



Personal Life

Carol Smart

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For more than a decade, Carol Smart has been at the forefront of debates about the sociology of the family. Yet she has become frustrated by the fixation of many commentators with the supposed decline of commitment, and even the decline of the possibility of family life. In this exciting new book, she puts forward a new way of understanding families and relationships.

Breaking with conventional wisdom, her book offers a fresh conceptual approach to understanding personal life, which realigns empirical research with theoretical analysis. She gives emphasis to ideas of connectedness, relationality and embeddedness, rejecting many of the assumptions found in theories of individualisation and de-traditionalisation by authors such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Bauman and Giddens.

Instead, her approach prioritises the bonds between people, the importance of memory and cultural heritage, the significance of emotions (both positive and negative), how family secrets work and change over time, and the underestimated importance of things such as shared possessions or homes in the maintenance and memory of relationships.

This ground-breaking text will be essential reading for anyone who cares about the future of families and personal relationships, and who wants to understand this most intimate area of social life.

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