

ARTICLE

Doctor Who, Family and National Identity

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National identity is often intimately bound to connectedness to, independence from, and constructions of, family. Furthermore, family remains integral to neoliberal capitalism such that efforts to develop national identity along capitalist lines are likely to involve engagement with it. Legal changes in Britain over the last forty years reflect these constructions. *Doctor Who* is a science fiction programme in which an alien (the Doctor) has adventures with mainly human companions, travelling in time and space in a ship called the TARDIS. As the BBC's longest-running television drama series, and one with a long-term focus on projecting Britishness, *Doctor Who* valuably charts how national identity has evolved. In the context of the Doctor's companions in particular, *Doctor Who*'s treatment of family has altered starkly over time. This article identifies an *orphan companions era* in the programme's early years in which characters' families were either startlingly unmentioned or dead, leaving the TARDIS 'family' unchallenged. After a *transitional phase* in the 1980s in which each companion's family assumed only fleeting significance, the programme's post-2005 reboot ushered in an *era of deep engagement with family* in which families assume seminal importance. By putting family centre stage, *Doctor Who* captures the spirit of the age, marking a refashioning of British national identity in which family looms large. This reflects Britain's transition from social democracy to neoliberalism. Distancing itself from conservatism, however, *Doctor Who*'s promotion of family goes hand in hand with the programme developing its own more progressive take on what constitutes the 'good family'.

Keywords: *Doctor Who*; television; national identity; family; law; British

Introduction

National identity concerns the stories which a nation's people tell each other about who they are. Yet power to fashion conceptions of national identity is unevenly distributed: the political and cultural elites necessarily enjoy a privileged position in disseminating visions of national identity. For their part, political leaders frequently promote conceptions of national identity which coincide with their favoured ideologies. But the makers of popular television put forward notions of national identity too. Scholars have shown how these contributions, from the ostensibly distinct fields of politics and television drama, actually tend to resemble each other. Street (1997) has observed that both politicians and popular culture offer forms of identity intended to resonate with people's experience, and van Zoonen (2004) has argued that popular culture is a relevant resource for *political* citizenship. This close relationship between the efforts of politicians and those of television drama to fashion national identity merits academic attention. For while television drama is capable of constantly 'flagging up' signifiers of national identity until so doing becomes banal (Billig 1995), it does not necessarily follow political leaders' conceptions of national identity in slavish fashion: it may seek to subvert or at any rate alter them. As Edensor (2002) observes, television has unleashed a torrent of national representations including some dissenting and dissonant ones. Furthermore, *Doctor Who*'s audience may be receptive to the programme's changes in social values (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 83). Television drama may therefore put forward readings of national identity at odds to those promoted by the political elite, which may be received by viewers in the way they are intended.

Family often looms large in the construction of national identity. Indeed, the identity of a nation may be framed by the role of family within it, a status which legal provisions may serve to reinforce. The nation itself may be expressed as constituting a family. In many countries, family has at times played a seminal role in constructing the sense of nationhood. Stalinism promoted family as a cornerstone of Soviet identity, seeing it as a factory for authoritarian ideologies and conservative structures; the Vichy government replaced France's traditional motto with one of 'Work, Family, Fatherland'; Article 38.1 of the Lithuanian Constitution states that family is the foundation of society and country, and so forth. Yet at the same time, national identity is not stable: it changes as the contours of a nation's politics alter their

form. Television drama may provide particularly striking instances of the way in which national identity has changed as the status of family within society has changed. This transformation may in turn yield valuable insights into the balance which television drama strikes between descriptive portrayals of the nation as it *is*, and normative prescriptions as to what the nation's people *ought* to be.

