Friends are the families we choose for ourselves: towards the democratisation of relationships

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‘Friends are the families we choose for ourselves’
(Buchanan):
Towards the democratisation of relationships

Viv Burr
University of Huddersfield
Friends are the families we choose for ourselves: Towards the democratisation of relationships

- Women and the family
- Changes in family forms
- Friendship
- Democratisation of relationships (Giddens)
- Implications for women’s selfhood
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- Women in relationship
  Nancy Chodorow (1978)

- Patriarchy and the family
  Anthony Giddens (1999)
  Social structure and sense of self
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- Changes in family forms
- Cheal (2000)
- Sasha Roseneil (2004a): “the hegemony of the the conventional family is experiencing significant challenge”
- The family in television
  ‘Cultural fantasies’ (Denzin, 1987)
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Friends

So no-one told you life was gonna be this way
Your job’s a joke, you’re broke, your love life’s D.O.A.
It’s like you’re always stuck in second gear
When it hasn’t been your day, your week, your month, or even your year

Chorus
I’ll be there for you
(When the rain starts to pour)
I’ll be there for you
(Like I’ve been there before)
I’ll be there for you
(‘Cause you’re there for me too)
Buffy
THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
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*Buffy*: the premise

- Sunnydale, California: The ‘Hellmouth’
- The Slayer (the ‘Chosen One’)
- Buffy Summers
- Watcher (Rupert Giles)
- Willow, Xander, Tara, Anya, Dawn, Spike.
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‘Family’ (5.6)

Mr Maclay :‘we know how to control her ....problem.’
‘Family’

Maclay: The girl belongs with her family. Hope that’s clear to the rest of you (…)

Buffy: You wanna take Tara out of here against her will (…) You just gotta go through me

Dawn: And me (…)

Xander: You’re dealing with all of us.

(…)Shot of Giles, Dawn, Buffy, Willow, Tara, Xander and Anya all standing together.

Spike: ‘Cept me.

Maclay: We’re her blood kin- who the hell are you?

Buffy: We’re family.
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‘Alternative’ families - the down side

- instability
- uncertainty
- roles and responsibilities unclear

A better alternative?
- ‘Normal Again’ (6.17)
Normal Again
Normal Again
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- Deacon and Williams (2004): ‘the choices people make are morally informed responses to changes in their circumstances, rather than simple expressions of individual choice or lifestyle.’
- Carol Smart (2004): transformation of relationships
- Angela Phillips: importance of media
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Conclusion

Friends: the new family?

Berry Mayall (2000) ESRC Children 5-16 project

“Children spoke of friendships in terms of support: ‘telling each other everything’, ‘being there for you’.”

Buffy quote: