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Older people without children

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Older people without children

Jill Reynolds Solo Living Seminar 26th Oct 2009



What do we know about the old and childless?

In my research for *The Single Woman: a Discursive Investigation* I found that participants without children often conflated 'singleness' and 'childlessness'.

It's only been for decades that we can't assume
single=childless

There's relatively little work, either quantitative or qualitative that considers childless as a category in its own right



What I would like to do is:

- A qualitative longitudinal examination of the subjective experience of people aged 60+ who do not have children
- Explore, through interview transcripts, the discursive constitution of ageing and childlessness



Inclusive sample

- Couples – living apart or together
- Single people, divorced or widowed
- Re-interview selection from The Single Woman
- Heterosexual or homosexual
- ‘Lost’ children – death ?include through divorce?
- Acquired ‘step-children’



The Oldest Generation

- Compare with Timescapes study of the oldest generation – people over 75 – sample found through kinship networks so only one person without children.



Areas to explore

- How do childless older people make sense of their lives?
- What markers of time are used?
- Are patterns of sense-making gendered?
- How are agency and choice worked with?
- What expectations or plans do they express?
- Differences or similarities in the talk of childless and the talk of those who have children?
- Annual routines used to maintain contact?



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