Doctor Who (1963–89, 1996, 2005–present), a particularly long-lived television series, has undergone a remarkable transformation with regard to its depiction of family. *Doctor Who* is the British Broadcasting Corporation's longest-running drama series as well as the world's longest-running science fiction programme. It is a matter of consensus among television scholars that a pervasive purpose of *Doctor Who* is to express Britishness (Nicol 2018: 16–17). In so doing, *Doctor Who* tends periodically to shift its ground in response to social pressures, thereby constantly offering its viewers 'something the same but something different' (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983: 3). Despite a succession of writers, producers, directors and show runners, the programme has established a fairly strong degree of political consistency and 'message'. In part, a professional ideology took root which orientated *Doctor Who* durably towards an overt liberal-left ethos, a trend traced as far back as the early 1970s by Tulloch and Alvarado (1983: 182–183), though arguably apparent even at the programme's outset. Partly too, *Doctor Who's* social and political direction may be attributed to the unique trajectory of the BBC. The Corporation is charged with developing a sense of national identity and over the years *Doctor Who* has come to play a special role in that regard. Indeed, it is doubtful that a series like *Doctor Who* would have emerged without the freedom afforded by the BBC's public service ethos. Furthermore, the politics of early *Doctor Who* readily took root in the modern programme when it was rebooted in 2005. Alec Charles notes that from the outset new *Doctor Who* was uncharacteristically direct in its political references. Significantly, Charles sees its family orientation as part of that politics: 'family entertainment as social cement' (2008: 454–458). In turn, this intergenerational appeal aided the BBC's bid for Charter renewal in 2006.

In *Doctor Who*, the Doctor, an alien, travels in time and space in a machine called the TARDIS and is accompanied in his/her adventures by a succession of mainly human companions. Typically, these companions are played by conventionally attractive young women and men. This article aims to draw out the contrast between the programme's early years in which the families of companions were unmentioned or hardly mentioned, and recent *Doctor Who* in which companions' families play an enormous role. Three phases become readily apparent. First there was the 'orphan companions' era in the 1960s and 1970s in which viewers were told nothing or next to nothing about a companion's family. This was followed by an intermediate phase in the 1980s where a family figure of each companion made a fleeting appearance, generally to kick-start the companion's stay in the TARDIS. Finally came the rebooted 'new *Who*' from 2005 onwards which ushered in an era of deep engagement with family. In this phase, the families of companions not only feature repeatedly in individual episodes in an emotionally engaging way but may often come to play a major role in the companion's story arc.

Why did a programme which shunned companions' families at the outset regenerate itself into one in which those families became a central feature? This article explores the reasons for this transformation in terms of changes in British national identity as neoliberalism propelled the country towards a more pronounced family orientation. At the same time, however, *Doctor Who* applies a subversive gloss to family, by privileging families which do not match the supposed British norm of 'mum, dad and 2.4 children'. *Doctor Who* thereby neither entirely conforms to nor wholly rebels against politically hegemonic manifestations of national identity. Rather the programme negotiates a middle course between conservatism and progressivism, not only offering a realistic portrayal of modern British families but assertively celebrating their diversity.

***Doctor Who*, Britishness and the Doctor's Companions**

Doctor Who was broadcast from 1963 to 1989, and again from 2005 to the present day. The BBC, along with fandom and scholars, refer to the former as 'classic *Who*' and the latter as 'new *Who*'. Crucially there was also a 16-year period in between classic and new series (notwithstanding one 1996 TV movie). This gap, the so-called 'hiatus', is valuable in making contrasts between classic *Who* and new *Who* particularly vivid.

Doctor Who's emphasis on Britishness is unsurprising as a flagship product of the British Broadcasting Corporation, which was established partly to play the role, consciously articulated, of promoting a sense of Britishness and of national community (McNair 2009: 106). The BBC probably remains the most reliable medium for creating some image of communion across the United Kingdom, having consistently and actively provided a cultural image of Britain (Colley 2009: 25). Consequently, the BBC is tasked with endlessly trying to constitute what the nation *is*, combining reflexive anxiety and creative imagination to project a mixture of concern over British vices and pride in British virtue (Seaton 2009: 78).

