were once again able to externalise responsibility and subscribe to the lack of fit model. This in turn provides a strategic resource to legitimise employment practices. The argument created by managers can be conceptualised pictorially as shown below:

**Figure 9: Pictorial representation of rationalising process**

Although lettered for the purposes of discussion, a rationalisation for practices is created through discussion and epistemic truth claims. What is particularly important about this argument is that managers use a number of cohesive devices to present this as a cyclical system. This implies that the current circumstances are both difficult to change, and that any changes will have negative repercussions for the success of the company.

The first stage, shown as ‘A’ in Figure 8, draws upon the model of customer-focused business. Managers were keen to stress that customer prioritising was a key element which shaped both their jobs and business success:
You know I’ve heard my husband say that because he’s in the new kind of industry where it’s all very much about keeping the customer happy and the clients wanting more for less money and less people and it’s all about trying to meet performance target or you’re out.

Gail 49, Consultancy

Every time I go to a board meeting it’s customer customer customer, how does it benefit the bottom line productivity – that’s all I hear! (laughs).

Anne-Marie, 36, Call Centre

Its now impossible not to think about the customer at every step of the way – essentially my job relies on the success of customers to keep buying, although perhaps not in as direct a way as say, sales.

Martin, 43, Finance

I remember at one time I used to teach customer awareness training, and it was part of an induction course with people coming into the company.

Tara, 40, Finance

We have to be a slave to the customer these days – there’s far too much competition around not to listen to them!

Alf, 44, Construction

A lot of the discussion relating to customer service and the customer contributed to the construction of their own identity as HR managers. Martin also reconciles that this may not be recognised or as noticeable as within other business functions. This mirrors other participants who were keen to give explicit examples of the customer driven elements of their work in order to qualify their claims. Like Tara, participants often mentioned customer elements of their job in parenthesis, or mentioning it as a by-the-by account which allowed the managers to present this as an assumed part of their job whilst still acknowledging its importance to their business. Yet customer focus was also presented as an assumed norm and form of collective knowledge. This is achieved through the differentiation between a ‘then’ and ‘now’. Temporally framing this customer focus using words such as ‘these days’, ‘now’ and ‘the new kind’, as well ‘we have become’ (Kate) and ‘nowadays’ (Barbara) as discussed in other interviews implied that although this is currently a key dimension of their work role, this has emerged from a time when it wasn’t as important an issue. What is particularly interesting here is the modalising of the manager to the customer service focus; Gail, Anne-Marie and Alf all attach others (husband, board, customer), to the customer driven ideal, rather than themselves. Idiomatic language such as ‘slave’ and ‘out on your ear’ suggest that the new focus has been externally impinged on the managers, rather than pro-actively initiated. The use of humour also signify the reticence of managers. Both Alf and Anne-Marie appear to gently mock the idea through exaggeration and dysphemism in their talk. This of course is context specific; the participant is talking to an interviewer who is not part of the organization and
thus may be seen as a ‘safe’ audience for such repartee. So whilst it may be functioning as a form of social collusion to ingratiate the interviewer, it may also allow manager to achieve distance between themselves and the customer focus ideal, whilst acknowledging its importance in their role as HR managers.

‘B’ in Figure 8 is a consequential extension which builds upon argument A. This is more concerned with creating a relationship between the two facets of the jobs they discussed during the first argument. This was often achieved through talk of the people-match within the recruitment stage:

So somebody that can develop the business but also has a nice, friendly personality, customer focused, (laughter) I think that's the main things we look for.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment

Because as far as we're concerned it doesn't matter what age they are. It's about their passion for (name of company) and their passion for customer service

Lucy, 41, Retail

The key rhetorical strategy here is the fusion between customer focus and the more traditional aspects of their work which involved employee processes. By emphasising the interrelationship between the customer focus and what they require from their employees, managers appear to re-organize and re-interpret various dimensions of 'customer focus', to comply with their HR manager identity and present them as mutually complimentary. In the context of older workers, this complimentary perspective also serves to enforce their equality policies through the presentation of older workers as providing the much needed customer focus.

Well for example I think I love B&Q's idea of using older people on the shop floor because they have all the time in the day, they're comfortable talking to other people, helping them shop, they give excellent customer service.

Tara, 40, Finance

That's one thing old workers can offer --companies such as B&Q they understand what it means to be treated well and go the extra mile for the customer.

Susan, 39, Education

The citations above have two key features critical to the lack of fit model. Firstly, they give a clear example of how they interpret the customer focus business strategy within their role as HR manager. This presents customer focus in a more concise form that relates to customer service. The second noticeable trend is that whilst managers talked of the importance of customer focus in their own organizations, the examples they give are
examples from other businesses; B&Q in particular. This allows them to subscribed to the customer focused HR ideal, whilst not having to align their own organization to this idea.

Point C in Figure 8 occurred when managers felt the need to justify why their own particular business faced challenges in maintaining a customer focus whilst employing older workers. It is in this argument that we see the transformation between the preferences of customers and its link with older worker recruitment, where the discriminatory attitudes are distanced from the organization, and passed onto the customer. Yet by returning to D and emphasising the customer driven business to justify current practices, managers can set up a cause-and-effect argument that does not incriminate them. This occurs when managers emphasise the customer dimension as impinging or limiting their choice of worker. The force of this external factor is exaggerated to become the main driver of recruitment. Instead of been seen as complimentary, as in B, when discussing their own organizations, managers presented the customer-employee management situation as a tension where they had to continually negotiate between what the customers wanted from front-line staff and how this affected their recruitment practices.

Within these stories, participants were often keen to self-define themselves as people—persons who favour equality and diversity, as discussed earlier in this Chapter. This allowed them to present the argument without disrupting a favourable image of their managerial identity. However, since their businesses are driven by customer desires, the managers position the situation as outwith their control, using two main means to justify this.

The first way this was done was by introducing the ‘voice of society’ as driving customer preferences. The pressure was emphasised as a tension between what participants fore fronted as the most important aspect of their own jobs; looking after employees, against larger social mores.

Again it's society. It's what we perceive when we walk into a restaurant, its going to be a young person looking after us, or young chefs in the kitchen, you wouldn't see older people.
Alicia, 36, Hospitality

They are still providing the same service but I think a lot of it is what society puts the labels on to people so it's their typical perception of what a librarian looks like, or what a police officer, because you hear the stories, a police officer is getting younger and younger all the time.
David, 50, Local Government
The pronouns used within this excerpt help to universalise Alicia's claims by adopting the 'voice of society'. Whilst Alicia affiliates herself with this, David further distances himself from the mainstream, which helps him to maintain a positive self-image. However, both use 'society' as the defining force that influences customers. The idea of this all-encompassing macro opinion is associated with the belief that there is a 'typical' type of worker for a particular job who is more suitable or disposed to a job than others, which is characterised in some way by age. The use of the voice of society helps to naturalise this idea by presenting it as a universalised belief that everyone carries.

Another cause and effect argument used to justify their underemployment of older workers is emphasising the importance of workers reflecting customers.

I mean we don't even make references to older workers because in hospitality we try to reflect the customer.

Kate, 26, Hospitality

But in our stores I think people look at the stores and say, "Oh God we don't even go in there shopping so I'm certainly not going to work there, they play loud music, they sell all these funny looking shoes, that wouldn't be the place for me". So our workforce actually isn't aging. The average age of our employees is 21.

Lucy, 41, Retail

Interesting going back to this Woman's Hour programme somebody on the programme said when I go into a shop and want to try on something and I go to the changing room and this spotty faced 21 year old says to me if you need any help just give me a shout. Her response was maybe not repeatable on tape but more or less I think at age 50 I can probably help myself. Thank you very much, you know. I mean that's probably taking it a bit of a negative but, so whether it's the way we treat people as customers, as clients, as colleagues, as employees, as potential employees, I think it comes out potentially in a whole load of different ways.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

I think fashion shops for example again would not want the wrong sort of person, maybe less age, but more how you look, but a young person's fashion boutique would not want some old matron telling the girl she was wearing too much of whatever, so I think industry will attract certain ages. You won't like this but I don't mind, I'm all for age discrimination being negated, but sometimes I think it's quite reasonable for an employer to say to you "you'll have a problem here, they're all 17 and spotty and bright as buttons".

Bob 60's, Brewing

I was in one of our stores a few months ago and was surprised at all these Amazonian young beauties we had working there. I have to admit I was worried that there was some favourable recruitment practices going on there so had to confront the manager. She explained that she was sure a lot of the women that came in related to these women and enjoyed their attention (laughs).

(KR) In what way do you think-

Well I don't know if its some form of delusion which we're all guilty of, or maybe what they used to be like, but either way, the manager saw it as good business sense.

Rose, 44, Retail
This was a particularly strong argument for managers within the retail and hospitality sector where the ‘older worker’ was aligned with the ‘older customer’. Stories often placed the older worker themselves as the active agent who is choosing not to work there and are themselves guilty of making stereotyped assumptions. Yet this voice also serves to reinforce the idea of the ‘typical customer’ as young, or at least different to the older customer/worker through creating a contrast structure. In Lucy’s citation, this contrast is implicit; since we are told by the ‘older voice’ that they would not choose to shop there, the listener is led to assume it is a young person’s job, confirmed by Lucy’s mention of the average age of employee. Jackie and Bob also subscribe to the idea of the customer-employee mirror metaphor, although this appears to go in favour of the older worker. However, the narrative constructs the older customer, as Jackie conceded herself, is quite a negative figure; they are presented as stubborn and rude in contrast to the politeness of the younger shop assistant.

What is particularly interesting is Rose’s case, who works for a large clothing chain in which some concessions in the store are described as ‘specialising in mature ladies fashion’. Again the customer is presented as the active agent who drives the action in the story. However, whilst the customer-employee mirror metaphor is still relevant, it appears to draw on the ideal of youth and beauty as symbolic capital. Although distancing herself by ascribing the argument to a third person (one of her managers), Anne-Marie assumes that youth and beauty are mutually combined and values that everyone (note the use of ‘all’) aspires to. As a symbolic resource, they are thus transferable to economic value and therefore a means of justifying what could be perceived as an ageist recruitment practice.

**7.3.3 The ‘Nature’ of Work**

A further ‘lack of fit’ argument used by managers was to create a juxtaposition between the older worker and the ‘type’ of work. This relied heavily on essentialising the identity of the older worker through processes discussed earlier in this Chapter. At the risk of repetition, I will concentrate on the rhetorical strategies used to substantiate this juxtapositioning.

Once again, managers focused on different aspects of work which served to negate older workers. One reoccurring theme was the concept of ‘flexibility’:
I mean we tend to employ people that are, we attract people that are younger. A lot of students, though that's just the nature of the work, that we have part time work. So it tends to attract students who want to work on a part time basis. We tend to attract young people because maybe they don't have any commitments so they can work till 2 o'clock in the morning. Then again, we have a very different structure in the hotel. We have a lot of lone parents. They will maybe drop their children off in the morning, come and do some hours here and then go and pick the kids up. So we do adapt. It's not just you have to do that shift. These people what shifts can you do for us, then we'll work round you. Erm, and older people we have, I mean in some of the older 50's, 55, we have in the kitchen and portering area. And concierge. Door persons, engineer, and to a certain extent housekeeping women. But not as much again, going back to maybe that age of 55 or 60 perhaps people haven't worked with computers. So that's a common stigma of "oh I wouldn't be able to work a computer I couldn't do that" and they're embarrassed because their grand child or whatever can you know type out a word document. So that's stigma as well, that they're only able to do certain positions, jobs or whatever, so there's a bit of a stigma there.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

I know when I reach 55 I don't want to be working shift patterns, not knowing when I'm working from one week to the next, or not working normal hours (pause) although maybe I think we have just accepted that that's the way work is now.

Garry, 45, Finance

To avoid possible loss of face, managers are careful to negotiate the action orientation within their narratives. Alicia corrects herself by modifying the action orientation from the company as picking employees, to potential employees choosing to work there. Whilst she is keen to emphasise the diverse age range, the justification for fewer older workers is explained as derived from the older workers perceptions, rather than organizational bias. In other words, the discourse representation of older worker presents the older workers themselves rather than the organization as limiting their opportunities. Psychologistic claims about older workers were used in most interviews to justify the lack of older workers i.e. that they don't like working with technology, they don't want to think fast. This created a position where the older workers were presented as choosing not to work with the company, thus distancing responsibility of the current situation from managers to the workforce. Garry, on the other hand, appears to create a cohesion between himself and older workers through the creation of a ‘future self' i.e. a point in time where he may categorise himself as an older worker, which allows him to present a seemingly dialogical, balanced view. This allows him to use the personal pronoun ‘I’ to strengthen the argument, whilst having little effect on his own current self identity. Garry is also able to further distance himself from this group by employing a generation argument with the notion that he will be different to current older workers. This generation argument is particularly strong, since it promotes the idea of collective thinking between different age groups, supporting a homogenised view of older workers.
Other managers portrayed the required characteristics as jobs as aligned with a ‘younger person’.

Tourism, travel, that kind of thing. PR, erm, marketing, their jobs are very attractive to the young. Whether they're young coming out of school or university, that kind of thing.

(KR) Why do you think that is?

Because I think it's given a glamorous image in the media... Probably because people do it when they're young, it's such a hellish job (laughter) in terms of length of hours, pressures that people are under, targets they can't meet, that people tend to stay in for a certain period of time and then move out. I think, my perception is that young people these days are looking for a buzz from what they do and if they can't see a buzz they're just not interested. So, and, I mean I'm trying to think of the converse of that and industries that attract older people. You know, of course industries attract working mothers, such as organizations like ourselves that have a high volume customer services and that attract woman returners to work who see it as an opportunity to at least get back into the workplace.

Christine, 31, Finance

Well, sales side I think people expect youngsters to turn up rather than .... Depends what you're buying you know, you'll get the odd exception again, but selling I think is quite a young man's game, travelling around.

Bob, 50's, Brewing

I think call centres definitely attract younger workers, absolutely. They are incredibly fast-paced and don't given people time to think about what they're doing. But then we don't simply attract the under 30's, we also have people who choose to work part time for their own personal reasons, such as working parents. And then there are other jobs that might attract older workers, although I can't think just now, just because I've always worked in this area.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

This argument also uses a distinction between ‘younger’ and ‘other’ individuals as a means for justifying the lack of fit. Managers emphasise the elements of jobs that are aligned with stereotypical characteristics of the young. Christine accumulates a number of ideas that work upon the same shared proposition: that the characteristics required to work within such an environment are held by the young. Yet her argument appears to have as much to do with gender as it has with age. Instead of discussing older workers in the same comparative realm, the argument appears to undergo a paradigm change in order to refer to another group defined by gender. This has two implications in negating the older worker subject. Firstly, whilst younger workers are associated with industries that are ‘matched’ to them, the possibility of a comparative industry for older workers is not provided. Secondly, the discussion of replacement of older workers with working mothers creates a systemic collusion between the groups, that they are interchangeable. This results in an association between older workers and other ‘different’ group position older workers as outside a norm and a marginalised ‘other’.
People who worked - marketing again is relatively new. I mean 20 years ago it was a kind of infant function if you like. So it has attracted, I would say, a certain type of person. It's a very stressful job, it's demanding. There's qualifications now that are available through university that allow you to come out graduating in marketing degrees and stuff like that. That wasn't around 20 - 25 years ago really.

Simon, 50's Finance

I think employers seem to attract people of a particular age within industries. So if I give you the example of the call centre industry, er my er as an assumption, is that it's a young industry and therefore does attract young people, and I say that below the age of 30. That's a bit of a generalisation.

(KR) OK, what do you mean by industry that it's a new kind of -

- Yes it's a new thing isn't it? Call centres as we know them today have only just taken off in the last, sort of, last ten years and certainly the ones I've been involved in predominantly have quite a young workforce so I don't know whether you'd call that an industry or a sector or whatever, but that would be my take on it.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

As well as emphasising job characteristics associated with a younger stereotype, the excerpts above also use a less common argument, although still relevant to this discussion. This involved associating the age of an industry or type of job with the age of workers within these workforces. Older workers are positioned as disadvantaged through their possession of qualifications or skills such as technology, which are deemed as integral to 'new' industries. In relation of this, managers mentioned the importance of training only in relation to older workers, as well as the importance of focusing on pastoral areas of care. Managers discussed the older worker as 'learning to fit in' (Julie), 'having to learn new skills' (Ingrid) and 'understand how the world has changed' (Garry). This emphatic language not only favourably presents the organization as caring for their employee's well-being, but places the emphasis on the older worker, rather than the organization as having to accommodate or change their way of working. By creating an occupation age structure for workers in this way, younger workers are more 'naturally disposed' to working in industries of growth, whilst older workers must change in order to survive.

