

THESIS SUMMARY

CARING AND RESOURCES IN OLDER AGE

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Due to the high incidence of ill health and disability amongst their contemporaries, older people are likely to be involved in informal caring relationships. Due to the limited nature of post-retirement incomes, such carers are also likely to be relatively poor. In spite of this, little attention has been given to the role of older carers or to the influence of material deprivation upon this role. Drawing on fieldwork interviews with a sample of older co-resident carers and the secondary analysis of official statistics, this research aims to redress this 'ageless' and 'classless' analysis of informal care. While the original intention of the research was to focus solely on the way in which material resources went on to affect caring in older age, subsequent analysis revealed a complex interaction between material circumstances, physical pathology, culture and attitude. The concept of resources was therefore broadened to incorporate these issues and the study's materialist focus has been supplemented by a consideration of the age-based specificity in the way in which respondents manage and experience their financial situation and caring role. The thesis concludes with a consideration of the implications of these findings for future policy, literature and research. Thus, it is suggested that in view of the high degree of interdependence in caring relationships, intervention should focus less on the conflicting needs of care providers and care receivers and more on their commonality and their shared need for adequate and appropriate support. Similar synthesis is required in the exploration of poverty, older age and caring and also in the three generations of thought that have engaged in this exploration. In the light of this synthesis, it is argued that the 'relative autonomy' of the age dynamic should be recognised and responded to by researchers, practitioners and policy makers alike.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
• Chapter outline	III
• List of case studies	VI
• List of figures	VI
• List of tables	VII
CHAPTER OUTLINE	
INTRODUCTION	1
Background	2
Origins of the Idea	4
• Poverty and material circumstances	4
• Informal caring	4
• Older people	5
Research Aims	5
Thesis Outline	9
CHAPTER ONE. POVERTY, CARING AND OLDER AGE	12
Introduction	13
Social Consensus	17
• Functionalism and pathological perceptions of poverty and older age	17
• Positive perceptions of the family	19
Social Conflict	20
• Marxism and the ‘new social administration’ approach	20
• Structural theories of poverty	21
• Towards a materialist understanding	22
• Conflictual concepts of the family and its care	24
• The statutory response	26

Social diversity	28
• The emergence of post-modernism	28
• The importance of meaning and action	30
• The neo-liberal approach to welfare	31
A Reassertion of Structure	33
• Consumption in older age	34
• Caring in older age	41
• Caring and resources in older age: an unexplored dimension	49
Conclusion	52
CHAPTER TWO. RESEARCH METHODS	54
Introduction	55
Methodological Issues	55
• Positivism and the ‘costs’ of caring	55
• Phenomenological, interpretivist and participatory approaches	59
Sample Selection and Gaining Access	64
• Negotiating access	65
• Reviewing and supplementing the sample	67
• Sample characteristics	69
Questionnaire Design and Data Collection	70
• The piloting phase	71
• The main body of interviews	73
• Follow-up interviews	75
Ethical Considerations	77
Analysis	80
• Interview transcripts	80
• Case studies	83
• Statistical data	84
• Analytical memos	85
• Dissemination	86
Conclusion	88
CHAPTER THREE. MATERIAL RESOURCES AND THE CARING ROLE	90
Introduction	91
Material Resources and Caring ‘Costs’	91
• What is meant by ‘low income’ and ‘poverty’?	91
• Access to material resources	93
• Access to help and support	97
• Access to transport	99
• Housing and the caring environment	101
• Material interdependence	105
The Distribution of Household Income	106
• Ambiguous and arbitrary patterns	107