Throughout both classic and new manifestations, *Doctor Who* has proven a particularly fruitful source of commentary on national identity, constantly asserting its Britishness by fashioning and communicating a British identity. The programme's template and tropes provide a multiplicity of avenues for so doing. Regardless of whether *Doctor Who* covers historically-themed, monster-driven or outer-space narratives, these often act as thinly-veiled criticisms of contemporary British politics, the programme thereby holding a mirror to British society (Grady and Hemstrom 2013: 125–143). In classic *Who*, external political references were a permanent fixture of the programme (Tulloch and Alvarado 2003), and this has proven to be just as much the case with new *Who*. Metaphor is particularly widely-used, with monsters functioning to demonstrate human traits (O'Day 2010, Sleight 2012) and rebels representing national discontents (O'Day 2010). Planets are frequently used as metaphors for states (most often the British state) or empires (most often

the British Empire). Some *Doctor Who* serials have been full-blown allegories for British political engagements ranging from the European Community to the Cold War (Nicol 2018: 16–19).

That Britishness is pivotal to *Doctor Who* should be apparent to even the casual viewer. Russell T. Davies, first show runner of new *Who*, explicitly intended the programme to be ‘very, very British’ (Clarke 2005: 25). *Doctor Who* scholars too emphasise that Britishness is indeed central to the show. The emphasis, particularly in new *Who*, on Scottishness, Welshness and Northernness should be seen as part of the effort to represent the entire country in the programme (Nicol 2018: 83–115). More generally, academics have observed how the supposedly alien Doctor’s manners and adventures are imbued with stories that the British people tell themselves about themselves (Cull 2006: 55, Grady and Hemstrom 2013: 125, 139, Knox 2014: 112). Jowett (2017: 11) characterises the Doctor not as a traditional hero but a very *British* one, tending to prevail through ingenuity and persuasion rather than weaponry. Chapman (2013: 7–8) argues that the cultural politics and narrative ideologies of *Doctor Who* are unmistakably British in fostering toleration, non-conformity and difference. Hills (2010: 3) discusses the role of classic *Who* as an emblem of Britishness, articulating a British identity. If anything, new *Who* appears to pursue Britishness with even greater gusto and in a more brazen fashion (Nicol 2018: 15–20). Regardless of whether a *Doctor Who* story is set in contemporary Britain, elsewhere in the world, or on some faraway world or space station, the culture is repeatedly earmarked as British (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983: 288).

The Doctor’s companions represent another means of telling the national story. The vast majority of companions who come from Earth are British. Human companions acquired in outer space are usually coded as British. Most companions who are non-human humanoids are portrayed as upper-class British, thereby allowing *Doctor Who* to step beyond its normal focus on middle class concerns. Whilst in classic *Who* the use of companions to signify Britishness was rather subtle, in new *Who* the practice becomes more audacious. Various means of linking the companions to the nation are deployed. Several companions are repeatedly filmed in proximity with the Union Jack, one even sporting a Union Jack t-shirt. British pride in a multiracial society is emphasised by having non-white companions (five in new *Who* compared to none in classic *Who*) and by white companions often having black or mixed-race boyfriends. An increase in the number of unequivocally working-class companions compared to classic *Who* is also evident, suggesting a wish to represent the nation as a whole. The country’s great public services, the National Health Service and education, are showcased by having companions working in them, thereby highlighting egalitarian aspects of British identity. Even companions’ choices of food and drink may serve to accentuate Britishness, with tea and chips looming large.

Companions thus work as signifiers of Britishness. Their role in so doing is particularly significant since the companions are seminal to the programme: *Doctor Who*’s narrative strategy is built around them. As Wood (2007: 91–94) has observed, in the programme’s early years, the original TARDIS crew arrive somewhere and try to figure out how the alien civilisation ‘works’. From the outset, therefore, *Doctor Who* eschewed a conventional narrator, relying instead for its storytelling on the empirical, first-hand observations of the companions and thereby couching the narrative within a sense of scientific objectivity. The companions allow us to see them seeing things, helping the viewer piece together the mystery of how the alien society is arranged. In addition to their narrative function, the companions play an important role in characterisation, not least that of the Doctor. Companions’ questions serve to draw out the Doctor’s genius and their propensity for getting themselves into danger allows the Doctor to show courage and cleverness in saving them. The Doctor’s rescuing of companions fortifies the TARDIS family and the Doctor’s role as wise and compassionate parent figure.

The ‘Orphan Companions’ Era 1963–1980

In *Doctor Who*’s opening episode we encounter Susan Foreman (1963–4, Carole Ann Ford). She is the Doctor’s granddaughter and is attending a London secondary school. Her curious schoolteachers Ian Chesterton (1963–5, William Russell) and Barbara Wright (1963–5, Jacqueline Hill) follow her into the TARDIS, and the programme’s adventures commence when the Doctor plunges the TARDIS through time and space in order to abduct his passengers. In the following story ‘The Daleks’ (1963–4), the TARDIS lands on another planet and the companions have the opportunity to say how they feel:

BARBARA: We’re not on Earth, then.

DOCTOR: No, certainly not.

IAN: Are you sure?

DOCTOR: Oh, certain. ...

IAN (to Barbara): Try not to be too upset.

BARBARA: I counted so much on just going back to things I recognise and trust. But here there’s nothing to rely on. Nothing.

IAN: Well, there’s me. Barbara, all I ask you to do is believe, really believe, we’ll go back. We will, you know.

BARBARA: I wish I was more like you. I’m afraid I’m a very unwilling adventurer.

IAN: I’m not exactly revelling in it myself.

Ian and Barbara’s dialogue is striking for its non-mention of family. Barbara says that she wants to go back to things she recognises and trusts and can rely on, yet seems merely to want her external surroundings to be familiar. This aston-

ishing omission of family is consolidated at Ian and Barbara's departure: in 'The Chase' (1965), the pair manage to get back to Earth two years after they left. They celebrate not by getting in touch with their families but by fooling around Trafalgar Square and taking a ride on a London bus. This fits well with Barbara's expressed desire two years earlier to be 'just going back to things I recognise and trust'. Despite the two years absence, making themselves known to parents and siblings is not the pressing concern. *Doctor Who's* reluctance to generate families around companions in rivalry to the 'TARDIS family' is such that Ian and Barbara do not unequivocally form a *post*-TARDIS family either. A conventionally attractive man and woman, they maintain a firm friendship whilst in the TARDIS, but their emotional restraint rules out a definitive answer as to whether they end up constituting a couple. This is emphasised in their departure in 'The Chase', where the only hint of romance is that Ian is slightly tactile. As Wallace (2010: 114) observes, classic *Who* deviated from soap opera conventions in feeling unable to deal with love and sexual relationships, something which proved no problem in new *Who*.

Early *Doctor Who's* reticence over family is also confirmed by its treatment of Susan. Apparently an orphan, her parentage and the story behind her orphanhood remain unexplained. Instead the viewer is presented with the situation, perhaps unusual in post-war Britain, of a grandfather required to look after an orphaned grandchild. Their relationship is characterised by domination on the part of the Doctor and a lack of agency on the part of Susan (Nicol 2019). The Doctor even determines her departure, deciding on Susan's behalf that her future lies with her new human boyfriend. Susan makes a token appearance in the programme's twentieth anniversary special, 'The Five Doctors' (1983), but only as a passive figure who imparts and does nothing of consequence. That apart, thereafter *Doctor Who* treats the memory of the Doctor-Susan relationship with alienated distance. It is not referred to again until an oblique reference by the tenth Doctor (David Tennant) who mentions that he was once a dad ('The Doctor's Daughter' 2008), and then the twelfth Doctor (Peter Capaldi) keeps a photograph of Susan on his desk ('The Pilot' 2017). Given that *Doctor Who* is a fictional text, the evolution of the Doctor-Susan relationship was a continuing choice for the programme's production team who could, in principle, do whatever they wished with it. The decision neither to revive nor regenerate Susan nor even to remember her suggests a wish to avoid entanglement with family. Thus even the Doctor's own family was not allowed to rival the TARDIS family.