7.4 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter highlighted that age inequality not only occurs through the enactment of age discrimination, but also the construction of older worker identity revealed a number of slanted or even biased perceptions which may result in unequal practices. In many ways this was a more powerful enactment of age-bias since it served to homogenise the older worker identity through the veneer of compliments and positive characteristics. The careful
negotiation of more negative attributes were also legitimised by relating them to more
general characteristics, which are widely *associated* with age, rather than with age directly.
For example, 'experience', rather than being an older worker itself was used as the reason
leading to difficulty in adapting to new practices and ideas. However, experience had
already been aligned with the older worker identity.

The construction of the older worker also rested on contextualising them in relation to
certain organizational and work issues. The importance of career was marginalised by a
shared understanding of the work trajectory as slowing down in terms of promotion and
progression after 40. Action orientation was very important here and allowed certain
perspectives to be acceptable through emphasising older worker *choice*, particularly
concerning the decision to retire. However, this appeared more a façade than reality, since
there was no evidence of such a decision being relinquished from the organization and
passed on to the individual. Older workers were discussed as having more freedom to
choose how, when and where they worked, which framed them as more sensitive to
psycho-social reasons as the determining factor in their choice of employment. Doing so
enabled a diversion away from the economic rationale for work, and indeed allowed
managers to negotiate themselves away from the older worker label since they *did* need a
job for financial reasons.

Having created a biased construction of the older worker, managers then continued to
create a 'lack of fit' between older workers and their own organizations. A number of
rhetorical devices helped to fore front dimensions of their work, such as long hours the
need to be geographically mobile. These were seen as in direct conflict with how the older
worker would wish to work. Similar to Chapter 5, where managers used 'organizational
culture' as a means of justifying their approaches to diversity, culture was also seen as a
way of objectifying practices that may have been construed as ageist. Of particular
significance was employing a chain of logic that allowed managers to displace
responsibility for a lack of older workers as beyond their control through emphasising the
importance of being customer driven. In doing so, managers could deride or lament the
lack of older workers, whilst still legitimising the current status quo.
Chapter 8

Identity Work and the Ageing Self in the Workplace
Chapter 7 initiated our exploration of the importance of situating the perceptions of the self into the identity construction of older worker identity. Working against models of the older worker as working for reasons beyond financial rewards allowed many managers to distance themselves from the older worker label. This Chapter takes as its main focus the complex interface between the identity work of the participant and the construction of ageism, age discrimination and the older worker discussed in earlier Chapters.

This Chapter begins by examining the role of the body as a discursive tool which is used to mediate and negotiate the participants own identity in relation to the ‘older worker’. It then goes on to explore how participants discussed their own ageing experience as a dynamic process which is both significantly marked by gender and social interactions with others. The final part of the chapter then seeks to discuss the relationship between the identity work and positioning of the self against the detrimental affects of organizational age inequality.

8.1 Embodying the Older Worker

To ‘be’ or classify an older worker is both an embodied and embodying process. As discussed in Chapter 3, identity is not only constituted through experiences but is also inscribed and absorbed by the body. In turn, the body may be ‘read’ by others and understood through ideological processes. Although unexplored within current age and employment literature, interviews revealed that the body was an extremely important symbolic marker used when assigning meaning to the ‘older worker’ construction.

8.1.1 The Body as a Mirror

Contrary to other somatic discourses, many participants upheld the traditional conception of the body as ‘given’, in other words, that the body is a form of ‘truth’ which gives both the self and others social clues about age. A number of interviewees conceptualised the body as a social marker which provides dimensions for understanding and creating a social order. During interviews, such talk was discussed as a form of recognition which rarely deviated from larger social stereotypes associated with ageing:
You can see in the office, all of a sudden someone will come in with different hairstyle and new colour and you... you wouldn’t never say anything, but you think -- aye aye, how many greys are you trying to cover up! (laughs)

Anne, 37, Tourism

Well, its natural your eyesight goes, and you start to stiffen up which is a bit inconvenient if your out on site. You know, on some days I might be best to use a walking stick, rather than my BMW!

Martin 43, Finance

Try as you might, you can’t really hide some things – the wrinkles round the eyes, the flecks of white, the wobbly bits round the neck, the overall package.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

I am starting to get a nice wee bit of grey hair – I’m not using a zimmerframe to help me whizz about my office barking out orders, Ironside!

Jim, 37, Insurance

It is unsurprising that eyesight and grey hair are mentioned, considering their cultural association with old age (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1993). However, the excerpts also allude to other ‘aged’ symbols, such as walking sticks and zimmerframe. Whilst not meant to be literal interpretations, the use to extreme case formulations intended as humour are significant in the talk of managers as a means of differentiating being old, whilst still referring to their own signals of ageing. By using physical markers as a means of creating a spectrum of ageing, managers are able to assert themselves favourably whilst not denying signs of ageing that are noticeable to the interviewer. As if further counteracting the possibility of losing status within the ageing process through the context of their talk, these images actually serve to promote their own subject positions. Martin employs a synedochal trope by referring specifically to a BMW, rather than just a car as a means of increasing his own symbolic worth. This is achieved by creating a lexical cohesion between Martin and the status and power associated with the BMW brand. Similarly, Jim’s illustrative image portrays him as a powerful and decisive leader. The textual expressionism reinforces this imagery, with the onomatopoeic ‘whizz’ and figurative ‘barking’. This is emphasized through the possessive pronoun ‘my’, which assigns Jim as the owner of the space. Although difficult to draw generalizations, it is interesting that reconciling any possible loss of power through physical manifestations of ageing was a strategy only used by the male interviewees. One possible explanation is that such talk may be confined by particular gendered patterns of behaviour. This related to gendered studies of management style where men’s talk is legitimated by references to individual power and status whilst womens is sanctioned through referring to the collaborative aspects of their work, even if this does not reflect their management practice (Oakley, 2000; Reed, 2001; Cliff et al., 2005). Whilst it is not within the remit of this thesis to
explore such paths, it remains an important discursive tactic in ameliorating possible loss of status through ageing.

What was interesting was the linkages between body and mind, where corporeality was synergised with particular modes of behaviour. In this way the deterioration of the body was thus seen to act as an indicator of someone getting older:

'It's as if everything seems to gradually slow down as you get older. You know stiffer, little aches and pains take longer to heal, and things get harder to do, but that's made easier by the fact that you have more knowledge that you can rely on to work smarter. Good Old Mother Nature (laughs).

Michael, 52, Catering

He (the interviewee's line manager) was, I don't know how to put this, getting on a bit maybe, and had these really thick glasses, and didn't seem to be all here a lot of the time, you know, a bit fuddery. We always used to joke that the reason we couldn't get our reports back for so long was because he had to read over everything twice! It was just a joke, of course, you know, cos he's the boss I think, there's - (sic) was no real malice meant... he even used to play up to it, you know, looking over his glasses, or saying he was going for a nap when he didn't want to be disturbed.

(KR) So did you think he was a good boss?

Oh, I suppose he was as good as they can be! (laughs) He knew a lot about the company and how the *** sector worked, which was good for me just starting out.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

Michael appears to distance himself from his construction of ageing with the ambiguous 'you', which makes it difficult to assess whether this is meant collectively, or generically, as in 'one', commonly used in French. Various subtle techniques are used to create a relationship between somatic ageing and psychological or mental disintegration. At first glance, Michael in the immediate text appears to prescribe to the dualistic idea of body and mind, still commonly upheld within Western society. However, on further analysis, there appears to be a more complex relationship between the two. The second sentence, elaborative in its relationship to the first about his notion of 'slowing down', suggests that this is referring to the physical body. However, the discourse marker 'but' signals a change, not only relating to a way of ameliorating these changes but a refocus onto mental capabilities. This has two effects on the resulting text. Firstly, it suggests that the slowing down may not only refer to the physical capabilities, aided by the more generalised statement in his elaborative text; it is difficult to assess whether the 'things' that get harder to do refers to the body and or mind. Such a link is also seen in Anne-Marie's text where thick glasses (indicative of failing eyesight) is semantically framed with references to behavioural aspects stereotypically associated with older people. Secondly, there is an
implication by Michael that such bodily discrepancies cannot be ‘managed’ in themselves, but instead have to be recompensed through relying on the mind. Similarly, Anne-Marie alludes to this through her reference to ‘knowledge’. By contrasting her boss’ position with her own (‘just starting out’) this reference to knowledge also appears to have a relation to his age. It may also be a compensatory strategy by Anne-Marie, who’s hedging (‘a bit’, pauses) and meta-commentary (‘I don’t know how to put this’) suggest that she is aware of harming her own ‘positive face’. Anne-Marie also uses humour to create a conversational implicative that this is a naturalised form of workplace interaction and employee resistance, through mocking someone in a senior position and by the focus upon the individuals organizational position, rather than his age per se. This is further normalised by the individual subject of the mockery himself ‘playing up’ to an older identity.

A reoccurring trend was the tendency for managers to compensate for such shortcomings during the conversations. Michael does appear to ‘provide an answer’ as to how such effects may be managed. Yet in order to set up apparent solutions, ageing is assumed to be a problematic process which needs to be ‘fixed’ or addressed. However, since the body is presented as incapable of ‘fixing itself’, body-as-mirror discourse renders the individual passive and helpless to a greater extent and must rely on other resources (such as the mind). Michael’s allusion to Mother Nature illustrates this idea perfectly. Drawing on the ‘rationality of nature’ as a reoccurring motif that universalises the process of ageing as inevitable and (falsely) symmetrical and homogenous allows him to present the notion of a ‘fair equation’. Although bodily attributes may be taken away, they are compensated with knowledge. This perspective implies that the inevitability of ageing cannot be challenged by the individual themselves since it is dictated by a higher order. In this particular extract, ‘she’, a metaphorical embodiment of the ‘natural way of the world’ is seen as providing the solution, even implying that knowledge-gathering is an inevitability, rather than an active, conscious process.

8.1.2 ‘Doing Age’ Through Body Choreography

Other managers created a more explicit relationship between the body and work through articulating a relationship between particular body movements with age. The importance of this was not only discussed within interviews but was also captured by two managers in
the discussions before the interview. Both came about during a discussion about having to
walk to the interview locations after meeting me at their respective front desk receptions.
Having broken a small bone in my toe, I was limping badly and had to walk very slowly.
Unfortunately these interactions were not captured on tape, so instead I have included the
field notes I wrote immediately after the interview:

I got the feeling he was enjoying this – not in a malicious way at all, but his comments implied that
this was a sort of role reversal – he said – it’s been a while since ‘I had to ask a young lady to keep
up with me!’ (exact words). I’m sure I would have had a smart retort, if it wasn’t for my foot bloody
hurting at this point.

Diary entry and field notes: Bob

I was struggling up the stairs and he just straight went and left me behind! And then he asked if I
wanted to take the lift, even though we were nearly at the right floor. He had bounded up way before
me and said as we were walking to the coffee machine he often did this – it felt it made his other
colleagues see him as ‘nice and young’ (exact words).

Diary entry and field notes: David

My behaviour was noticeably perceived as ‘out of order’. There was no suggestion that this
was a long-term injury. I myself was subject to stereotyped assumptions by 4 of the 5
participants when I interviewed when limping, who joked that the injury had come from
some form of wild living (falling whilst I was drunk, or tripping whilst wearing high
heels). Such an example gave an insight into the idea of what is herein referred to as ‘body
choreography’. This is the notion that the movement of the body gives particular culturally
encoded signals that transpire as a form of symbolic capital, thus affecting identity and
power relations between individuals. In the particular case of this study, certain
movements are associated with youth or middle age for example (although such categories
in themselves are too crude and mechanical here), and thus are seen as more legitimate or
‘normal’ if congruent with the perceived age of the individual. One participant, David,
appeared to grasp this idea particularly well, and attempted to use it to his advantage, an
example of ‘symbolic mastery’ in action. As the field notes show, David’s comment not
only synonymises ‘nice’ with ‘young’ to promote youth as a positive attribute, but he
appeared to emancipate himself from an older worker stereotype by mimicking body
movements which were associated with youth.

The concept of body choreography was also alluded to within the texts of other managers:
You can see it in two of the sales guys in the company – both top sales people, but their styles are very different. Joe’s a bit older and likes to take his time, make himself comfortable – he’s a real genius, he’ll sit like they are sitting, not invading their personal space of course, and walk slowly round the room – it’s genius to watch their eyes just follow him. His protégé Paul is totally different – he just bounds in there, and takes them by storm – he gets called Katrina, after the hurricane in, em what do you call it, New Orleans! It seems to work for him, and I think down to him being all bright eyed and bushy tailed, and he’s 29 but looks like he’s just out of shorts, and get caught up in his enthusiasm.

(KR): (laughs) What do you think would happen if it was the other way round and -

(Laughs) I know, can you imagine – it – undignified I think is the word (both laugh)

(KR): And what if Paul was to copy Joe?

I just can’t imagine him doing that, it’s not in his personality you know, to just be able to sit there, he’s very ‘right lets do it now’ kind of guy.

Jim, 37, Insurance

I think there’s only been one time where I thought about age and older workers as, I think I was aware of it more when I went for this job, the job I’m in now and I was making a presentation to the board and some advisors who were all , at least 50 I would say, short presentation, but it was you know the...still an important one and they were just sitting there, and you’re trying to be as dynamic as possible, moving about, wildly gesticulating about all my great new ideas (laughs) you know, like (moves her arms about, knocking her microphone) sorry – got a bit over excited (both laugh), (muffled on tape) partly to make a good impression, but sometimes just to keep them awake! They were just sitting there – like, I don’t know.

Susan, 39, Education

He is very, he does, the word popping into my head is sedate. Which is awful but he likes his holidays to go somewhere nice where they can maybe go for a walk have a meal, you know. People go “he’s that age, he’s getting on”.

Tara, 40, Finance

The above excerpts highlight the interrelationship between body movement and social ‘signals’ of age. Yet the excerpts are not simply performative in the sense that subjects are using their bodies to achieve something. Their movements are embodied through participants deriving meaning in relation to cultural and social beliefs. The first story could easily fall under the title ‘doing age’, similar to West and Zimmerman’s (1988) ‘doing gender’ thesis, where particular body movements are portrayed as more appropriate and ‘natural’ for someone’s age. Whilst two alternative forms of body choreography are at first constructed as equally successful, when asked to elaborate by the interviewee through hypothesising, although the question is interrupted, Jim’s lexical choice, undignified, implies that such a situation would be unfitting. The humour which accompanies this idea emphasizes the notion of a disjuncture between age and certain body movements. In comparison, the younger workers not as berated and the assumed ‘lack of fit’ is distanced from age specificity to more psychologistic claims about the individual.
Susan also creates a contrast between 'young' and 'old' body movement, where she positions her own movement as trying to compensate for the lack of perceived energy from her audience. Compared to Susan, phrases such as 'just sitting there' and 'struggling to keep awake' not only imply closed body language, but the lack of movement compared with Susan's 'gesticulating' are structured in a way which imply they are conducive to age. For example, the initial framing of the story and biographical information ('all at least 50'), that is used to identify the board leads the reader to understand the story as age-significant. This is also seen in Tara's excerpt. Examples from outwith the workplace are interrelated with other pastimes which she uses as behavioural signifiers of older age and together they help to qualify why an individual gets called old at work. The pronounced lexical choice ‘sedate’ also carried particular assumptions which are complimented by referring to ‘going for a walk’. Since the contrast is largely implicated, the listener is invited to create a contrast structure ourselves to regard particular lifestyle choices as universally understood as age-related.

8.1.3 Body Discrepancies

Another emergent theme which drew on body discourses as signifiers of age was the assumption of the ageing body as degenerative and deteriorating:

When I started out working *** (name of organization) my body was my friend (smiles) I could dress it up in nice suits and everything sat where it should. Now I sometimes feel that I have to shoehorn myself into my clothes, not that they're too tight, I'm not one of these vain women that buys clothes a size too small (laughs) but (pause), but I hate it when women sit down and you can see the bits of fat coming out from under their shirts when they sit down. I just need to take more care about how they sit on me, take more time about bits escaping I think!

Catherine, 42, Hospitality

Naturally as you get old, and I'm experiencing this year, your body starts misbehaving and not doing what you want it to do. So there could be maybe absence issues and stuff like that.

(Later in interview)
I recently had a conversation with a new manager I had and I said something about being 40 and he went "pardon?" and I said I'd hit 40 this year, my body's just starting to pack up and it's really annoying me.

Tara, 40, Finance

I remember when I was really stressed out and we were in a meeting and it was for, we were trying to, you see, secure a big deal and all of a sudden I felt really really hot and all sweaty and it was so strange...later on one of the guys on my team joked that I must be starting the menopause – accelerated due to stress!

KR: And what did you think about that?

Well, he was joking of course, but I do remember thinking, oh my god, I'm dreading if that ever happens!

Anne, 37, Tourism
As the examples show, body discrepancies are symbolically connected with ageing. Such a theme appears to work directly against managerial ideals of rationalism and reason, where the body is an ignored vessel within organizational exchange. Contrary to this world view, the ageing body was widely discussed as ‘impinging’ on the workplace. Catherine’s excerpt is particularly insightful, in presenting her ‘youthful’ body as the naturalised state; the body that is unproblematic and can be essentially forgotten about. Tara also conceptualises her ‘ageing’ body as ‘misbehaving’, setting up an implicit comparison with a time when it did behave. This comparison is also seen in Catherine’s excerpt where her ‘current body’ requires a higher level of consciousness; the body is separated from herself and able to achieve a life of its own and attributed autonomous actions such as escaping. This is marked as undesirable, as Catherine distances herself from becoming ‘one of those women’ who is unable to control their own body.

Similarly, in Anne’s case it appears to be that her apparent exclusion from belonging to what may be seen as a categorical age marker (‘menopausal’) is also used as a distancing strategy. In this case, her proclaimed subject position appears to be a reason why such an age marker can be discussed i.e. because it doesn’t threaten anyone’s identity within the interaction. The use of humour is perhaps unsurprising; menstruation or menopause is still viewed as a taboo subject in society, let alone the workplace (Brewis and Linstead, 2000; Osseen, 2003). Thus whilst interrelationship between menopausal and workplace events may be anything but jocular, using it as a means of humour trivializes and negates its impact. As further qualification to distance herself from this age marker, Rose primarily attributes this incident to stress. The structure of this narrative is particularly telling; by placing the explanation prior to the story (‘stress’), we, as the listener read the story as resultant from stress, and can therefore appreciate the irony of the event used as an indicator of an age-specific identity.

8.1.4 The Ageing Body Project

In light of the negative social connotations associated with ageing as discussed earlier it is unsurprising that there was a lack of affiliation with such constructions. However, many of the questions asked were worded in a way that encouraged the individual to assert their own identity within their answers, through asking them to draw on their personal
experiences. This resulted in discursive shift within corporeal Discourses which opened up a more liberating theoretical space for managers to exert and discuss more subjective perspectives of ageing, which otherwise could not be discussed. One such theme that arose from this was the notion of challenging the inevitability of ageing as discussed earlier:

I suppose I am biologically 41 because that’s how old I am. So I do have to get more highlights in my hair now to cover up some grey which is alarming me because I’m thinking “where did that come from?” but I’ve been lucky in that I’ve never had any other health problems and I’ve never had and still don’t have to wear glasses. Whereas I’ve got 10 years on many of my colleagues and some of them are wearing glasses already. So but biologically I guess my body is 41 years old, but mentally I’m not.

Lucy, 41, Retail

I think I’m lucky, I’ve got good genes and as my husband keeps on reminding me the money to make the best of them (laughs)...but I still have to work hard at it, you know get my nails done, it’s quite important to me, and make sure I use just enough corrector to hide the lines without, em, looking like Frankenstein (both laugh), but I’ve never had anyone comment on looking like an old crone, I remember on my 50th birthday Ian (her husband) ordered a cake to our office and everyone was shocked – so there you go, I must be doing something right!

Patricia, 54, Utilities

In terms of wanting to look the part and not wanting to look too old. We have someone who works for us and I know she’s nearly 60 and works in admin and she’s conscious of how she looks and conscious of how she comes across. And we think she’s great, brilliant, and if I could look like that when I’m that age I’d be so happy, but she is conscious of it. What she eats, what she does and how she’s perceived. I don’t think ... think she’s always been like that or whether that’s just ... I think it’s just, I mean I think nobody would ever turn round and say anything to her about her age at all like today it would make her feel awful because she does look wonderful for her age. It is her own self perceptions...people probably think quite a bit about what others think of them to look like that - make that much effort - You know spend ages hiding yourself in the makeup or whatever in the morning. There’s maybe consciousness there. People expect it.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

There’s more of a pressure to not give in to the perm and stuff and I mean when I was younger I would say "I will never, ever have plastic surgery, it’s appalling why would people do that" but just in recent years I’ve been thinking "would I get my eyes done" because I think my eyes are the worst thing, so would I get my eyes done. That’s a complete change. That’s scary that I’ve changed my mind like that because I’ve always thought that’s completely vain, it’s got nothing to do de, de, de, de.

Tara, 40, Finance

Although alluded to in many interviews, Patricia is explicit in her thematic introduction of a nature vs. nurture debate. As in the earlier ‘body as mirror’ discussion, biological fundamentalism is used as a primary means of communicating ideas. However, rather than being presented as a level playing field, managers fore fronted this as an advantageous foundation which gave them an advantage. ‘Good genes’ is a key phrase since it both draws on a biomedical language which assumes objectivity, and may also be seen as a type of synedochal reference which refers to her whole body, rather than the simple genetic make-up. Lucy also draws on this predestined idea of nature by being ‘lucky’. Her
advantageous position is also set up using a comparison between others (‘10 years on many of my colleagues’).

However, within these discussions, the idea is ‘nature’ is sidelined whilst the ‘nurture’ idea is fore fronted and developed as managers continue to discuss the ways in which they proactively try to challenge ageing. This was extremely important in terms of liberating managers, since it implied that the ageing process was a phenomena that could be controlled by the individual. Key to this idea is the transactive positioning of the individual subject. There is acute focus on the active subject within causal process (what they do) and the use of present tense also implies the ongoing nature of the process as a continual body project. The structure of the texts also serves to promote particular value judgements. Patricia’s assertion of beliefs (‘quite important’; ‘doing something right’) are about her own body project, although the third party individuals within her narrative (husband and work colleagues) universalises this as a preferred achievement. Alicia also sets this up as the preferred norm in society, abstracting this judgement from a personal preference to being expected by ‘people’.

Tara, like many participants, refers to more extreme forms of anti-ageing, promoting the notion of plasticity of ageing, where the body can be moulded and sculpted if required, or desired (Synnott, 1993). However, there was careful negotiation of undertaking more extreme forms of body project. Unlike Tara’s examples, who states she might consider ‘getting her eyes done’, such references are often employed as extreme case formulations where managers deny they would ‘go to such lengths as a tummy tuck’ (Ingrid, 50’s Broadcasting). One possible suggestion is the danger that to undertake the body project may send out social signals that you are ageing, which might have not been noticeable before. Undergoing surgery may result in what could be described as a symbolic backlash where activities undertaken to prevent or hide ageing end up in doing the opposite.

The danger of this is also encapsulated in the references to ‘hiding’ or ‘covering up’ in the above quotations. It is difficult to assess whether this only refers to ‘hiding’ the ageing process, or also to the notion to hiding the fact you are trying to hide the ageing process. For Patricia, not wanting to look like a fictitious monster is assumed, but it is difficult to assess whether this is because it looks unsightly in itself, or because it gives away that she needs to apply concealer. Similarly, Alicia questions the worth of the body project...
dominating every aspect of life. As a result, there appears to be a contradiction between undertaking a body project to ameliorate the affects of ageing and shame in investing too much time in doing so. In this instance, humour may also serve a mitigating function of euphemising individual’s body projects, where they appear to ridicule their own vanity or actions. In the direct context of the interview, humour also appears to help discuss issues which are discussed only between trusted friends, or perhaps not discussed at all.

8.1.5 Agelessness as an Achievement

Key to the previous theme was the achievement of the anti-ageing body project. Surprisingly, whilst managers discussed a desire to look younger, there was a lack of discussion about wanting to look ‘young’. Instead, there appeared to be the emergence of the notion of ‘agelessness’:

If you look at women’s magazines they have woman on them, if you look at men’s magazines they have women on them. You know. Unless it’s generally a gay magazine. But I think about the only guy they don’t stereotype is David Beckham, who is acceptable on a man’s magazine. I think you could probably get away with George Clooney on a man’s magazine but most of the time you want women on a man’s magazine. Women wearing very little clothes on a man’s magazine. Whereas on a woman’s magazine, we’d quite like to see a guy on it as well but we’re also quite happy to see a woman on it. But the woman is ageless. I know sometimes they can air brush as well if it is an older, some of the stars, or they’re shot in a different way to appear ageless almost.

(Later in interview)
Look where people go “I could not tell what age that person was”. Which is a new thing I think. So it's not necessarily about looking younger, it's about looking where people can't guess your age and maybe that's so that we have to then, I don't know look more at your personality I don't know. So I think it's a very interesting topic.

Tara, 40, Finance

The way they (women) act as well if they go out, yes. You have to behave a way depending on your age buy if you’re male maybe not so much. I feel that I’m managing to fight it and don’t look either young or old and that's fine but females they look in newspapers and things trying to make themselves look younger all the time. I'm not saying it's right or wrong. But that's what's perceived.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

I think women are more interested in how they look. They are definitely more concemed with their appearance. That's not to say they want to look young. It’s they want to make the best of themselves. And I'm not sure that can be said of men of my age, for example. You know, but it works in the engineering world, where you know, they are expected to dress down and not wear suits. You know, he used to wear suits but, now he works at BP they don't wear a suit, you wear an open necked shirt and you wear a scarf and a fleece and cords. Well we had to go and buy all that, you know. So I don’t know, maybe it's just cultures within organizations as well.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

A number of strategies are used within the examples to objectify and legitimise their claims. In these excerpts, the manager’s drew examples from celebrity or media images, sources which are embedded within social discourses of ageing. Such a message is
objectified both through the lack of contestation to this world view and the declarative modality of the clauses. For example, Alicia promotes her position of an objective truth teller by her explicit denial of judgement (‘I’m not saying it’s right or wrong’). In one way referring to media text allowed the managers to distance themselves from the ideas permeated within such texts and at the same time subscribe to them through creating a causal relationship between such ideas and their own behaviour.

Again, although such a small participant pool means we cannot generalise, this only appeared in the discussion of female managers and often overlapped with references to gender. The modality surrounding the introduction of differences signaled that participants were hesitant to ascribe a gendered perspective, as shown in the above examples with hedging and adverbs (‘maybe’, ‘I don’t know’) mitigating such claims. However, one reason for this may be found within previous research which suggests women are ‘never the right age’ (Itzin and Phillipson, 1993:45; Duncan and Loretto, 2004). If this is indeed the case, it is unsurprising that the interviewees were attempting to achieve a goal of transcending age.

8.2 Growing Older at Work

Without essentialising the discussion to biology, ageing differs from gender or ethnicity. Whilst the social and symbolic meaning of gender and ethnicity are dynamic and fluid, those who belong within such categories will often remain so throughout their lives, save the exceptions of transgender, although their experiences of ethnic or gendered constructions may change. Age, however, is less determinable in terms of categorising. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is difficult to use the term ‘older worker’ in the same way as we would, say ‘women’, since there is an ambiguity over which age one ‘becomes’ an older worker. This has particular consequences for the notion of the habitus, which Bourdieu sees as formulated primarily during childhood when we already have an awareness of belonging to a particular group or collective. Instead, an individual’s self-position within the meaning of age can change dramatically change over their life course. It is perhaps because of this process that it is possible to explore the reflexive nature of age identity to a greater extent.
8.2.1 Age Aware

The first way age identity was highlighted in interviews was through participants alluding to their own ageing processes at work.

More and more these days I'm beginning to feel older just because all the applications we get in. You know people are coming in with birth dates of 1988 ...

(KR) And you're at school ... (laughter)

Can't possibly be old enough to work and I'm sitting there counting it out and "oh yes, they are, and I'm ten years older than that" so I have started in the last year I would say to feel old whereas up until 25 I felt always quite young and it's not just at work, it's out socially as well.

(KR) And how does that feel? What's your reaction to that?

Shocking actually. I never thought about it and then I noticed it. Plus I still feel I'm happy, the fact that I've got this far is brilliant - it's a fact of life, it's not a problem, it's just funny that I noticed it. I was surprised.

Kate, 26, Hospitality

(KR) And do you think you act your age -

Ha, ha. Yes and no. Yes. Oh. Ha, ha. I purposely don't at times. But yes, I try and behave, appropriately and I have done, and I suppose, actually over the last five or so years more so. I put more thought into that as well to sort of say, well what would I have done and right ok how should I behave, yeah what is, it's not should it's what appropriate behaviour should I be doing here? And I think over the last five years have thought more about that and behaved more towards more thinking about it than actually behaving that way.

Gillian, 30's, Retail

I think starting to know you are an older worker when young people come into your section, and you suddenly realise, "oh my goodness I've been here before they were born" as it were. There's something for me, having been around a bit people who can come to you and say, "oh yes, Linda will know that. Go and ask Linda for her advice, she'll know the rules and regulations. She'll remember if there's anything like that before" or if there are problems, you know, staff problems "go and ask Linda, for her advice". So it's almost playing the role in some cases of mother, sister perhaps...

Linda, 50, Civil Service

Thinking about it now, in some ways I took my age for granted when I was younger, not I'm finding it, not harder, but finding it harder to be wonder women and work 60 hour weeks and still try to keep up with my family at the weekend.

Catherine, 42, Hospitality

Another common idea emerging from a number of interviews was that the notion of becoming 'age aware' increased as the individual grew older. This used a contrast structure, as exemplified in Kate and Gillian's excerpts, between age being a 'given' when younger to an increasing awareness growing older. This is created through disclosing a lexical marker referring to when this began ('five years ago', 'started in the last year'). In one way, this increasing awareness does allow participants to assert some control over the process. Despite many alluding to the ageing process being natural or normal, their
transactive positioning within the texts is still active and the opinions focus on internalised thoughts rather than socially impinged.

However, this is rather contradictory considering the ‘critical events’ triggering such feelings. What was particularly interesting was the presentation of becoming age aware appeared to be triggered by a significant event or sudden realisation that is framed as jolting the individual into a reflexive state, often met with surprise. These ‘critical events’, such as interacting with those who you suddenly regard as ‘different’ appear to shape the individuals own meaning of themselves through their position with others and appear to react or predict that their behaviour must be modified in accordance with this. In this sense, the participants present themselves as active reflexive agents. Whilst particular events are decoded by managers drawing on age-determined Discourses, they appear to be aware of this change and are able to manoeuvre within them.

Finally, the above extract of Linda is particularly insightful in constructing the notion of ‘doing age’. This concept is modified from West and Zimmerman (1988) who discuss gender as socially accomplished and perpetuated within social relations. Similarly, many of the interviewees included narratives where interactions were organized using idealised depictions on account of age. In Linda’s case, age is managed by both herself and others through being an indicator of her experience. As discussed previously, this notion of ‘experience’ is embedded with age-related assumptions. Through the semantic collusion of the two ideas (‘age’ and ‘experience’), where one may be substituted for the other, Linda asserts a pastoral identity, which is further reinforced through alluding to family members.

8.2.2 Ageing as a Gendered Process

Although the sample was biased towards women, there did appear to be suggestions that ageing was being constructed as a gendered practice. One reoccurring example was the notion of ‘adding value’.

Probably an older woman, erm, what society expects, talking about being good looking at a certain age and to skin and you know bone structure and all the rest of it. I mean as you age things all go down and migrate south sort of thing (laughter). I think yeah, there is perception that an older man has greyed looks distinguished, but an older woman who’s greying and has wrinkles does have to look very good to be able to carry that off.

Ingrid, early 50’s, Broadcasting
(KR): Do you feel that an older woman is subject to difference age related perceptions than an older man?

OK. I feel I'm not sure why I feel this, but it's probably less. As I say, I'm not sure why I feel that. I think it's something around women tend to, she says in her jeans, be able to glamorise themselves. Get dressed up for special occasions and look younger. Whereas men, on with the suit, or what have you, don't make an effort to look younger. Some older men do look good looking but I don't think they look younger. So therefore women ... I've lost the point I was making. Yes. I think it's something I got muddled in saying, it's something to do with men physically wear - a great generalisation- better and you almost don't notice them sort of particularly if a company they've been there for a few years, and it's almost like they blend in, so age isn't important for men ... I'm getting myself tied up in knots. Just round the corner, whereas for women oh well er, can't think of any ideas but you're watching for a blue rinse, not that but you know nice and do themselves up too much and stick out like a sore thumb, etc, but as we said earlier she may be seen as a mother and a granny. And whilst they are sort of, while with men they wouldn't necessarily be associated with being a grandfather although they may be.

Linda, 59, Civil Service

Men, erm, I still think people think men are going to mature (laughter) as they grow older. And so they, I think, there is still a belief they can add value as they get older, whereas not necessarily a woman.

(KR): Why is that?

Well, they might have taken a career break and by the time they come back they are a bit out of date with new technologies and systems perhaps, I'm not sure.

Christine, 34, Finance

It might sound sexist and its not, but you can nearly guarantee that most older men will have worked straight through from school or college or an apprenticeship, and it's the women that tend to take time off so naturally they're going to have less experience than a man of the same age.

Martin, 43, Finance

See I mean, I suppose it's really difficult for me because most women at my age are either married, have been married, or have been in a long term relationship and probably have children, most of my co-workers do. None of that applies to me. So I don't think I'm acting my age because I think society tells me that by this age I should at least be living with someone or have children and I've achieved none of these things so does that make me a failure? But nor do I ... and then they give you new stereotypes like the Sex in the City thing. Don't relate to them either. It's almost like you have this choice, you are either 40 and in a long term relationship or the relationship is meant to be long term with children or you are meant to be Carrie Bradshaw and her friends out on the town who were all looking for long term relationships. So I don't feel I'm acting my age and sometimes that worries me. People, I think, probably treat me younger than what I am actually am.

