



**Out of the Shadows?
A Relational Approach to
Young Women's HE
Transitions**

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Young Women in Transition

- Forthcoming book:
Finn (2015) *Personal Life, Young Women and Higher Education: A Relational Approach to Student and Graduate Experiences* Palgrave Macmillan
- Overview of book
- Key themes and motifs
- Caitlin's story

Methodology and Focus

- PhD research (2006-10) + Follow-up study (2012-3)
- Qualitative Longitudinal Methodology: 3 or 4 in-depth interviews over 6-7 years
- 24 [10] Young women from 'Millthorne'
- 'Ordinary' youth?

(Roberts 2011; Roberts and MacDonald 2013; Snee and Devine 2014)

Developing a Relational Approach (1): Mapping the field

- *Just another* study of class/gender/ethnicity?
- Dominant approach: Personal relationships as risk or resource
- Personal relationships as facilitators or barriers to (different forms of) participation in HE

(see: Reay, David and Ball 2005; Christie 2007, 2009; Evans 2009; Holdsworth 2006; Hussain and Bagguley 2007; Thomas and Quinn 2007)

- Everyday dynamics of personal life left in the shadows
- Space within terrain for a different view?

Developing a Relational Approach (2): Doing things differently

- A manifesto for change within the social sciences, youth studies and relationships research

(see Kelly 2006, in press; Smart 2007, 2010; Law 2004; Back 2007; Thomson and McLeod 2009; Henderson et al. 2012)

- Horton and Kraftl (2006): *what else can be done with(in) the field?*
- Qualitative Longitudinal Research central to this
- ‘conjuring evocatively’ (Henderson et al. 2012)
- Chimes with Relational approach which is based upon:

- a) Everyday relationship practices**
- b) Negotiation and emotional work**
- c) Time and space**
- d) Interpersonal politics and power**

Telling Stories

THEME	ANALYTIC FRAME
FAMILY	Disentangling family relationships
FRIENDSHIP	Imagined, embodied and negotiated
HOUSEMATES	Accelerated intimacy
ROMANTIC & SEXUAL PARTNERSHIPS	The curious absence of love and sex
GRADUATE SUPPORT	Webs of interdependency after university
GRADUATE SUCCESS	Relational, emotional and gendered

Caitlin's Story

- 'traditional' pathway?
- Family relationships unfold in unexpected and emotional ways
- Difficult friendships reflect a mirror to the self and renegotiations take place
- Love and commitment kept at a distance
- Complexities of 'successful' graduate transitions

Conclusion

- Research and approach creates a space for dynamic understandings of choice and change in young women's lives
- Complicates fixed understandings of class, gender and ethnicity and is humanising of research participants
- Relationship between 'public story' about HE and lived lives moving in and through this space
- Significance of description and understanding contemporary moral tales
- 'keep the process of relating in focus just as much as, if not more than, the individual or the self' (Mason 2004)



THANK YOU