Yet the TARDIS family itself proves flaky and unconvincing since it lacks the permanence associated with family. Members of the TARDIS crew regularly flit off and are replaced. This contrasts with programmes such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) which managed to keep its central characters over quite a long duration. In *Doctor Who*, the tradition of a regular turnover of companions evolved early in the programme's life with first Ford then Russell and Hill opting to leave in order to pursue other prospects. In these early years, actors were more fearful of becoming type-cast and more stigma was attached to relying on a single programme for one's acting career; these were potent factors which encouraged actors playing companions not to linger too long. Periodically changing the companions evolved into a good way of refreshing the programme, enabling *Doctor Who* to survive and thrive by continuously replacing its cast (Franke and Nicol 2018: 198). Moreover, no tradition developed of the Doctor keeping in touch with former companions. As a result, the TARDIS family lacks the stability to be a credible permanent family and is more in the nature of a temporary or foster family. Yet *Doctor Who* unquestionably continued to project the TARDIS crew as *some* kind of family. Newman (2005: 44) maintains that all subsequent companions are surrogates for Susan, and this is particularly obvious in the case of the companion who 'replaced' Susan, Vicki, who was similar to Susan in terms of youth and petiteness. Jones (2016) observes that the filming of Vicki's introduction to the TARDIS interior overtly emphasises that Vicki is joining *a family*. In this context he suggests that the characters of Ian and Barbara can be seen as functioning as surrogate parents with the Doctor as surrogate grandfather. In this era, therefore, companions' families were marginalised, yet the TARDIS crew forms something of a family themselves. Britton addresses the issue of the TARDIS family in arguing that ideas of family have served to structure the central relationships in *Doctor Who* for most of the programme's history. He observes that the adventures start with the Doctor's actual granddaughter as one of the TARDIS crew and when she departs the Doctor acquires a succession of wards to fill her position (Britton 2011: 115).

The early *Doctor Who* crew set the pattern for the remainder of the 'orphan companions' phase which lasted until 1980. In this period, the majority of companions were orphans in the *metaphorical* sense: their families were simply never mentioned, let alone encountered. Three were *literal* orphans. The metaphorical orphans were Ian Chesterton, Barbara Wright, Steven Taylor (1965–6, Peter Purves), Polly (1966–7, Anneke Wills), Ben Jackson (1966–7, Michael Craze), Jamie McCrimmon (1966–9, Frazer Hines), Zoe Herriot (1968–9, Wendy Padbury) Liz Shaw (1970, Caroline John), Jo Grant (1971–3, Katy Manning), Sarah Jane Smith (1973–6, Elisabeth Sladen), Harry Sullivan (1975, Ian Marter), Leela (1976–8, Louise Jameson) and Romana (1978–81, Mary Tamm/Lalla Ward). Those who were orphans in the literal sense were Vicki (1965, Maureen O'Brien), Dodo Chaplet (1966, Jackie Lane) and Victoria Waterfield (1967–8, Deborah Watling). Victoria is a rare exception to the thesis advanced in this article since the serial 'The Evil of the Daleks' (1967) details her father's attempts to save her from the Daleks before he is killed. By contrast, the viewer does not encounter Vicki's and Dodo's deceased parents who are merely mentioned.

The Doctor of the 1960s therefore gads around time and space with the programme showing little interest in his companions' families. This inattention does not mutate when *Doctor Who* changes somewhat in the 1970s. The Doctor's people, the Time Lords, exile him to Earth, disabling the TARDIS. He comes to work for a new organisation, the United

Nations Intelligence Taskforce (UNIT) which investigates alien incursions. Eventually a UNIT 'family' is formed, one of 'cosy cuppas, quiriness, ditzzy girls [and] a little light patriarchy' (Halliday 2012: 204) yet viewers still do not meet companions' families. Britton (2011: 116) observes that when working for UNIT the Doctor acquires 'assistants' rather than companions, yet his status as father figure largely persists. In the cases of Jo Grant (1971–3, Katy Manning) and Sarah Jane Smith (1973–6, Elisabeth Sladen), family connections serve to kick-start their adventures. Jo is made the Doctor's assistant within UNIT because she has 'relatives in high places', a nepotism which the viewer is presumed to find acceptable ('Terror of the Autons' 1971); Sarah Jane, a journalist, encounters the Doctor whilst impersonating her scientist aunt ('The Time Warrior' 1974). Again, the viewer never gets to meet these relatives. The model of the TARDIS family then resurfaces more overtly once the Doctor regains control of the TARDIS and returns to his wandering ways (Britton 2011: 115–117).