Tara, 40, Finance

Men's 'signals' of ageing, such as grey hair of maturity were discussed within a humourous context with jokes about their 'lovely grey hair', for example (AIF). Yet female aesthetic markers appeared to be more negatively construed. One emerging theme that supported this idea was the concept of 'visibility'; the idea that women's signs of ageing were more poignant since women themselves were more noticeable in the workplace. This idea is seen as the catalyst in modifying Linda's opinions within her extract. At first she states women are advantaged since they have the ability to 'look younger'. Yet the value
attachment of this is dissolved later on in the text when men are constructed as not as noticeable: the idiomatic ‘blend in’ serves to portray older men as ‘naturally’ fitting into the company. This is set in contrast to the female character who, again employing idiomatic language for emphasis (‘sticks out like a sore thumb’).

Both female and male managers alluded to the notion of ‘adding value’ through age using the ‘experience’ token, as discussed earlier. However, this also appeared to carry particular gendered qualifiers by presenting their argument in a quasi-logical structure. Managers did seem aware that such claims could be seen as sexist and thus used a number of mitigating devices, such as openly denying sexism, and instead appeared to appeal to the interviewee’s sense of logic and deduction. By drawing on biological Discourses, managers uses the stereotypical motherhood career break to substantiate claims that women will have less experience. As well as reproducing gendered inequalities such as the prioritisation of family (Alvesson and Billig, 1997:98), it is interesting to note that these constructions are used to shape meanings of concepts related to older workers. Since the career break is a culturally understood stereotype, it can be used to ‘naturally’ deduce that they will have less experience. Again, this relies on the earlier analysis of ‘experience’ which deconstruct experience as qualified by quantity of time in the workplace, rather than quality.

Tara’s extract highlights the difficulty of self management concerning ‘doing age’. Her narrative is framed by references to personal anxiety (italicized) about not ‘achieving’ culturally inscribed roles. This is presented by Tara as an inability to fit in with the norm, through the construction of her own self position as the ‘other’. However, the position of the ‘other’ (single) woman is also self-limiting in its aspirations towards love. The dichotomous position she presents between having found or looking for love by a certain age highlight just how limited the cultural norms are, although auxiliary verbs such as ‘should and ‘must be’ work to increase the degree of neutrality and objectivity of such ideals. This is also aided by the focalisation apparent within the narrative: ‘you have this choice’ is not attached to any active or particular agent and emerges as an omniscient and powerful ‘voice of society’. It is telling that as a result of such limiting visions of self, Tara is unable to, in effect, ‘live up’ to her socially-ascribed chronological age and she (and others) resort to using a younger age in order to ‘make sense’ of her identity.
8.3 Constructing Self Within, Between and Against Older Worker Identity

Considering the stereotypes and negative connotations resulting from cultural and organizational discourses that relate to age, it was not surprising that participants sought to actively assert a favourable self-identity to challenge the older worker constructions that emerged within the texts. This section discusses the three main strategies that were repeatedly employed by managers as a means of negotiating the self within the texts.

8.3.1 Flipping Stereotypes

This was most commonly used by managers who were 45 or above. Whilst it cannot be assumed that participants themselves felt more attached to the older worker identity, it may be suggested that they were more in danger of being categorized as an older worker through the social precedence of using chronology as a means of definition. The first technique employed discursive distancing strategies as a means of separating themselves from the older worker construction was by creating a separation or distance from older worker typifications. This required presenting themselves as having characteristics that were normally socially understood and aligned with ‘the young’.

OK, what do we bring? I'm just thinking of ... I suppose the main thing, you see I'm quite creative. I'm not a ... I would like to say that you know I can kind of bring calm into the ... but I wouldn't. I'd be the one going "ooohhh" - and perhaps getting giddy or - that's not sort of typical I don't think. But I know, like some of my peers what they would bring. I don't know, I'm thinking of my ex boss who's 20 years younger than me, well she wasn't, she was 10 years younger than me. And she was quite downbeat and very serious and the exact opposite of me. So you would probably think that if we described ourselves and you didn't look to see us you would probably choose her as the older person because she was very serious.

Gail, 49, Consultancy

I suspect someone would think why is this twit working so hard because most of the people come up from England Monday to Thursday and then they get to fly home on a Thursday to work from home.... Certainly the head consultant, Haydn, who looks and acts 50 but he's 32 but that's by the by, he regularly refers to my age. He made the comment the other day he'd never seen, because I do ogle at women sometimes and he just can't believe that I'm all over the place, pretty face passes,' who's that?' No, but I'm sure some think why's he here? Others see me as very helpful and doing my best. Because despite appearances I could be quite polite when asking for things .... Remembering everybody knows that I got my money, everybody knows I was asked to come back and I've done two decent pieces of work, hence why I'm back for a third time. So they see my value.

Bob, 50's, Brewing

This technique was often accompanied by the individual at some point ascribing or defining themselves as an older worker at some point during the interview. The use of
personal pronoun ‘we’ was often used to signal this attachment, as seen in Gail’s extract. So whilst the questions asked would refer to the older worker in generalist terms, the interviewer would automatically position themselves as belonging to that group. However, referring to their own personal experience allowed them to purport examples which subverted socially understood norms about older workers.

What was interesting was that the characteristics referred to were not necessarily redeemable traits or those required within an organizational domain. Characteristics such as overt sexuality, excitability and naivety are all either repressed or frowned upon in dominant perceptions of bureaucracy (Hearn et al., 1990) and admitting to such behaviours appears surprising as a strategy of redemption. One way to understand this is suggesting that whilst such behaviours are not valued in themselves, their ascription to youth make them symbolically powerful. Therefore, their power to assert and enact particular identities is more important than the behaviours in themselves.

This aided the construction of contrast structures to allow interviewees to distance themselves from the older worker ‘ideal type’. This did not challenge particular beliefs about older workers: instead, participants would position themselves as ‘the exception’ and in doing so, required the participant to actively engage in the reproduction of a ‘typical’ older worker in order to personally subvert it, although this not only referred to older workers themselves but individuals who ‘acted’ old. This was a strong argumentative device as it allowed managers to negotiate a position away from the older worker whilst not making direct claims about older workers that could be construed as ageist. For example, whilst structured as a meta-commentary within the narrative, it is important to note that the other figure in Bob’s story is subject to age-shaping, but in the opposite way through his description ‘acts 50’, similar to Gail’s characterisation of someone who acted older. These characters also help managers to problematise and discredit the notion of using chronological age as a marker of older worker identity and instead focus on more psychological traits and behaviours.

Stylistically, Bob’s quotation is similar to other participant’s texts in the sense that he combines an informal tone with evidential reasoning in order to reinforce self-worth. The disclosure of his own behaviour, which is discursively associated within younger people, is
used to distance from the ‘typical’ older worker figure. Bob also fore fronts his willingness to return after redundancy rather than take early retirement; a reoccurring thematic motif throughout his interview. The clause work (italics) helps to achieve ‘proof of his performance’ through a number of additive statements which strengthen his argument. Therefore, he is not simply ‘dead wood’ (a reference he makes earlier in the interview), but is making a significant and palpable contribution.

8.3.2 Denying Personal Relevance of Older Worker Ageism

The second approach used to distance themselves from the older worker ‘ideal type’ was by problematising the category of older worker. Highlighting the ambiguity about how to define an older worker allowed individuals to contest their own affiliation:

What is old? I mean I think I read somewhere recently that people in their mid 30s now are being told at interview, not specifically, but there is an inference that they’re actually too old for the job. Which is quite frightening. Erm, it's quite a difficult one to put a figure on. Erm. But I would say certainly 50+ has got to be in that category but it might even apply to people younger than that. Again depending on erm the perception of the individual that's doing the recruitment in the company. Erm, it's quite a hard one to actually say put a figure on, but as I say I have been told that 30 something in some cases is verging on a bit too old now.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

You...you could say its more likely that someone who is 64 is more likely to be discriminated against that someone who is 34, but other than that, erm, I think, it's in the minds of the people I think, although I certainly don't think I would be discriminated against at the age I am just now — I can honestly say I have not ever felt discriminated against on account of my age so far.

Susan, 39, Education

The books tell me 40 odd...or even worse. Erm, I've not encountered that to be honest. To explain, two years ago, and this isn't secret (name of company) had a problem with their new supply chain network. Now there were profit warnings to the City so it's all quite official. I was asked to go down to Thatchern in Berkshire in April 2003 to fix it because it was a mess. It was a mess. The staff partly because they did lots of hours, but the staff were very pleased to see somebody who cared, but some of them were, and it annoyed me at the time because I think I'm 19, but they were saying it was the experience that made them confident I knew what I was doing. So I think as long as you're doing something useful you don't get accused as being seen as old, if you know what I mean.

Bob, 50's, Brewing

(KR): So has anyone ever called you an older worker?

No, not yet...I might get that soon, but not at the moment. I think I'm in the middle ground, which is the safe ground I think.

Irene, 36, Engineering

I am probably discriminated against because I'm over 30 now. Actually I think there are some statistics that say between the age of 28 and 35 that's when you gain or you are at your most valuable to an organization. I read that somewhere recently and I can't think where I read it and I thought Oh My God, I'm on the scrap heap already and I'm only 38, so I'm obviously an older worker. (laughter). Probably not right now, but maybe if I was to, say, in a couple of years time
As the citations show, managers attempt to ideologically contest the notion of using chronological age as a categoriser. Thematically, managers emphasized the subjectivity of perception, an idea that was noticeably absent within managerial discourses about managing age discrimination. Extreme case formulations, such as Jackie's example of '30', attempted to construct a 'murky middle place' where views concerning who was susceptible to age discrimination highlight the futility of trying to use chronological age as a marker. In the interviews, this idea was supported linguistically with the frequent use of hedging their talk with 'erm' and pauses (shown by ... or - ) or laughter. One heavily employed device was using evidential reasoning by referring to experience. Structuring anecdotes within a personal framework is one of the most effective means of ameliorating apparent tensions within talk (Labov and Waletzky, 1968). This allows personal declarations to strengthen the declarative modality of the text. In the case of this study, it allows managers to dispute the cultural norm using biological stages as a basis for categorising, symbolically presented by Bob as 'the books'. This personal space they created is also particularly powerful since they are ultimately the authoritative voice: because it is their experience, no-one else is in a position to contest this view.

8.3.3 'Winning' the Ageing Game

Since chronology was challenged as a model of categorization, there was a need to substitute an alternative model of classification. The third strategy managers used to challenge older worker alignment was not to deny their affiliation with the category of 'older worker' per se, but to stress their own 'successful ageing'. Whilst this often relied on discourses of the body discussed earlier, managers combined this with psychologically caring and overall management of the self:

(KR) What about the phrase, 'you are as old as you feel', what does that mean to you?

That means what my philosophy in life is. Your age doesn't actually matter and you shouldn't... I don't believe in saying I can't do something because of my age. Or I can't wear something because of my age. OK, I know that there are certain things in ... I love fashion, clothes, shoes and always have and there are certain things now I might think well I'll modify that to wear it because it might look a wee bit silly on a 41 year old. But then equally at other times I'll think that's really frivolous but so stuff it I'm going to buy it I like it. Like the dress I wore to last year's work Christmas party. I had gone shopping, seen this ridiculously short fringey dress that was covered in fringes and
thought, wow that's fantastic, I love it. Then I thought, God I'm 40 should I wear a dress like that. Then I thought, stuff it, it's for one Christmas party, I love it, I'm going to get it. And I did.

Lucy, 41, Retail

I'm usually 6 o'clock in the morning and it's like eyes awake and that's me ready to go again you know. Very, very occasionally I'll sleep till about quarter to seven and then I know I'm in trouble for the rest of the day because I've not waken at my usual time and it's like "uh-oh, I'm going to have a cloud hanging over me all day" like you know. So I suppose maybe that's it- that's what keeps me young.

Alf, 44, Construction

There's the psychological side, I think as well. If you keep yourself mentally active. Keep up to date with what's happening round about you, interested in your family, your grandchildren, young people you work beside, listening to them, issues that they're going through, getting engaged or starting off their new life or buying their first house or whatever, I think you can keep mentally attuned. So I think there's two sides of it, physical and psychological. And it's an holistic approach. If you're ... if you have this thing that in you're 50 and you start deteriorating and feel miserable and a real boring person I think that can have a knock on effect from an holistic point of view because you can end up feeling ill but you're not ill. It's psychosomatic concept. So I think that's something older people in businesses and in organizations are looking at not just the physical side of them coming to work but the intellectual, spiritual side. The holistic approach to people as well.

David, 50, Local Government

The transitivity helps to promote the responsibility for 'successful ageing' at the level of the individual. This is exemplified in Lucy's extract, where she is positioned as the causal agent in subverting social expectations. The direction of action within the text is similar in other interviews, where responsibility for successful ageing is focused at the individual level by, for example, keeping up to date, as David suggests. Similarly, all extracts focus on the role of the individual in enabling successful ageing, using either personal examples or the collective pronoun 'you'. This affects the modality of the text by promoting high levels of truth; since the participants set themselves up as 'living' evidential proof, the advocation of its success is strong. The limitation in using personal experience to exemplify the possibility of challenging norms and negative social standards is that there is no acknowledgement of possible barriers and challenges to such an approach that others may face. The individual is thus constructed as a free and liberated subject situated in a level playing field where each person has an equal chance of achieving 'successful ageing'.

Surprisingly, only one manager (David, above) draws any link between this concept and the organization, which he refers to as a holistic approach. This was surprising considering the recent governmental promotion and academic discussions purporting a more rounded approach to ageing which takes into account both personal and organizational objectives. Even when discussing elements of work which were targeted as older worker priorities such as training, the impetus was on the advantages to productivity, rather than the
individuals overall well being. It may be suggested that this indicates a lack of engagement by managers with larger social discourses about wellbeing and a prioritised concern with managerial goals, even though the two may be mutually beneficial.

8.3.4. Chronological Disjuncture

The final strategy again sought to undermine the legitimacy of chronological age, as seen in 8.3.2. This fallacy was achieved by stressing the disjuncture between their chronological age (as a number) and how they ‘felt’. Out of the sample, only 2 managers in the sample said that they ‘felt’ their chronological age. For the remaining managers, there was strong denial about being identified through their ‘chronological age’.

I don't think I feel any different than I did at 25 or 26 and I'm now 34 so I think you probably reach a state of mental maturity round about your mid 20s and that doesn't really change that much until society tells you, right you're old now, you've to change the way that you think about yourself and what you do, how you dress, where you go and all of these things. I think there's probably quite a wide window between 20s and late 30s when you can do, say and go where you please.

Julie, 34, Hospitality

My parents always are saying act my age. You're as young as you feel you know. I don't feel I'm ... I've got lots of energy and I love my job and I get on and do it and I don't ever think "oh gosh I shouldn't be doing that" or whatever. No. I don't ever stop and think about it. Certainly don't. No way.

Alicia, 36, Hospitality

I feel I'm 19. erm, because someone once sent me a thing saying "you can only be young once but you can be immature for ever" and that's ... but when key birthdays happen like my son, my older son was 21 a couple of years ago and my younger one's 21 this year, yes you are aware you are getting older but I ... no I don't ... because lots of people, I mean I know friends who had children at 18 so they're very young parents. I was 28, 29 before I had the first child and it didn't make me feel older at 29. an awful lot of parents are older these days than they were 100 years ago I suspect, you know in their 40's- you hears about women in their 50's nowadays as new mothers. So no I don't think the family side impacts on it. You only realise you're old when someone gives you a gold clock or something I suspect.

Bob 60's, Brewing

You will get people ... and I do like this saying ... people who are born at 40. so they've never really known what it's like to be a kid, to enjoy themselves, just let their hair down, you know, do some daft things because they've always been sensible and grown up and adult and actually that's quite boring. Whereas you'll get people who at 50, 60 80, whatever age, good fun to be with, have a laugh, can have drink, and just let their hair down and enjoy themselves but when they need to be they can be grown up too so it is a question of what's in your head and not letting other people dictate to you "for goodness sake you're 58 you should behave like a 50 something instead of 5".

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

This required managers to position internal perceptions as a more legitimate marker than chronological age. Of course, just as chronological age carried social and symbolic values, such internal perceptions also relied heavily of age-significant meaning attached to them.
For example, Alicia uses ‘lots of energy’ as an expressive marker of her identity. Whilst this is not necessarily indicative of youth, it does distance her from constructions of being older and connotations of slowing down. At a textual and strategic level, this was achieved by a fallatic function where elaborating and stressing the importance of experiential feelings and behaviour served to undermine the assumption of chronology as a legitimate age marker. For example, by highlighting development and chronological age as not moving along simultaneously, Julie implicitly questions the validity of chronology. This is further developed by a negation of discussing chronological age as a determinant of becoming ‘old’. Instead, she creates a reliance on ‘society’ to dictate ‘old’ as a marker, rather than mention any particular chronological age. This fallatic function is also employed within Bob’s extract, managers by highlighting the contradictions and limitations of chronological markers by presenting extreme or outlier cases as the norm. So whilst there are few women who are first time mothers in their fifties, the fact is used to highlight chronological approach to age as limited.

Whilst this was a successful strategy when referring to their own identities, it was difficult to universalise into a more collective frame of reference, since it relied heavily on internalised feelings. So whilst individuals could justify this execution from chronological age for themselves, it was still heavily used when referring to others. This in fact strengthened the importance of chronological markers by, for example, describing individuals by their chronological age or referring to others chronological age markers as a means of marking their own age identity (as in Bob’s excerpt). One noticeable discrepancy is that although managers dismiss age as a marker, they repeatedly relied on it as a basis for discussion. It could be argued that despite their dismissal of age markers, it remains an inescapable ideological resource when discussing older workers and discrimination. This is manifested in the earlier examples (see 8.3.2) in two ways. Firstly, there is the discursive emergence of a ‘safe age’, discussed by Susan, Amy and Irene. In the excerpt Julie’s own age is right between the margins she proposes as a ‘safe age’. The second way is highlighted in Bob’s text where he self-identifies himself using a chronological marker (19), which assumes the listener will draw on shared (stereotypical) perceptions of individuals of that age. This is particularly interesting since 19 is not his biological age, but he affiliates himself with it as a means of distancing himself from a possible age-related identity closer to his actual chronological age.
Managers also drew on culturally inscribed notions of the body as highlighting the juxtaposition between their ‘real’ age and their chronological age. A common motif was the body as a ‘traitor’:

I suppose I have a mental block about it because when people ask me how old I am, or how old you are when you are at the doctor’s or something, I can never remember. I’ve got this block, you know, I don’t want to remember how old I am. It does vary and there’s all sorts of, you’re right, it does change from day to day and I think you look around and it gets a different time of year and you see everybody wearing flouncy skirts and all that sort of thing and you think I use to wear that. (laughter) and then at other times, I suppose I’m probably about the oldest in our team at work and that goes from about 25 to 30 years in age and I don’t really feel, I just feel one of them.

Ingrid, early 50’s, Broadcasting

The boys next door there, they see me with my lovely grey hair and all the rest of it, you know, so therefore I’m definitely perceived to be older than them. And funny enough I look at them and think the age that they are but when I see their date of birth you know it’s like some of them are maybe younger than me but I think they’re older than me.

Alf, 44, Construction

In my head I still want to wear tight tops but my body just screams nooo!

Susan, 39, Education

Erm, funny enough on the Woman’s Hour programme about fashion and age on the website somebody had written in their comments and it was to the effect that something to do with our girth or her width was that of a 55 year old woman but inside her head was a size 14. I really liked that because ... and I’ve heard older people than me say this. I feel the same as I did when I was 21. I don’t feel any different. I sound the same, you know. It’s just when I look in the mirror, my body’s telling me I’m now 60 or whatever it is, my body shape and size or whatever. So, erm, it’s very much an individual thing.

Jackie, 60, Civil Service

Managers repeatedly used body references as a problematical marker of their age. Yet this is not simply a ‘reminder’ of age, which implies that the individual is simply pretending or deluded about feeling younger, but was shown as an area of contradiction which needed to be careful negotiated by participants. The most common strategy in doing so was to polarize themselves from their body, shown in the common employment of figurative language and tropes used to refer to the body within such discussions. This personification from the body is developed, often by giving their own body a voice separate to themselves. For example, both Isabel and Susan allude to a dialogue between themselves and their body, which is able to ‘tell’ or ‘scream’ and by elaborating on its characteristics, such as ‘traitor’ (Linda). However, this attempt to divide the body in a Cartesianistic manner highlights the insufficiencies of relying on ‘feeling’ young as combating affiliation with older worker identity by positioning the body as the most important socially accepted age marker. In terms of narrative structure, this relies on the introduction of third parties to
illustrate this importance. Throughout the texts there are no instances of direct speech or quotations being evoked which refer to a ‘mutton dressed as lamb motif’ but instead characters mentioned within the narrative have particular views and thoughts projected onto them by the interviewees. However, they are structured so as to appear as direct quotations and thus assert a high degree of modality. For example, Ingrid projects an opinion of ‘people’ whilst Alf discusses how the ‘boys’ see him; whilst both are essentially hypothetical beliefs, they are presented as truth claims.

As well as feeling younger than their chronological age, three managers, all below 40 also discussed chronological disjuncture at the other end of the spectrum:

I actually physically feel older but that's been quite a recent thing. I think in the last few years, you know, I've gone into a promoted post and I've gone through two house moves. I've gone through a part time MSc. I feel it's given me so little time for eating properly, relaxation, and actually fresh air and activity and therefore I feel like I'm lacking energy and I don't have the same ability to like buzz around the place. The funny thing is when I went to the doctor because I said I feel tired all the time, and not feeling very good, and she said well now you're over 30 you just won't have the same energy levels as you were when you were in your 20s. and I was like "what!" (laughter) you've got to be kidding me. Just because I'm now 31 this means that I'm therefore going to be tired. I thought it was maybe more because I'm not getting enough vitamins and exercise so in terms of you're only as old as you feel, I can quite honestly say that I am probably feeling 20 years older in terms of how healthy I am just because of the life style that I've had over the last few years.

Christine, 31, Finance

Sometimes I'll come in tired and they'll say “out at the dancing last night Anne-Marie", and it's really because I've got loads of deadlines and exams for further qualifications, but they just make that assumption. So I would say I do feel a lot older that 26 just because, em, I don't think most 26 years old have the amount of responsibility I do, and I am proud of myself for getting this far when I'm still young, but it does mean people make certain assumptions about you.

Anne-Marie, 26, Call Centre

Sometimes I feel that I'm expected to be the new blood of the team and have all these amazing ideas, but there's times when I'm just too exhausted to do that you know, I've had to stay up late on a report or whatever.

Lydia, 23, Recruitment

It appears that even for those who may be chronologically classed as younger workers highlight the frustration of being categorized through age typing. The discourse representation of Anne-Marie’s co-workers calls on expectations made based on her age. These are contradicted by a correction of the ‘real reason’ and proclaimed as falsifying accounts.

What is particularly interesting is that they discuss the struggle of being expected to embody the epitome of a ‘young worker’, suggesting this construction is also more an ideal
type, which is unachievable or unsustainable by anybody. Again, this identity is alsoencased within references to embodiment. The trope ‘new blood’ highlights the importance
of somaticism as culturally embedded with meanings of age. All three managers highlight
how expectations of their body, either by themselves or others are understood as symbolic
signals of age. The negotiation between control and agency is particularly complex here.
Managers highlighted their awareness of the various ways that ‘youth’ may hypothetically
be achieved, highlighting the ‘care of self’ motif discussed in 8.1.4. However, this is
contextualised by fore fronting the concept of constraint. For example, the lexical structure
of the extracts focuses on finite aspect of work as preventing them from ‘being’ young.
Detailing and pinpointing specific examples (such as studying towards qualifications)
helps to legitimise this claim at a textual level and increase the authenticity of the texts.

8.4 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter sought to introduce the body and self-identity as important discursive
resources which serve to shape organizational age inequality. This was seen to be an
extremely complex process that required the participant to be skilful in reproducing the
constructions discussed in previous Chapters, whilst at the same time ensuring their own
identity was not misplaced in relation to the older worker.

Body-related symbols of age were used as a means of either distancing the participants
from an older person, or providing a basis through which they could compensate for
perceived shortcomings. Body movement was also understood as being value-laden in
terms of age, where older and younger body movements were aligned to behaviour of
certain employees. Discourses of embodiment were personalised through the emblem of
the ageing body as ‘misbehaving’. This was compared to the norm of a ‘young body’ that
could be trusted or controlled by the individual. A number of body practices were also
mentioned as attempting to mould or shape a favourably body image. Surprisingly, this
was not to recreate the illusion of youth as inferred in previous work which discussed the
young body as encapsulating all that is good, truthful and sexually powerful (Sontag,
1979). Instead, many female participants aspired to achieving agelessness. However, there
was a precarious negotiation between engaging in an ageing body project, and the negative
connotations associated with people knowing you had done so. Because of this, participants
were more likely to discuss how to work within limits defined by ‘Mother Nature’, rather
than attempt to defy 'her' altogether. Despite attempts to 'age well' or embark on a body project on modes of identity work that served to delay or cover ageing, there was no evidence of the master narrative of age and decline being disputed.

Studying identity formation in relation to ageing at work also uncovered the experience of ageing as heavily embedded within social and organizational interactions. Ageing was often realised relationally through interaction with other employees within the immediate work space. The realisation of the ageing process was conceptualised as a 'critical event' for the individual where they appeared to reflect on their own social position in relation to others was changing or had become different to what they may have previously perceived. This appeared to be characterised in particular gendered ways. Whilst men were assumed as 'adding value' through age, there was no such qualifier for women.

In order to negotiate their own self-identity within the constructions of age inequality discussed in previous Chapter, managers employed a number of discursive strategies and adopted particular subject positions. As well as seeking to distance characteristics ascribed to older workers, participants sought to embody qualities associated with youth. Others attempted to destabilise the meaning of the term 'older worker' by disputing age as too simplistic a category to use, or subverting their own chronological age as indicative through 'evidential', anecdotal reasoning. There was also evidence of referencing back to the concept of the body project where responsibility for successful ageing was concentrated at the level of the individual: If they could 'achieve' it, why couldn't everyone else? The argument made was similar to the discourse of female high-achievers in gender studies discussed as 'Queen Bee' syndrome where successful women dismiss discrimination by referring to their own success as a marker (Staines et al., 1974). This of course has implications for the larger argument about responsibility for managing age inequalities and whether it is relegated to being the individual's responsibility to 'avoid' being discriminated against.
Chapter 9
Concluding Discussion and Implications
This final Chapter returns to the original research aims and objectives in light of the theoretical and empirical development within this thesis, and discusses the applied implications to those who inform work practice on a day-to-day basis. Having presented these issues, the discussion then turns to possible limitations of the study, before examining the future directions for research.

9.1. Key findings

In light of the empirical and theoretical spaces for development which were carved out in Chapters 1 and 2, the thesis set out to explore the discursive processes that construct, reproduce and transform organizational age discrimination and older worker identity. This was achieved by taking a markedly different perspective to mainstream age and employment studies, developing a discursive theory of age discrimination and ageism. Most significantly, this allowed the researcher to introduce the 'older worker' as a topic of study in relation to organizational age inequality, and focus on how the construction of 'older worker' and ageing identities were reliant upon on-going sense-making processes.

The research questions led to an investigation of how the justification of particular beliefs and practices held by HR managers were enacted through discursive and symbolic resources. In so doing, the study not only problematised processes that 'name' the older worker through chronology but served to highlight the complexity of issues surrounding the enactment of organizational age inequality. In this respect, the empirical research has demonstrated the value of the theoretical approach, revealing a number of significant findings and advancing our understanding of the discourses which seek to perpetuate and reproduce organizational age inequality.

Taking a panoramic overview of the findings, there is a strong undercurrent of a 'new ageism' paradigm, previously employed in gender and ethnicity studies. This is a substantial finding in relation to our current understanding of ageism, which has so far concentrated upon more pertinent forms of bias, such as stereotypes. As in racial studies by van Dijk (2000), the use of the naturalisation of difference through biological markers of age was consistently called upon and employed as a rationale for differentiation. If, as the findings show, managers can still adhere to organizational or political rhetoric about equality whilst still holding underlying biases, discriminatory practice may continue under
the surface of a sanitised 'politically correct' environment. However, unlike 'new racism' or 'new sexism', new ageism not only focused on the naturalisation of difference in relation to others, but actually used differences perceived at different age periods in *the same person* to highlight changes on account of age. In other words, since the 'older worker' had at some time *not* been an older worker, it was possible for managers to legitimise differentiation by comparison of the older worker with older workers own 'past' self.

9.1.1 To explore how constructions of ageism and age discrimination are created and justified by managers

Taking a theoretical perspective which has not been employed within mainstream analysis of age and employment allowed the study to uncover a multitude of ways in which age inequality can be reproduced in the language of HR managers, even if they appeared to be promoting equality. In light of the changing political and social context, where explicit age discrimination is increasingly seen as socially unacceptable, this approach was invaluable as a way of bypassing rhetoric and enabling the analysis to uncover instances where discriminatory ideals were reproduced.

The critically discursive perspective enabled us to bypass a level of analysis of the transcripts where the participant's beliefs were taken as authoritative in themselves and instead focus on the production of knowledge, in other words, how their ideas and beliefs were supported, justified or legitimated (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Managers were actively stimulating a construction of age in relation to organizational models to manage equality, such as the business case approach. This allowed them a level of control over shaping the differences between age equality as a social programme, and the organizational domain, where every activity revolved around bottom line financial success. Whilst social justice *could* provide a reason for age diversity, drawing on an economic rationale distanced the impetus for organizational diversity away from a moral duty towards a financial consideration. In Bourdieusian terms, managers sought to set up a differentiation between the social and organizational field, and in situating their practice within the organizational field they were able to deem any ethical issues as irrelevant. Moreover, this allowed managers to not simply discuss diversity as a tool for achieving organizational equality, but as a means of achieving other organizational objectives, such as promoting
the company. In other words, diversity became a form of symbolic capital that could be used as a means of gaining access to other valuable resources, such as networking at diversity events.

The interrelationship between these two fields was also important in shaping managers dialogues about the legislative impact on age discrimination. As Bourdieu argues, for any form of capital to be considered as powerful or influential within a particular field, it must be recognised as valuable by those who hold power within that field (Bourdieu, 1977a:65; 1990:137). In discussions relating to the introduction of law, it was clear that managers were actively attempting to dismiss legislation as a key determinant of practice within the organizational field, either through giving instances of age bias within law itself, such as different pension ages, or rendering it irrelevant to their own companies because of their strong cultural values.

Another significant discovery was that the concept of ‘difference’ was ideologically contested in order to legitimise accounts of age bias. Wodak et al. (1999) argue that difference often equates to ‘lesser’ compared to a norm, and this was evident in the discussion of those presented as ‘needing’ diversity programmes (‘the diverse’) compared to other workers. Yet the diversity discourses made the process of differentiating necessary, since difference was required to be recognised in order to be celebrated. Developing Wodak et al’s thesis through the key findings, what appeared important was drawing a line between legitimate differentiation (diversity) and illegitimate (age discrimination), which led to age discrimination being defined by what it was not. This was determined by managers focusing on the causal motive behind intentions, rather than the outcome. In turn, this resulted in the possibility of unfavourable and discriminatory outcomes forgiven if seen to be derived from ‘emotive’ or ‘natural’ assumptions about age, rather than malicious intentions. Ironically, both diversity and discrimination definitions contributed towards the marginalisation of older workers, albeit through very different processes.

The discussion of the management of age discrimination also had constructive effects on age discrimination itself. ‘Organizational Culture’ served as a key symbolic resource used to construct age discrimination and ageism in that managers referred to it as a way of justifying the absence of inequality in their own workplace. Whilst this enabled managers
to ‘prove’ their claims of equality, referring to culture meant that managers moved the discussion away from finite examples of evidence of managing equality on a day to day basis to a more abstract, vague discussion of organizational philosophy. However, examining the findings across Chapters 6 and 7, there appear to be tensions between purporting the strengths of an internally driven organizational culture which intrinsically prohibits age discrimination, whilst claiming that ageist beliefs are held by everyone and that the law is unable to tackle these biases. As a result, the relative proximity or distance between external social and internal cultural norms fluctuated. However, what remained consistent was the manager’s conviction that an organizational culture was the driving force behind their equality agenda, and was embodied in the organization through its people.

Not only were managers reliant on situating age discrimination within wider management processes such as culture, they appeared to prefer discussing age discrimination in relation to other modes of inequality. Age discrimination was dissolved into a discussion of all forms of discrimination, which prioritised other forms of inequality, such as sexism, as more important within a management agenda. This was achieved through defining discrimination in relation to ‘minorities’ by drawing on the ideological function of universalisation. Since everyone ages, the personal effect of ageism could be justified as less emotionally damaging and therefore less important.

It is unsurprising that managers openly protested about, and at the same time denied the existence of age discrimination within their workplaces. However, this did not automatically lead to a denial of ageist attitudes. Unlike previous literature (e.g. Redman and Snape, 2002) which has often assumed ageism and age discrimination were interchangeable terms, some managers appeared to discuss age discrimination as an organizationally moderated phenomena, whilst ageism was discussed in relation to personal beliefs. This led to the denial that ageism could be policed by organizations, whereas age discrimination could and should be managed by managers. It was perhaps for this reason that many managers denied a causal linkage between ageism and age discrimination, implying that people could still hold ageist beliefs and this would not necessarily lead to age discrimination.
9.1.2 To explore how older workers are discursively reproduced and positioned in an organizational context

The discursive perspective allowed this study to go beyond the older worker as a referential category and to view the 'older worker' as both an object which was ideologically produced and positioned, and an identity which was not determined by nature or fixed, but understood in relation to social processes and relationships with others and the self. In this sense, discourses have the ability to construct identities through limiting the subject positions which an individual may occupy (Grant et al., 2004), or by the individual being 'called upon' to fulfil particular positions.

The older worker was clearly a category that required individuals to fulfil particular subject positions within organizational life, which resulted in a silencing of other positions. This often occurred through the precedence of attributes similarly discussed in other studies pertaining to older worker stereotypes such as difficult to train and slower than younger workers (e.g. Itzin and Phillipson, 1993; Chiu et al., 2001; Redman and Snape, 2002). Yet this research also provided the opportunity to show how managers justified using stereotypes. This was achieved by stating that stereotypes were often helpful as a means of gaining a broad view, and drawing similarities between using stereotypes and forms of objective personality measurement, such as psychometric testing. Moreover, using Bourdieu's perspective on power and capital allowed the analysis to uncover evidence of positive stereotypes having a marginalising affect. This occurred through the concept of 'strategies of condescension', where the managers assigned a subject position for the older worker through an apparently positive attribute which nonetheless had very little symbolic value attached to it. Simultaneously, this reinforced the manager's right to attribute stereotypes by showing their ability to present a seemingly balanced view of positive and negative stereotypes. This strategy was strongly exemplified in the use of the 'experience' positive attribute. Although experience was strongly correlated with older worker identity, it was always referred to in the abstract general sense and aligned with 'soft skills', and never translated into a finite performance measurement. This compares to more negative attributes connected with older workers that were validated in manager's talk as being economically detrimental to the company.
Besides stereotypes, other devices were used as a means of constructing older workers. For example, managers referred to a career trajectory where older workers were discussed in relation to being further on in their careers, a seemingly common sensical assumption, although it does overlook those on their second or third career change. However, this trajectory was not constructed as a spectrum but more as a conceptual work hill where individuals were either seeking to move up through the company, or be moving down towards retirement. These two objectives were presented as mutually exclusive which led to the assumption that those closer to retirement were ipso facto less interested in furthering their careers, providing another explanation as to why older workers may be overlooked for promotion, as found in other studies (e.g. Palmore, 1990; Brooke and Taylor, 2005).

Older workers were also constructed in relation to aspects of organizational life, understood within the CDA framework as the creation of ‘subject positions’. The diversity discourse required managers to differentiate between ‘the diverse’ and the non diverse. Although this was viewed as ostensibly necessary in order to implement diversity programmes, it resulted in changing the meaning of diversity from an organizational philosophy which was supposed to benefit everyone, to only being relevant to those who required ‘special dispensation’. Structures of contrast also enabled managers to marginalise the position of older workers through juxtapositioning the requirements of a job with their construction of an older worker. Unlike academic studies which use chronological age as a way of defining the older worker (e.g. Warr, 2001; Loretto et al., 2005), managers used forms of behaviour and characteristics as a way of defining those who they regarded as older workers. Work was characterised as requiring long hours and a need to be flexible, characteristics aligned with the lifestyle of a young person. Moreover, these were presented as not dictated by a management preference, but instead came from external demands by the customer, organizational culture or from the ‘type’ of work’ being naturally more disposed to a younger persons lifestyle. In making these essentialist claims, managers were able to justify the lack of workers within their own company whilst still espousing an equality rhetoric.

Finally, the older worker identity was constructed through its relationship with other constructed identities reproduced in the interviews. Managers drew a very vague picture of perpetrators of discrimination, implying that ‘everyone’ is responsible to some extent.
Drawing on van Dijk's modes of ideology, a collective consensus serves to legitimise the behaviour as 'normal' and thus less 'deviant'. Moreover, this universalisation meant that older workers themselves could be framed as potentially discriminating against themselves. This allowed managers to distance the older worker as someone who may be discriminated against to someone who could be just as discriminatory. The older worker identity was also affected by the prioritisation of younger workers as more valuable. Since younger workers were viewed as having more time to contribute to the company (even though a counter argument would suggest they are more likely to leave to go to another company), 'young' discrimination was potentially a more serious issue since denying access to training and work experience was seen as having longer repercussions. Yet this assumed a normative model where the majority of training occurs predominantly during early careers; a norm which is once again to the detriment of those classed as older workers.

9.1.3 To investigate the interplay between self-identity and the construction of the older worker and age inequalities

Past studies (e.g. Chiu et al., 2001, Redman and Snape, 2002) have failed to consider how the respondent's own age identity may affect how they view factors relating to age discrimination. The theoretical development of this thesis has enabled the research to explicitly engage in an exploration of self-identity in relation to the ensuing data by drawing on Bourdieu's habitus concept. Identity was thus seen as affected and, in turn, affecting the construction of reality. Managers were engaged in a continuous identity project where the production of age-related discourses were not only related to a need to legitimise their own position of power, but also affected by their own identity in relation to the social construction of ageism, age discrimination and the 'older worker'.

It became apparent that there were a number of positions that managers chose to adopt in relation to 'the older worker'. Of particular note was that whilst these identity-positions could be regarded as very loosely related to their chronological age, in the sense that those over 50 were more likely to connect themselves to elements of an older worker identity, such a generalisation would fail to acknowledge the complex negotiation between being an older worker and feeling like an older worker, or feeling old, and how this affiliation with their own identity changed at particular moments in time.
In terms of being an older worker, no manager subscribed wholly and unquestionably to the older worker identity which they had constructed during interviews. Instead they showed concessions by suggesting they may have some characteristics which would make others categorise them as older workers, often concentrating on physical markers, as discussed in 9.1.4. However, it was apparent that managers were keen to differentiate themselves from the ‘older worker’ object they had previously constructed throughout their interview. In other words, they saw themselves as older workers, but a ‘different type’ of older worker than the constructed norm. Exceptions were made through explicitly discussing their work dispositions, reasons for working and other sets of personal ‘special circumstances’ relating to their life choices, distinguishing them from the ‘norm’. This meant that they could consolidate claims of being older in relation to their chronological age, whilst still avoiding the older worker ‘ideal type’ that had been previously constructed.

A second point of separation between the self and the older worker identity was distancing the personal relevance of ageism and age discrimination. A key distinction was noted between discussing themselves as potentially being discriminated against and actually experiencing it first hand. By aligning themselves as potentially susceptible, managers were able to maintain some form of distance between themselves and the older worker who was framed as being very vulnerable to discriminatory practices. Moreover, the participants undertook various processes of identity work to present themselves as deliberately updating their skills or keeping in touch with contemporary culture. These were presented as strategies they had consciously adopted to prevent being classed as an ‘older worker’. This in turn had an affect on the construction of older worker identity, since it implied that older workers were people who had not been so pro-active about their own career, or were more resistant to social and consumptive cultural changes.

Participants did, however, attach themselves to certain aspects of the older worker identity when discussing times when they had felt old in relation to work. Interestingly, this was seen in the data of managers of all ages, not just those who would have been academically classified as ‘older workers’ (i.e. over 50 or 55). Feeling worn out, lacking in energy, and tired were all attributes which were used as a means of discussing how ‘old’ managers felt, with many of these traits being considered to be effects of their workload or its impact on their lifestyle. Whilst this obviously contributes to a rather negative picture of an older
worker in the sense of the older worker being 'worn out', it also emphasises the importance of viewing older worker identity alongside other forms of identity work in organizational life, such as constructions of youth, and how one identity or 'ideal type' shapes and forms the other.

Other discourses emerged in relation to age identity that gave an insight into the privileging of youth as a norm, which in turn marginalised the older worker. Managers discussed becoming more 'age aware' as they grew older, and how they felt pressurized to behave in a certain way in relation to how old other people perceived them to be (not how old they actually were in chronological terms). However, this disjuncture created an arena of negotiation where their behaviour did not have to be directly dictated by their chronological age, but rather managed alongside the age identity they attempted to create. This meant that managers would discuss how their behaviour or traits allowed them to avoid any negative connotations with being old. However, rather than enabling them to 'transcend' an age marker by aligning personality characteristics with certain age groups, participants could be reinforcing particular modes of behaviour as age-specific, and if they were not successful in avoiding being regarded as an 'older worker', such behaviour may be viewed as inappropriate.

9.1.4 To conduct An exploratory analysis on the role of the body in relation to older worker identity

The final research objective arose from the stark absence of the role of the body within age and employment studies. Despite scholars arguing that age remains a body-based form of categorisation (Ainsworth, 2002), studies had only considered discrimination to occur through reference to cognitive or personality processes. Understanding the bodily hexis (Bourdieu 1990; 1991) led to a view of the body as a discursive object which can absorb ideology and affect the way a person manages their appearance and movements. Yet this research objective was specifically related to how the body was assumed as a 'truth' and how it formed meaning and understanding. Throughout the interviews, the physical and aesthetic was used as a means of explicating the construction of the older worker. Such discussions are, of course, encased within Western biased cultural ideals, which may be seen as dominated by visual perception, in other words “to see is to know” (Hughes,
1999:155). Thus within the texts, being able to 'see' particular aspects of ageing is at once proof of the ageing process and a means of legitimising a number of statements.

This was evident in interviews where discourses of the body created a means through which older worker identity may be classified, verified or contested. The body was widely regarded as a 'truthful' way of indicating a person’s age, where categorising the older worker can be visually understood through looks and movement. ‘Aged’ symbols such as grey hair and wrinkles were used as a signal to indicate that individuals were ageing, and then synergised with behaviours and attitudes which were aligned with the older worker identity and associated with ageing. However, these were different to more emblematic symbols of being old such as walking sticks and zimmer frames. This distancing from ageing and being old was extremely important in terms of manager own identity, since it allowed them to show concessions to the actuality of their own ageing, but simultaneously distance themselves from being regarded as old.

The analysis also revealed a relationship between behaviours of the body being used as a means of constructing organizational age identity. Portrayals of how the body ‘behaved’ served to draw differences between older and younger individuals where ageing was aligned with a need to be more aware of possible shortcomings of the body, relying heavily on an assumption of irreparable decline found within biological Discourses of ageing (Trethewey, 2001). Managers discussed various forms of the ageing body as increasingly 'misbehaving' and having to be managed in order to remain unnoticed by others, an illusion which was strongly associated with maintaining professionalism.

Participant’s discussions led to a theory of ‘doing age’ through body choreography. Ways of moving the body appeared to go beyond a concept of ‘performing’, in terms of presenting a sales pitch, for example, and were seen to translate into a form of symbolic capital which could be used to negotiate an individual’s relative position to the ‘older worker’ construction. Moreover, there appeared to be a level of subjective practice in a number of interviews where managers were well aware of the signals that could be sent out through their bodily movements. Theoretically understood as a form of symbolic mastery (Bourdieu, 1990a), some participants discussed how they consciously manipulated their body movements to align themselves with a more youthful model of corporeality. However, whilst this may have provided the participant with a means of avoiding being
viewed as an older worker, it did not serve to challenge larger discourses which constructed a negative ‘ideal type’ of older worker.

As discussed in relation to the previous objective (9.1.3), there was hesitancy for managers to align themselves with the older worker construction in the interviews. However, it was important not to dichotomise their identities by assuming that managers wanted to be identified as ‘younger’. Instead, a notion of ‘agelessness’ appeared, where participants wanted to portray an ambiguity about their age, and make it difficult for others to pinpoint how old they may be. From this emerged the notion of a ‘body project’, where individuals were involved in a continuous strategy to prevent old age and the unfavourable organizational perceptions that were attached to it. The concept of agelessness appeared to draw on gendered discourses of embodiment, indicating that Halliwell and Dittmar’s (2003) notion of a ‘double standard of ageing’ was relevant in relation to men and women’s experience of ageing at work. Although the sample size makes it difficult to infer any judgements beyond the scope of the study, only the female participants discussed challenging or engaging in body projects to various degrees. The analysis suggests that the experience of age at work is more complex than the mere seduction of youth. Instead, all workers discussed an aversion to becoming or growing older (and not simply ‘old’). In some ways, this was presented as potentially possible; individuals talked about their own ability and attempts to prevent the ageing process. Yet within participant’s dialogue, there was always a tension between what had been ‘given’ and what could be ‘done’. This biologisation of ageing Discourse (ageing as ‘given’) could be argued as working against the concept of a ‘mask of ageing’. Unlike Featherstone and Hepworth’s (1991) thesis, where the mask represents the ageing body as hiding the ‘real self’, within this study, the ‘mask’ metaphor relates to the various activities undertaken in order to challenge the ageing process. This mask becomes more than an aesthetic change and reifies, transforms, or reproduces the identity of the individual, not only through how they physically look, but the symbolic significance which is derived from the activity of ‘challenging nature’. However, even then there is a careful negotiation between a convincing and unconvincing mask, made even more difficult by the ambiguity surrounding how or who judges this achievement. As a result, the body project appeared to be a precarious balance between the achievement of obtaining ‘agelessness’, and whether engaging in anti-ageing activities would in itself mean that they were perceived by others as older.
9.2 Evaluating the Theoretical Contribution

In mapping out the current field of knowledge pertaining to age discrimination and older worker identity, this thesis asserted that an alternative theoretical framework was required in order to reveal the layers of meaning surrounding age discrimination which would also re-introduce the 'older worker' as ideologically positioned and socially constructed in relation to other identities. From the discussion of the research findings, it is already clear that applying a Bourdieusian-informed CDA approach has allowed this study to uncover significant findings about the multifaceted nature of age discrimination in the workplace and the complex negotiation of older worker identity and ageing identity in general.

In doing so, this thesis has been able to show the value of exploring age discrimination and ageism as socially constructed phenomena which are reliant on context and those who served to gain or lose power from projecting particular beliefs or ideals. This approach may thus be seen to develop a more theoretically substantive definition of the older worker which does not simply refer to every worker over a certain age but is also viewed as an 'ideal type' of identity which is constructed through aligning characteristics, modes of behaviours (both cognitive and physical) and looks with a particular age group. Similarly, ageism can be viewed as a social process of marginalization that serves to undermine the value of an individual or group through ascribing beliefs and attitudes in relation to age.

The theoretical framework has also made a further contribution in relation to the development of critical discourse analysis by using the work of Bourdieu to introduce a level of subjective action where an individual’s experience or history provides potential space for emancipatory practices. Introducing Bourdieu’s work enabled the researcher to temper the radical postmodernist agenda that has often dominated discursive approaches in organizational studies, which often deny the subject any real potential escape from discursive domination and control (Fairclough, 2005). This was achieved by developing Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as a site through which individuals are not only predisposed to certain forms of action which may reproduce their dominated position, but also allows them to draw on experiences learned in other fields of practice which may subvert such modes of power.
Furthermore, the application of Bourdieu's work ensured sensitivity towards the empirical research process in relation to the theoretical framework and analysis of data which has thus far remained underdeveloped within mainstream discursive studies. In embracing a reflexive perspective of the research interview, this study considered how the role of the recorder and using interviews as data would impinge on the subsequent production of knowledge within the thesis. It was therefore vital to analyse the age dynamics in relation to the interviewee-researcher relationship, where the researcher's youth was viewed as having an affect on the data at both an interpersonal level (how participants related to the researcher) and at a discursive level (how the researcher embodied particular ideologies in relation to youth).

9.3 Implications for Policy and Managers

Whilst the main theoretical concerns of this thesis are centred around the construction of age discrimination, ageism and older worker identity, the empirical findings still bring to light a number of issues which can inform current and future practice both at the level of government policy intervention, and for managers.

9.3.1 Policy Intervention

Shortly after the completion of this thesis, legislation will have been implemented to prohibit age discrimination at work. However, the findings from this study suggest that care must be taken not to assume that legislation in itself will stop older workers becoming marginalised. Since the law will only cover discrimination at work, social attitudes towards age may not be challenged. This study has shown that the biased perceptions that result in discriminatory attitudes are often supported by larger social norms about age. This means that social attitudes around, for example, retirement can still be supported through strong social signals about when is the 'right' age to retire, even if new law gives individuals the right to work on. In order to tackle these beliefs, it is recommended that the government should promote a larger social programme alongside legislative measures which attempt to change wider age-related perceptions within society. Although this was recognised in earlier consultations, (DTI, 2005, as discussed in Chapter 1), it is questionable whether there will be any affect through the limited mediums currently used, such as the Age Positive, which is largely web-based.
Secondly, this study has uncovered the limitations of promoting age diversity through the business case approach, which has been the main tool of promotion within governmental campaigns, particularly during the introduction of the Voluntary Code of Practice. Although in theory this views age diversity as internally driven, during interviews, managers saw age diversity as resulting from external pressures, such as the demographic ‘time bomb’. Moreover, using age related qualifiers, such as suggesting a mixed-age workforce is more conducive to organizational success, still advocates the use of age as a means of assessing value, even if this is supposed to be to the benefit of older workers. If it is the case that diversity and discriminatory attitudes can exist alongside each other, as found in this study, it is argued that future government approaches to age discrimination should have a two-pronged approach which not only promotes age diversity, but also provides guidance about how to prevent discrimination, and bench markers which organizations can use to measure levels of discrimination.

