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 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)
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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)
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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: