A death in the family: experiences of dying and death in which everyday family practices are embedded and enacted

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Abstract:
‘Family’ is an important concept in end-of-life care policy and practice but familial relationships are rarely considered, beyond a bio-medical framework and/or as a resource for informal care. Furthermore, bereavement and grief have largely come to be seen as the domain for psychiatry and psychology. I argue for an exploration of death, dying and bereavement as experiences within which everyday family practices are embedded and enacted. In doing so, I draw upon experiences, in an English setting, relating to my parents’ coming to the end of their lives. Morgan’s work is central to this endeavour and I apply aspects of his work to this important but understudied area of family sociology. Building on insights from this important body of work, I argue this can help to develop richer more nuanced understandings of the everyday familial experiences of dying and death bound up in social, material and cultural contexts.

Key words:
Death, dying and bereavement, family practices, siblings, end-of-life care

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