Finally, the findings show how older workers may be constructed as ‘suited to’ particular jobs over others, often those at customer facing, entry level positions, which fail to utilise the finite professional skills older workers may have. Whilst this means that older workers do have some opportunity to work, being relegated to such jobs means a mass of professional skills may be being lost, to the detriment of the economy as a whole. HR Manager’s discussion of the ‘norm’ for their own professional was associated with long hours, geographical mobility and was aligned with a younger worker. This implies that commitment is still very much associated with the quantity of time people work, in terms of number of hours, rather than the quality of work people bring to the workplace. In light of this, it is recommended that older workers be considered as a key group within larger government campaigns aimed at promoted flexible working practices, which have so far been focused on women. Changing attitudes and perceptions about the traditional ‘working week’ would allow the promotion of a sustainable form of retaining skills which is not simply a ‘wind down’ to retirement, but recognised as valuable to employers, organizations and the economy.

9.3.2 Managers

This study also has a number of implications for managers who are responsible for preventing age discrimination:
First, there is a need to understand that whilst chronological markers may be a fast way of assessing who is more susceptible to 'older' age discrimination, findings showed that participants were aware that their age being used as a prohibitor or marker throughout their working life. Since forthcoming legislation covers age discrimination at any age, managers need to ensure that policies related to promotion and development are carefully monitored and evaluated. Not only should this be incorporated into equal opportunities monitoring to assess the age range across the company, but data relating to length of service and promotion should also be scrutinised to ensure that employees are being retained and developed regardless of their age.

The managers interviewed revealed that 'new ageism' is a means through which age equality can appear to be upheld on the surface, whilst discriminatory attitudes still serve to differentiate and marginalise older workers. This is particularly important considering that HR managers are often involved in activities such as recruitment and promotion, where their inherent beliefs may affect decision-making processes. In presenting the inconsistencies of upholding equality whilst still legitimising or justifying difference based on age, managers are charged with not only failing to prevent discrimination, but also perpetuating essentialised norms about behaviour and age. This may help to explain why discrimination could still exist despite the application of equal opportunities policy. Of course, whilst it is easy to recommend an increased sensitivity towards unconscious age-biases, due to the covert nature of 'new ageism', it is accepted that there is a difficulty in creating a forum where managers can openly face their biases in order to challenge them, since doing so may result in liability on account of discrimination.

The embedded nature of age biases and their association with particular types of work is also of consequence to managerial practice. Participants discussed particular jobs as being more suited to younger workers yet failed to relate any of their reasoning to the skills required for those specific jobs. Whilst this may affect a number of managerial decisions, of particular importance is ensuring that such prejudices do not affect the recruitment process, since managers may be more likely to fall back on stereotypical impressions to assess those they are meeting for the first time. One possible way to alleviate this bias is for interviewers to be extremely clear about what is required for the job. Part of this may be to ensure that job descriptions are written based on skills required to do the job, rather
than broad people specifications. However, since those interviewing are often not those who have designed the job description, it may also be good practice for interviewers themselves to have considered and discussed what are the vital components of a job, and synthesize these into a list of very specific skills and competencies.

The research also showed how managers over-emphasised the importance of 'organizational culture' as a means in itself of ensuring equality in the workplace. However, whilst managers could discuss this in terms of workplace philosophy, there was ambiguity over how organizational culture could in effect change practice on a day-to-day level. Moreover, there was evidence that social norms about age were pervasive and could still be upheld alongside an adherence to organizational culture. Culture cannot therefore be relied upon as the sole instigator in upholding age equality practice, and requires managers to be more assertive in challenging discriminatory practices to ensure that decisions are made on the basis of merit, rather than assumptions relating to age. It follows that more focus should be given to putting in place systems which provide evidence-based information about age equality, rather than maintaining a laissez faire approach to managing discrimination through diversity schemes or corporate culture.

Finally, although the theoretical development was primarily concerned with how to conceptualise ageing, it holds two important points which are of relevance to the successful management of age inequality at an applied level. First is the way in which our perceptions and beliefs are gained through interaction in a number of social settings, which affects our behaviour. Attitudes that individuals have are held across both work and social settings. Since the forthcoming law does not cover age discrimination outwith the workplace, managers should be aware of the influence of views which are still sanctioned in wider society, and how these may prevent equality. Whilst these may not directly result in illegal practices, they may still promote ageism in the workplace, for example, in trends in workplace socialization where older workers are 'assumed' as not wanting to go for an after-work drink. Second is the position of language and text (referring to symbols, pictures and images) as a fundamental ingredient in the construction of reality. Managers should be aware that ageism and discrimination may not only be perpetuated in formal organizational practices, processes and interactions, but also in the jokes, cartoons and phrases used in day to day interaction on the work-floor. Whilst seemingly harmless, such texts may be seen as reinforcing age-based norms and expectations of behaviour and
reproducing prejudiced beliefs, which infiltrate the collective consciousness of the organization.

9.4 Research Limitations and Future Avenues for Research

9.4.1 Research Limitations

As in any research project, this thesis has certain limitations. Chapter 3 has already critically discussed the limitations of the theoretical approach, whilst Chapter 4 weighed up the pros and cons of applying discourse analysis to interview data. However, there were also three main limitations which may have affected the data produced.

Using a singular method of data pool

One possible limitation was using a narrow participant pool. Part of a human resource manager’s job is to design and shape policies, and for this reason, they were chosen as a participant pool. However, this perhaps assigns too much power to HR managers, since those who apply practices on the work-floor, such as supervisors will also have a key role in the construction of such terms. It may have been valuable for the study to perhaps look at two levels of the hierarchy and compare similarities and disparities in the particular discourses they drew to justify their discussion. However, steps were taken to prevent a privileging of a ‘managerial’ perspective. For example, the flexible interview schedule and choice of questions sought to consider the multiple identities of participants as managers and workers, and whilst this may not have permitted a closer examination of those in the organization who had no managerial discretion and were only subject to management processes, it did allow the analysis to consider managers as workers who were also affected by discriminatory processes and the management of equality.

Possible Ethnocentricity

In this study, all interviews were carried out in the central belt of Scotland. This was considered during the analysis, and found to have some cultural effects, such as being used as as a discursive strategy of justification by mentioning self-deprecation as a national characteristic. Carrying out research in a primarily white population may have led to some bias. For example, within Oriental cultures, confucian ideologies view the elders as revered, which may mean other discourses are used to construct the older worker.
Similarly, managers from countries who already have established legislative sanctions for age discrimination may use different techniques to discuss their own practices. So instead of discussing their reliance on an organizational culture of diversity, they may be more focused on emphasising their adherence to the law. However, using a discursive approach did allow the study to reveal a number of discourses which have also been referred to within other workplace and social studies, such as discourses of biologisation and organizational culture. This indicates that the symbolic resources drawn upon by the participants are also applicable outwith the immediate geographical context and make up the ideological repertoire of organizational fields.

The Introduction of Legislation
From the beginning of this project, the imminent arrival of age discrimination legislation has meant that whilst empirical fieldwork was carried out prior to its introduction, the study would conclude just before it comes into effect. In order to address the possible danger of the study becoming out of date immediately after the legislative change, care was taken throughout the project to ensure that this study would provide a valuable contribution to knowledge by focusing on the processes of discrimination, which may still exist after legislation. The importance of social and cultural attitudes which were uncovered during this study also suggests that 'new ageism' will still exist after legislative changes, since perceptions are subject to 'cultural lag' and are unlikely to change in the near future.

9.4.2 Future Avenues for Research
In light of the conclusions and implications of this project, the thesis closes by identifying vistas for future research arising from this study. Although the theory development of the thesis has explored a number of potential paths which may be taken up in relation to the advancement of discourse analysis (as shown in 9.2), within the study of age and employment, there are two main areas which have emerged as pertinent issues that should be studied in order to further contribute to an age discrimination and older worker identity research agenda.

Towards a comparison of 'old' and 'young' discrimination
Throughout the interviews, managers were keen to discuss discrimination against the young. This appeared to have considerable effects on the marginalisation of the older worker subject position. However, since the focus of the study was on age discrimination and older worker identity, it was outwith the realms of this project to explore the construction of ‘young’ discrimination in any depth.

Yet the data indicated that ‘young’ age discrimination differed to ‘older’ age discrimination in terms of the discursive resources used to construct it, and reinforced the prioritisation of youth to the detriment of older workers. The findings of this study suggest that, since discourses of youth are often used as a means of marginalising older workers, it is difficult to apply the construction of age discrimination explored in this thesis to ‘young’ discrimination, and separate work must be carried out to provide information in relation to the similarities and differences within forms of discrimination. Beyond practitioner and media literature, there are few studies that examine how discrimination affects those regarded as younger workers. Even though legislation covers discrimination occurring at all ages, without an understanding of how this manifests itself in practice, it is difficult to see what affect the law will have in protecting younger victims.

In light of these gaps in current knowledge, the preliminary related findings of this thesis signal that ‘young’ age discrimination may manifest itself in different ways. Indeed, it may be more suitable to begin to examine ‘young’ discrimination from a more generic agenda which explores youth unemployment and inequalities, and then see how this compares to ‘older’ age discrimination. Initial comparisons suggest that whilst the broad general overviews are similar, there is a lack of knowledge about how this translates into individual experience. For example, Fergusson (2002) argues that youth transitions to employment are intertwined with a number of other forms of inequalities related to ethnicity and class. This suggests that patterns of low participation in employment mirror older worker participation, in the sense that those from lower class backgrounds are less likely to be fully active in the labour market. However, the individual workforce patterns of those marginalised through ‘young’ or ‘older’ discrimination may differ dramatically, as might their experiences of discrimination on account of their age.

Organizational age identity
This study began to uncover how older worker identity was not only constructed in relation to organizational processes, but also alongside other age-related organizational identities. It explored how youthful identities were often aligned with certain forms of work, suggesting that those who embodied this identity were symbolically more valuable. Yet managers also discussed incidences where youth could be used as a means of dismissing or prohibiting their professional development, suggesting that the valour of youth is not so much an undisputed form of capital, but also subject to processes of domination. This implies that value may be added by studying age discrimination with wider reference to age identity and its relationship with organizational processes and norms of behaviour.

The relational view of identities has already been considered within gender studies, which shows the value of considering how masculine identities affect the construction of feminine professional identities (e.g. Fletcher, 1999; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2003). As Alvesson (1998:970) states: “it is argued that masculinities and femininities do not form simple patterns of domination and subordination, but interact in more complex ways”. This thesis could be taken as a starting point for the development of a relational theory of organizational age identity. Undertaking further research would allow the relationship between youth and ageing, not to be reduced to a dichotomy where one identity having complete power to marginalise the other, but instead viewing organizational age identity as complex relational phenomena worthy of being studied in its own right. Moreover, a relational view of age identity may have the potential to manifest itself in a multitude of ways since the continuous categorisation of age allows for more scope to move within constructed spaces of age, compared to discrete markers related to gender and ethnicity.

Finally, situating older worker identity within a more generic study of age would allow a closer examination of the body project in relation to the negotiation of age. Of particular interest here would be an exploration of the concept of ‘agelessness’, and how it relates to the ageing project and to masculine and feminine forms of identity. Although Andrews (1999) has begun to explore the theoretical meaning of agelessness, so far there is no empirical work which provides comment on how individuals ‘achieve’ agelessness in the workplace, and whether this is an unattainable myth or an achievable form of emancipation.
References

AARP, 2002, Staying Ahead of the Curve, AARP Work and career study (report), Washington, DC, AARP.


AUT. 2005, *Coming of Age: Response to DTI Consultation*, October, 2005, obtained through e-mail correspondence with Association of University Teachers.


Bonilla-Silva, E. and Forman, T. A. 2000, ‘I'm not a racist but... Mapping white college students racial ideology in the USA’, *Discourse and Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 50-85.


Caputi, J. 2003, ‘Sexual capital and sexual aesthetics’, *Meeting of the American Sociological Association*, University of California, Santa Barbara, California, 16th-19th August.


CIPD, 2006a, *CIPD response to the DTI consultation on the draft Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006*, Dianah Worman, Diversity Adviser and Charles Cotton, Reward Adviser, copy obtained through e-mail correspondence.

CIPD, 2006b, *Breakdown of membership by gender*, obtained through e-mail correspondence, March 12th - 27th.


Coleman, J.S. 1988, 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 94, supplement, pp. 95-120.


Corbin, J. and Morse, J.M. 2003, 'The unstructured interactive interview: issues of reciprocity and risks when dealing with sensitive topics', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 335-354.


EFA, 1999b, *Report on a Survey of Senior Decision Makers in Small And Medium Enterprises*, September, Employers Forum on Age, obtained through e-mail correspondence with Employers Forum on Age.


EFA, 2005, *Employer’s response ‘Coming of Age’ Consultation on Age Regulations*, October.


Formosa, M. 2000b, Education and Old Age: A Critical Analysis of Malta's University of The Third Age, Unpublished Master of Arts, copy obtained through e-mail correspondence with author, September, 2003


Gogstad A. and Aasland OG. 1998, ‘How are the retired physicians?’ *Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen*, vol. 118m no. 9, pp. 1378-1382, translated from Norwegian through Google Language Tools, 18th December, 2002.


Goodwin, K. 2004, ‘Age diversity the story so far’, *Equal Opportunities Review* no. 131 pp. 7-16


320


Halliwell, E. and Dittmar H. 2003, 'A qualitative investigation of Women's and Men's body image concerns and their attitudes towards ageing', *Sex Roles*, vol. 49, no. 1/2, pp. 675-684.


HM Treasury/Inland Revenue, 2002, *Simplifying the Taxation of Pensions: Increasing Choice and Flexibility for All*, December, Norwich, HMSO.


Sunday Times, The, 2004 'CBI chief aims to sell business to the nation - The Andrew Davidson Interview', Andrew Davidson, Business Section, November 7th.


Tannen, D. 1994b, Gender and Discourse, New York, Oxford University Press.


Thompson, E.H. 2006, 'Being women, then lesbians, then old: Femininities, sexualities, and aging', *The Gerontologist*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 300-305.


van Dijk, T.A. 1984, Prejudice in Discourse, Amsterdam, Benjamins.


Warr, P.B. 2001, 'Age and work behaviour: Physical attributes, cognitive abilities, knowledge, personality traits and motives', in C.L. Cooper and I.T. Robinson, eds.,


Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation following contact from prospective participants

Name of Organization

Dear ***

Research Project: Organizational Age Inequality and the Older Worker

Many thanks for sending your contact details expressing interest in the above research

The three year research project which is being undertaken as part of my PhD is sponsored by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) and is seeking to investigate age identity at work and how ageism and age discrimination is discussed by Human Resource Managers. We are currently looking for HR and Personnel managers to take part in a one hour interview to discuss their experiences and beliefs about age related issues within the workplace. Interviews would of course occur at a time and place convenient to you, with all interviews adhering to confidentiality guidelines set by the University. We would be extremely interested in hearing your views about age identity in the workplace.

All participants also receive an overview of the main findings.

I very much look forward to hearing from you, and include a small attachment outlining the research project. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0141 339 8855 ext. 2000 or 07971 072595.

Best wishes

Kathleen Riach
Doctoral Researcher
Appendix 2: Research brief sent to participants prior to research

A Discursive Analysis of Ageism and Older Worker Identity

Kathleen Riach, University of Glasgow

This project aims to investigate how concepts of age discrimination and the older worker are constructed in relation to the workplace, and how these may help understand the phenomenon of organizational ageism within the UK.

The current research began in 2003 with a critical examination of governmental, managerial and academic literature examining ageism and age discrimination. Governmental figures estimate a 69% unemployment rate within the 50-65 year older age range and stress that the demographic pressure of a greying population makes age discrimination not only an equality issue but also one of great significance to the economy. In light of this concern, a business case approach towards age discrimination has shown its debilitating consequences to the companies overall success.

Whilst these studies have aided an understanding towards age discrimination and provided a much needed spotlight on the problem, there is a reluctance here to examine the sociological processes behind the phenomena of ageism. Other academic studies have highlighted prejudices against older workers in relation to stereotyped images that portray them as less adaptable or suitable to work in today’s fast paced organizations. Despite this, there have been few detailed studies examining how the positive and negative stereotypes are related to each other, and how organizational ageism is constructed through the discourse of managers and older workers alike.

These are the main objectives of this study. An initial pilot study will interview small samples of Human Resource managers and those within the administrative sector about their views and experiences of age discrimination and ageism. This will then inform focus group sessions and in-depth interviews with different members from the same genre of participants to explore and develop emerging ideas and images. All research will be anonymous and ethical procedures strictly adhered to.

The research, due for completion at the end of 2006 is hoped to illuminate some of the hidden obstacles within age discrimination, and aid a better understanding of the social complexities which exist within organizational ageism.