• Continuity and change in allocative patterns	108
Financial Caution	111
• Credit, debt and saving	112
• Financial accessories	114
• Budgeting strategies	117
• Economic downsizing	118
Culture, Disability and Material Constraint	122
• Objective and subjective deprivation	122
• Social isolation: a multi-causal approach	124
• Age based diversity	129
Conclusion	132
CHAPTER FOUR. THE EXPERIENCE OF CARING	134
Introduction	135
The Evaluation of the Caring Experience	135
The Impact of Caring	138
• Objective and subjective demands	138
• Issues of assessment	142
• Finances	144
• Physical health	146
• Mental health	150
• Social life	153
• Household routine	156
Role Transitions and Reciprocity	159
• Continuity and change	159
• Reciprocity and interdependence	165
Conclusion	173
CHAPTER FIVE. EXTERNAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT	176
Introduction	177
Access to Informal Support in Older Age	178
• Help from kin	178
• Help from non-kin	185
Class, Poverty and Informal Networks	188
• Poverty and marginality	190
• Instrumentalisation in caring relationships	191
• Housing and neighbourhood	193
Access to Formal Support	197
• Day care and respite care	198
• Domiciliary support	203
• Carer support groups	205
• Financial support	207
Gaining Access	210
• Disempowerment in the context of service diversity	210
• Age based specificity	213

Conclusion	217
CHAPTER SIX. CONSTRAINT, CULTURE AND CARING	219
Introduction	220
Caring and Resources	221
• Poverty and material resources	221
• Physical pathology, culture and attitude	222
• Action and meaning	222
Theoretical Implications	225
• The need for synthesis	225
• The relative autonomy of the age dynamic	226
• The structuring of the age dynamic	228
The Welfare Response	233
• Lack of appropriateness	233
• Lack of resourcing	235
Reflections	237
• Care for older people, by older people	239
• The welfare dialectic	241
• Research implications	244
Conclusion	246
REFERENCES	248
APPENDIX	270
Carer questionnaires	271
• Pilot questionnaire	272
• Main questionnaire	275
• Follow-up questionnaire	281
Carer profiles	287
LIST OF CASE STUDIES	
3.1 Mr MacLellan – the council flat tenant	102
3.2 Mr Davis and Mrs Flude – the unwilling co-resident carers	106
3.3 Mr Tunstall – a financially cautious carer	115
3.4 Mr Hunter – the 89-year-old car driver	126
4.1 Mrs Hudson – the long term carer	146
4.2 Mrs Halsey – a disabled carer	163
4.3 The Lanes and the Taylors – practically interdependent spouse carers	170
4.4 Mr Cicourel and Mr Caplow – the former spouse carers	172
5.1 Mr Denis and Mrs Field – the materially diverse carers	190
5.2 Mr Tumin – the pressurised welfare recipient	215
LIST OF FIGURES	
2.1 Polyhedron of the research process	89
6.1 A three way model of older age	226

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Contrasting perspectives on society and the state	13
1.2	Contrasting perspectives on poverty, older age and informal caring	15
1.3	Average weekly household expenditure by age of head of household	37
1.4	Household expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure by age of head of household	37
1.5	Percentage of men and women caring for an elderly person (65+) in a co-resident setting by social class and age of carer	42
1.6	The age of carers	44
1.7	The age of the cared for person	45
1.8	Who older carers care for	45
1.9	Hours of caring per week for older co-resident and extra-resident carers	45
1.10	Characteristics of person needing care by an older carer	46
1.11	Type of help given by middle aged and older carers	47
1.12	Length of time spent caring by gender of older carer	47
1.13	Long standing illness/disability of older carer by age	48
1.14	Visits from services by residence of older carer	48
2.1	Percentage of families affected at referral and at the end of two years	57
2.2	Profile of respondents	70
3.1	Average income of FES respondents as defined by occupation	92
3.2	Average income of FES respondents as defined by age group	93
3.3	Weekly household income bands of respondents	94
3.4	Income sources of respondent households	94
3.5	Non ownership of goods by household type	101
3.6	Households buying products on loan	112
3.7	Mean food expenditure by the age group of the head of household	120
3.8	Car ownership by age category	126
4.1	Number of years in caring role	138
4.2	The impact of caring	140
4.3	The incidence of longstanding illness or disability by age	162
4.4	Does not ask for help by age	164
4.5	Marital status by age group	166
5.1	Relatives living in Sheffield	179
5.2	The incidence of practical help from relatives in the last month	179
5.3	Composition of pensioner and non pensioner households	184
5.4	Incidence of practical help from neighbours in the last month	185
5.5	Access to social support by age group	187
5.6	Number of years in current accommodation	193
5.7	Acorn profiles	195
5.8	Formal support received	197
6.1	Material, physical, attitudinal and cultural factors effecting respondents	224
6.2	A synthesised approach to older age	238