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

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Young Women in Transition


• 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

• 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**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>ANALYTIC FRAME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td>Disentangling family relationships</td>
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<td>FRIENDSHIP</td>
<td>Imagined, embodied and negotiated</td>
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<td>HOUSEMATES</td>
<td>Accelerated intimacy</td>
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<td>ROMANTIC &amp; SEXUAL PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>The curious absence of love and sex</td>
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<td>GRADUATE SUPPORT</td>
<td>Webs of interdependency after university</td>
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<td>GRADUATE SUCCESS</td>
<td>Relational, emotional and gendered</td>
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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