What drove early *Who's* exclusion of companions' families? The programme was born into the post-war political consensus of 1945–79 in which there was a strong social accord in favour of the traditional family. Given this consensus, there was no pressing need to trumpet the virtues of family. At the same time, television drama trod warily in dealing with the diverse forms of family which life could throw up. The sustainability and rightness of the traditional form of family – married couple plus children – was not being questioned, save in films and television plays which were seen as daring experiments: *Cathy Come Home* (1966), *Up the Junction* (1965), *A Taste of Honey* (1961), *The L-Shaped Room* (1962). Their social message was not yet mainstream.

Britain's post-war consensus was a compromise (across class parameters) in which the state committed itself to the maintenance of full employment, social security, universal healthcare and significant housebuilding. The welfare state was consolidated in law by statutes such as the National Health Service Act 1946, the Transport Act 1947, the National Assistance Act 1948 and repeal of the anti-union Trades Disputes Act 1927. The British could project their country as one of 'fair play'. At the same time, the stronger welfare state enabled young people to live independently from their parents earlier in life. At *Doctor Who's* outset, marriage remained a social imperative. The practice of early marriage combined with non-prohibitive housing costs enabled young adults to 'fly the nest' rather than stay with their parents for economic reasons. This early independence, reflected in the characters of Ian and Barbara and their successors, eroded the need to emphasise relationships with parents in *Doctor Who*.

Furthermore, almost half the programme's viewers, pre-reboot, were under fifteen (Moran 2013: 207). In this regard, the absence of companions' families in early *Who* also ran with the grain of children's literature, in which the disappearance of parents was treated as a prerequisite to the attainment of adventure. It was well established that authors should get the parents out of the picture so that the children could solve their own problems. Families were not therefore a locus of adventure but, rather, children escaped the family if they were to have adventure. This absence of parents typified not only children's books (e.g. *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), *The Jungle Book* (1894)), but also Disney films (e.g. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Bambi* (1942), *Cinderella* (1950), *Peter Pan* (1953)). Orphans were free to have adventures without the control and constraints of protective and stifling adults, whilst simultaneously having to deal with the danger and discomfort of lack of parental love (Nodelman and Reimer 2002). Although most of the Doctor's early companions were young adults rather than children, the programme clearly infantilises Susan and Vicki, so it is not too fanciful a leap to suggest that *Doctor Who* may have been influenced by the tradition in children's literature which still prevailed in the 1960s. This exclusion of companions' families had the practical benefit of allowing *Doctor Who's* makers to concentrate attention on the pursuit of the adventure without the 'distraction' of family cares.

Transitioning Towards Family 1980–1989

In the 1980s, *Doctor Who* made its first tentative steps towards engaging with family. This took the form of encountering family but only at the outset of a companion's tenure or in one case at the time of departure. In this way the programme started to feel its way towards drama in which family loomed larger but without placing a character's family permanently centre-stage.

The first companion in this group was Adric (1980–2, Matthew Waterhouse). He appears on his home planet trying to join a group of teenagers which includes his brother. The brother is killed during the adventure, and Adric stows away in the TARDIS. We encounter Nyssa (1981–3, Sarah Sutton) as the daughter of a nobleman who is killed by the Doctor's long-term adversary the Master. Viewers are introduced to Tegan Jovanka (1981–4, Janet Fielding) in the company of a pleasant aunt who tries driving her to Heathrow to begin her career as an air hostess, only for the aunt to become another victim of the Master. Turlough (1983–4, Mark Strickson) departs the TARDIS when he finds his brother. Peri Brown's (1984–6, Nicola Bryant) stepfather looms large in her introductory adventure, not least when he is impersonated at the Master's behest.

Engagement with family was therefore present but fleetingly. This represented a rupture with *Doctor Who's* original formula of never meeting family. The new practice was nonetheless reasonably compatible with the children's literature tradition of getting relatives out of the way so that the companion could have adventures without them. All the same, it was significant that, for the first time, family at least put in an appearance, topping or tailing a companion's stint in the TARDIS.

