

Kathrin Dodenhoeft: Inviting the Other in – Chosen Families in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

It has often been argued in *Buffy* scholarship that the main narrative of the series is the difficult journey of growing up and finding one's own place in the world. Another point of interest is whether Buffy presents the chosen family as being superior to the biological one – and therefore subverts patriarchal family structures – or whether nothing has really changed besides a gender swap with a girl taking on the role of family patriarch (c.f. Jes Batts as well as Agnes B. Curry and Josef Velazquez). This paper proposes to bring these two ideas together under special consideration of the incorporation of 'Others' into Buffy's chosen family. It will be argued that these Others – Angel, Faith, Spike, Anya, Dawn among others – serve to reflect Buffy's darker character traits and that with their incorporation or rejection Buffy's and the Scoobies' identity as a chosen family is constantly being renegotiated. With a special focus on the titular heroine, it will be explored how the introduction of Others into her chosen family affect her, her identity, and if the chosen family is a necessary tool to contain the characters' daily struggle between normalcy and monstrosity. As a consequence, it will be questioned whether the chosen family really is all so different from the blood-related one or if these relationships work the way most families do: the children move out when they are grown-up.