For more information please contact:

Kathleen Riach
School of Business and Management
Gilbert Scott Building
University of Glasgow
G12 8QQ
Tel: (0141) 330 2000 ext. 0273
ESRC Award No: PTA-030-2002-00783
Appendix 3: Ethical form given to participants (3 pages)
(one was filled in and kept by researcher, the other was kept by participant)

Department of Business and Management

UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

Consent to Participate in Academic Research

I .................................................................

Of (address) ..............................................................
..............................................................................
..............................................................................
..............................................................................

Telephone ..............................................................

(This information is only needed to obtain consent to the research and will not be used in any results or publications resulting from this research)

Have read and understood the attached Principles of Ethical Research and agree to participate in the under noted research:

Title: Ageism and Older Worker Identity—doctoral fieldwork in which the researcher named: Ms. Kathleen Riach is supervised by: Prof. Fiona Wilson (Tel 0141 330 4064)

I understand that I have the right to refuse to continue to support the research at any stage, to require the return and no subsequent use of any data provided and that special issues of confidentiality will be subject to agreement between myself and the researcher before any research begins.

Signed: .................................................................

Date: .................................................................

If you require further information about the research please contact the supervisor in the first instance.

If there are any unresolved problems please call the Department and ask for the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.
1. In all forms of research conducted in the Department we will operate with as full a consideration as possible of the consequences of our work for society at large and groups within it.

2. We will handle all confidential information with appropriate levels of discretion and compliance with the law and with due diligence as to the security of that data. We will normally prevent the publication or use of data in any way that could compromise the subject's confidentiality or identity.

3. Any material being prepared for publication both inside and outside of examination purposes will be produced in such a way as to reduce the possibility of breaches of confidentiality and/or identification. If necessary, this process will be subject to a written statement as to agreed process between any sponsors of research, research subjects and the Department.

4. We will try to avoid overburdening subjects, causing them inconvenience and intruding into their private and personal domains.

5. Subjects will be informed as to the purpose and nature of any inquiry in which they are being asked to participate.

6. We will avoid misleading subjects or withholding material facts about the research of which they should be aware.

7. Where the research methodology allows for it, a research subject will be expected to be provided with a copy of these Statements of Principles along with a consent form which will also indicate a subject's right of referral and appeal to a higher authority in the Department and through Faculty to the University Ethics Committee.

Continued Overleaf...
8. Where the research methodology suggests that a different kind of consent is the only one possible this will be made clear in the ethical approval form but subjects will be referred to departmental web pages or made aware of these principles by the researcher in order to understand the issues as at paragraph 7 above.

9. All staff, researchers and their supervisors are required, before the project begins, to submit to the chair of the departmental ethics committee, either a short-form or a long form ethical approval form. Only on formal approval by the ethics committee will the project be permitted to begin.

10. In the situations listed in the following subsections, staff, researchers and their supervisors must produce a justified case using a standard Application Form for Ethical Approval.

   a. When the research methods employed might be regarded by the lay public to have delicate or controversial elements or when the research might be considered to give rise to adverse publicity for the University.

   b. When the research involves the use of individual medical records

   c. Where there might be difficulties in obtaining the subject's informed consent. This to include but not be limited to the following examples: with vulnerable people, including children; and those with learning difficulties; when proposing to use covert observation; or when employing a methodology in which the practicalities of obtaining signed consent forms are infeasible.

Only if and when the Departmental or subsequently the Faculty Ethics Committee has approved the research can it commence.

11. All members of staff and all student at all levels are required to read and agree to comply with these statements and to operate them in the full spirit in which they are written. Failure to comply with these statements will be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

12. All researchers and all supervisory staff at all levels must sign an agreement on an annual basis, indicating their acceptance of these Principles.
Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

A: Age out with the workplace

1. Do you think our society is discriminatory on account of age?
   Pr./F.U: Why?/Why not? In what ways?

2. In what ways is organizational age discrimination different to age discrimination within society?
   Pr./F.U: different people

   Do you think someone being a parent/grandparent affects the age people believe or perceive you to be?
   Pr./F.U: What about how you feel? What about within work?

3. Do you think people treat you a certain way because of the age they think you are?
   Pr./F.U: People you know/don’t know?

4. Is it important that people work up until retirement age?
   Pr./F.U: Does this make a difference? For themselves? For the economy?

5. What do you think about people working beyond retirement age?
   Pr./F.U: Do people ever get ‘too old’ to work?

6. Are there any consequences with an ageing workforce?
   Pr./F.U: Who for? (society, individual, economy, organizations)

B: Age in the Workplace

1. What are the characteristics of an ideal worker?

2. Do you think specific industries attract people of particular ages?
   Pr./F.U: Why do you think this is the case/consequences?

3. How old do you have to be to be called an ‘older worker’?
   Pr./F.U: Do you think this is how most people would define an older worker? How young do you have to be to be called a younger worker?

4. Do older workers have any specific qualities they bring to the workplace?
   Pr./F.U: what about younger workers?

5. Is there a difference between being an older worker and an older manager?
   Pr./F.U: What are the differences, why is this?
6. What does it mean to be called an older worker?
Pr./F.U: or call someone an older worker?

7. Are there any instances you can think of when age should be used as a differentiating factor within the workplace?

C: Age and the Individual

1. Do you see the issues of age discrimination as personally relevant to you?
Pr./F.U: In what way? (employer/employee/in society)

2. Have you or anyone close to you had any experiences of age discrimination?
Pr./F.U: Can you tell me about them?

3. What does ‘acting your age’ mean to you?
Pr./F.U: Do you personally feel you act your age?

4. At any stage have you consciously thought about how your age might affect your career?

5. Are you ever aware that a co-worker’s perception of you (either good or bad) has anything to do with the age they think you are?

6. Do you feel that an older man/woman, is subject of more age-related perceptions than an older women/man?
Pr./F.U: Society/In work?

7. Are the people you work with in your immediate work group older or younger than you in general?
Pr./F.U: How does this compare to the organization in general?

8. Are you older or younger than the people you manage?
Pr./F.U: Does this make a difference? What about those you manage?

9. Can you think of any times when you have felt particularly old or young at work?
Pr./F.U: Why was this the case?
1. What does your company look for in potential employees when recruiting?
   Pr./F.U: And what about when promoting?

2. How would you describe your staff turnover and absence rates?

3. What is the age range of employees within your organization?

4. Does your company target any specific age group for certain positions?
   Pr./F.U: Could you tell me why/ a bit more about them?

5. How would you describe the term 'age discrimination'?
   Pr./F.U: Do you think this is how most people define it? What does it mean to you?

6. How would you describe the term 'ageism'? 
   Pr./F.U: Do you think this is how most people define it? What does it mean to you?

7. Do you have an input into anti-discrimination policies and practices within your organizations?
   Pr./F.U: What is that role? Could you tell me a little bit more about it- difference between sex and age policies?

8. Do you feel new legislation to outlaw age discrimination will have an effect on your organization?
   Pr./F.U: In what way?/ why not?

If a current member of CIPD

9. Is CIPD a useful resource in helping to assess age inequalities within your organization?
### E. Age Inequalities in the Workplace

1. **Who are most likely to be susceptible age inequalities?**  
   **Pr./F.U:** Why do you think this is the case?

2. **Why do people experience inequalities related to age?**

3. **When during the employment cycle do people experience age inequality?**  
   **Pr./F.U:** Why do people experience ageism?

4. **Can older workers do anything to avoid becoming susceptible to age discrimination?**

5. **Do you feel age discrimination is related to the type of qualifications or job the person has?**

6. **Do you think that age related attitudes lead to age discrimination?**  
   **Pr./F.U:**

7. **Are age inequalities most likely to occur in a particular place?**  
   **Pr./F.U:** Workfloor, boardroom, sector, industry?
### Appendix 5: Description of Discursive and Textual Strategies

<p>| <strong>AUREATION</strong> | The use of (a) decorative loan-words from Latin, and (b) words which have meanings associated with value, wealth, light and power, in order to create a highly ornate, 'golden' style. |
| <strong>CODE-SWITCHING</strong> | The movement, within a stretch of text, between two or more varieties of language; for example: 'The inordinate amount of effort involved in the activity gave me pains like an auld an ricketty cairt-horse.' |
| <strong>CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE</strong> | The study of those rules of conversation which allow participants to understand what people are saying, even when they are not saying what they mean. For instance, the utterance, 'Can you help me with this box?' is formally a question, but it will usually be interpreted as a request for help. The response, 'Yes I can, but I'm not going to' is possible, but would be regarded as impolite. |
| <strong>EMOTIVE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE</strong> | The use of language principally to express the beliefs, feelings or attitude of the person who is speaking. See CONATIVE, METALINGUAL, PHATIC, POETIC and REFERENTIAL functions of language. |
| <strong>PHATIC</strong> | Small talk, gossip – to engage in social relations |
| <strong>CONSTATIVE LANGUAGE</strong> | Used to persuade or direct the person it is addressing |
| <strong>MODALITY</strong> | Refers to the ways in which a certain set of meanings -- mainly about possibility, obligation, desires, beliefs and attitudes -- are expressed in language; mainly through AUXILIARY VERBS, such as 'can', 'should', etc. and ADVERBS, such as 'hopefully,' 'certainly' and 'sadly'. Indicates the orientation of a speaker to an utterance – can be expressed a number of ways (syntactically, declarative; verb, passive, active, or other means such as adverbs-hopefully, thankfully, or modal verbs - should, can, would) |
| <strong>NORMALISATION</strong> | Is done through normative |
| <strong>FOCALISATION</strong> | Related to the narrative point of view and who or whether they privilege a particular voice |
| <strong>RHETORICAL FIGURES OF SPEECH</strong> | Helps to signal relations between speaker and discourse |
| <strong>SHARED PROPOSITIONS</strong> | Propositions that are worded differently but make the same point |
| <strong>INFERENCES</strong> | When something is said that assumes another thing |
| <strong>RHETORICAL COMPARISONS</strong> | Persuasion |
| <strong>COMPARISONS</strong> | Comparing to, or comparing with |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPATIAL METAPHOR</th>
<th>i.e. on the left – to signal the liberal, Tory etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NARRATIVES (van Dijk, 1976)</td>
<td>Stories within text. Look at motivations, plans, actions, purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT POSITIONING</td>
<td>How someone is discussed within the text – similar to Althusser’s (1971) concepts of subjectification (being produced and subjected to ideology) and interpellation (being called upon by text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL MATRIX OF DISCOURSE</td>
<td>Social and power structures constituting matrix How this particular instances of discourse stands in relation to this How it reproduces hegemonic structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOCABULARY</td>
<td>Individual words (call in lexicalising) can include rewording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAMMAR</td>
<td>Words combines with clauses or sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERTEXTUALITY (Kristeva, 1986; Fairclough, 1995)</td>
<td>The way texts refer or build on larger discourses. Differences between ‘manifest intertextuality’ (other text overtly mentioned) ‘interdiscursivity’ (‘constitutive intertextuality’) – where a new style of discourse is made up through amalgamation and translation between the two forms – discourse type Really is to do with incorporating other forms of text (e.g. news paper draws on report). Could be the mixture of corporate culture business with legislative ‘constraints’. Can also be used in a more abstract way – where different aspects of the business world are drawn upon to justify and rationalise. Can also include the mixing of genres – business with academic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESUPPOSITION</td>
<td>The mention of something which assumes something else i.e. the soviet threat assumes there is a soviet threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT STRUCTURE (Coultard, 1977)</td>
<td>What elements and episode are combined (i.e. what experiences and examples are given to legitimise the statements made by the agents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRONOUNS (Fairclough, 1989)</td>
<td>Personal pronouns (I, you, they) reciprocal pronouns (each other) equal relationship inclusive pronouns (we- speak for the ordinary people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAUSES</td>
<td>A sentences – can be transitive (relating a first object with a second object) declarative, imperative, interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERBS (Fairclough, 1992)</td>
<td>Present terms are authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEECH ACT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question and answer, commands</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSACTIVE SENTENCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The act is seen as having an origin, and a receiver (e.g. a boy hit the girl, has an actor and an acted upon) and non transactive (the girl got hit)- passive voice sentence can be used to show that it would have been the same for anyone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOMINALISATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using nouns words that can be used as verbs, adjectives or adverbs. this can change an agent into an action (a boss sacks an employee- verb – a sacking occurs - noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EPISTEMIC FORMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of knowing, seeing, claiming – often syntactic claims, such as being self evident to make a belief seem natural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEDGING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing uncertainty about the claims they make (kind of, sort of)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METADISCUSSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the speaker situates themselves on different levels Expression marked as belonging to another text (in scientific terms) or redefining a term to move it ideationally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which people distance themselves from what they are saying (often with hedging) inseparable from their relationship with the world ‘degree of affinity’ with statement auxiliary verbs (must be, can, should); tense (is) adverbs (probably, possibly) – subjective modality uses I think, subjective leave it out, signalling the person is a vehicle for a group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONNECTIVES AND ARGUMENTATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used as reassurance everything kosher (often linked with conjunction) and mode of rationality through alignment, distancing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSIVITY AND THEME</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideational dimension types of process people are involved in – passive or agents also uses nominalisation. Theme also referred to as rheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THEMES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can show what are seen as commonsense assumptions – using adjuncts(therefore, inevitably) highlighting rationality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORD MEANING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing how specific phrases or words are used – e.g. does older worker have three meanings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RHETORICAL (HOLLIDAY, 2004)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be done through elaboration (same thing) extension (adding something new) or addition (enhance meaning of previous clause through reference to place, time, manner etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EUPHEMISMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ‘softer’ words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DYSPHENISM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of exaggerated words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERWORDS (Fairclough, 1992)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of lots of synonyms (words that meant roughly the same thing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METAPHORICAL STORY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. journey to work as a war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPORTED SPEECH (Tannen, 1986)</td>
<td>Constructed Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUOTATIVES (van Dijk, 1987)</td>
<td>Words that state what is being said next is taken as a quotation - can be used to signal moments of ageism, where ageism is 'enacted'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENCE (Davies, 1982)</td>
<td>Not only refers to the physical quiet, but what is not said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE</td>
<td>An item of one sentence refers to another item in another sentence - can be the sentence before (anaphoric) or before (cataphora) through the use of pronouns, such as 'they'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSTITUTE</td>
<td>Words that substitute for same words found elsewhere – e.g. do you think we have the most points this year – Hope so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLIPSIS</td>
<td>Similar to substitute, but no word used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJUNCTION</td>
<td>But, and, however, because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEXICAL COHESION</td>
<td>Using same words repeatedly or words that point to each other – beef-meat (Hyponyms) – the used of older and mature are manipulated in this way) or Meronyms (a whole referring to a part or vice versa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOCIAL ROLES**

| FOOTING (GOFFMAN, 1981:128) | The alignment we take up of ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance. Can also refer to ourselves as the past and present figures – often uses quoting to do this |
| BUNDLING TOGETHER (Cohen, 1994) | My own phrase – e.g. that’s like something a mother would say |
| APPROPRIATION | Taking ownership over |
| MISAPPROPRIATION/DISTANCI NG STRATEGIES | Executing yourself from a particular idea or notion |
| PROFESSIONAL JARGON | May provide shortcuts- but even to outsiders, it can serve to notify them of a particular register |
| CHANGED IN LINGUISTIC REGISTER | From informal to formal |
| PERSONAL PRONOUNS | Either first (I) second person (you) |
| REGISTER | Adopting a specific form of genre was a genre – e.g. scientific discourse |

**RHETORICAL/PERSUASIVE DEVICES**

<p>| QUASILOGICAL | Argument that uses formal logic or mathematical argument—e.g. x+y+x |
| PRESENTATIONAL | Repeating a phrase again or in the same form in order to persuade |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RHETORICAL WORK</th>
<th>Description, rather than expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BACK CHANNELS E.G. YEAH) (Beattie, 1983)</td>
<td>Facilitate the current speakers turn at talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAUSES</td>
<td>Differentiates between long and short pauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCOURSE MARKERS</td>
<td>Included connective such as and, but, you know I mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META COMMENTARY</td>
<td>When participants discuss why the researchers have added in a bit of extra commentary – problem with meta commentary is that if people are being researchers, may look for more hidden intent than they normally would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCURSIVE APPROACH</td>
<td>Seeks to understand human actions in terms of language used to account for that action – do not bare the true motivations of the speakers but are understood to be orientated in the social context in which they are produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOTING (Goffman, 1981)</td>
<td>direct quotations when telling a story that attempts to make their own stories objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-REPAIR (Jefferson, 1974)</td>
<td>A rhetorical device used when the speaker corrects what he perceives as errors in terms of speaking appropriately to particular people in particular circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECT/INDIRECT SPEECH</td>
<td>Relating to Wodak et al's. (1999) discourse representation, which examines the reproduction of utterances of 3rd parties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 6: List of Participants (Pseudonyms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSUDONYM</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne-Marie</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Call Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>50's</td>
<td>Brewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garry</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>early 50’s</td>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Civil Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Civil Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Call Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjorie</td>
<td>40’s</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillian</td>
<td>30’s</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Catering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>50’s</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>