In certain instances, however, family came to intrude slightly more pervasively. In 'Arc of Infinity' (1983), Tegan helps to save a cousin from an alien enemy. This is the first instance of family putting in an appearance during a character's period as companion rather than merely at their advent or departure, so might represent the first faint glimmerings of *Doctor Who's* deeper involvement with companions' families. More significantly, when Ace (1987–9, Sophie Aldred) becomes the final companion of classic *Who*, her parents maintain a brooding presence during her tenure, lending an air of mystery: they are largely absent, but seem to live on in her fears. Quizzed about them, she states at the outset: 'I haven't got no mum and dad. I've never had no mum and dad, and I don't want no mum and dad. It's just me, all right?' ('Dragonfire' 1987). Subsequently, in 'The Curse of Fenric' (1989), the Doctor transports her back to the Second World War where she meets the baby who will become her mother. Ace's encounter with her baby-mother appears to resolve her hostility towards her parent in favour of love. It is significant that one of classic *Who's* most emotionally charged encounters with family occurred almost at the end of the programme's run.

Doctor Who's switch in favour of meeting the relatives makes perfect sense in the light of the changes in British society wrought by the succession of Conservative governments led by Margaret Thatcher. These governments represented a decisive shift in British politics. They ended the social democratic consensus of 1945–79, shifting the country's dominant ideology towards neoliberalism and fostering corresponding changes in national identity. British society became harsher: high unemployment disciplined the workforce, as did the defeat of the Miners' Strike of 1985–6. Trade unions became politically marginalised, a relegation confirmed by the anti-union Employment Acts 1980 and 1982. By 1990, as a result of a series of privatisations enshrined in statutes like the Telecommunications Act 1984, Gas Act 1986 and British Steel Act 1988, some 600,000 people were no longer employed by government. This went hand-in-hand with rearranging public sector management to instil private sector disciplines (Jenkins 2007: 105–111).

Crucially, collectivism was being replaced by an emphasis on family, Thatcher (1995: 628–631) believing that governments 'could only get to the roots of crime and much else besides by concentrating on strengthening the traditional family'. Government policy was therefore to encourage families to stay together and to provide properly for their children. Thatcher's dogged promotion of a strong sense of family tallies with Brecher's (2012) observation that the family remains integral to neoliberal capitalism, so that efforts to develop national identity along capitalist lines are likely to involve engagement with the family. Brecher argues that neoliberal constructions of the family may serve to entrench ownership as a basic category and yet simultaneously to provide a haven in a heartless world, an oasis in which *non*-market relations can hold sway. Not only did Thatcherism propagandise in favour of family, but the consequences of Thatcherism necessitated falling back on the family.

At the same time, however, the terseness of relatives' appearance in *Doctor Who* reflected the need not to stray too far from the programme's traditions. The role of family as 'haven in a heartless world' was, however, to be greatly expanded when *Doctor Who* returned to television screens after a significant break.

New *Who*: Deep Engagement with Family 2005–present

After *Doctor Who's* cancellation in 1989 there followed a 16-year gap between classic *Who* and new *Who*. This period proved immensely creative. As Booy (2012: 152) observes: 'fandom had survived through the cancellation of the programme, and its creative energies thrived in the void left by the programme's absence'. At a time when fans were demanding more by way of backstories for companions, Booy (2012: 117) describes how many of the novels, audio adventures and comic strips of the so-called 'hiatus' grappled with precisely the same issues which would come to confront the makers of rebooted televisual new *Who*: how to inject more emotional content into a *Doctor Who* story and make the format matter in the twenty-first century. *Doctor Who* novels with a family orientation included *Transit* (Aaronovitch 1992), *Death and Diplomacy* (Stone 1996) and *Return of the Living Dad* (Orman 1996). The family emphasis of new *Who* represented a new direction for companions which derived from the outputs of the hiatus. It gave fans what many thought they were not getting from classic *Who* whilst simultaneously broadening the programme's appeal. It also reflected change in children's and young people's literature, film and television. Whilst the 'kill the parents' imperative continued into the new century in works like *Harry Potter* (1997–2007), there was also an increase in stories in which interplay between children and parents became one of the narrative drives (Nicholls 2015).

When *Doctor Who* ('new *Who*') returned to television screens in 2005 the role of the companion's family was transformed. Show runner Russell T. Davies intended cross-pollination between *Doctor Who* and fantasy dramas with an important family dimension such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2001) (Davies and Cook 2010). This family orientation thereby readied *Doctor Who* for the American and worldwide markets which, along with merchandising, represented a means of diversifying the BBC's funding as its licence fee arrangements and Charter renewal became more politically contested. A *Buffy*-esque emphasis on family and intimacy helped new *Who* meet the demands of US quality television drama (Knox 2014: 107–109). Moreover, the 2005 reboot was propelled in part by the need to connect with family audiences watching together, to produce flagship, talking-point television under pressure from commercial rivals. New *Who* enabled the BBC to reconnect with a part of its audience always considered key to its public service mission. The programme's intergenerational appeal was valuable to a Corporation facing Charter renewal in 2006, and the emphasis on companions' families supported this orientation. The addition of family was all the more striking given new *Who's* compression of time. Most stories now had to be concertinaed into a 45-minute slot, a deliberate creative

decision, instead of being played out over four or six weekly episodes of 25 minutes as in classic *Who* (O'Day 2013), yet time was found to tell the stories of companions' families.

New *Who's* first companion, Rose Tyler (2005–6, Billie Piper), lives with her mother Jackie Tyler (Camille Coduri), who becomes a recurring character. Jackie, a widow, has raised Rose on her own. One remarkable episode, 'Father's Day' (2005), revolves around the death of Jackie's husband Pete (Shaun Dingwall) whilst emphasising her dissatisfaction at her marriage. Rose tricks the Doctor into taking her back in the TARDIS to the day Pete dies, ostensibly to see him, but in reality to rescue him. Tellingly, the writer of 'Father's Day', Paul Cornell, was explicitly told to use his 'voice' as author of *Doctor Who* novels during the hiatus to craft the script (Booy 2012: 177). In a later adventure, Rose encounters an alternate version of Pete in a parallel universe who conveniently becomes a second husband for Jackie. As well as contributing humour to the series, Jackie, alongside Rose's sometime boyfriend Mickey Smith (Noel Clarke), adds emotional resonance by obliging Rose to choose between humdrum existence at home and adventure with the Doctor:

JACKIE: Listen to me. God knows I have hated that man, but right now, I love him and do you know why? Because he did the right thing. He sent you back to me.

ROSE: But what do I do every day, mum? What do I do? Get up, catch the bus, go to work, come back home, eat chips and go to bed? Is that it?

MICKEY: It's what the rest of us do.

ROSE: But I can't!

MICKEY: Why, because you're better than us?

ROSE: No, I didn't mean that. But it was. It was a better life. And I don't mean all the travelling and seeing aliens and spaceships and things. That don't matter. The Doctor showed me a better way of living your life. You know he showed you too. That you don't just give up. You don't just let things happen. You make a stand. You say no. You have the guts to do what's right when everyone else just runs away, and I just can't—

(Rose runs out of café.) ('The Parting of the Ways' 2005).

Family is similarly counterposed to adventure in the cases of subsequent companions: Martha Jones (2007, Freema Agyeman) and her warring family, Donna Noble (2008, Catherine Tate) and her dissatisfied mother and Bill Potts (2017, Pearl Mackie) and her uncaring foster mother.

Yet at the same time relatives, including those middle-aged and older, have been co-opted into active roles in *Doctor Who's* adventures. Jackie herself becomes enmeshed in the action in 'Army of Ghosts'/'Doomsday' (2006) and Martha's family are forced to act as servants of the Master, only to try rebelling against him, in 'The Sound of Drums'/'Last of the Time Lords' (2007). Most remarkably, there was a subsequent blurring of companions and family with first Donna's grandfather Wilf Mott (Bernard Cribbins) serving as a one-off companion ('The End of Time' 2009–10), then a married couple becoming companions in 2010 then a grandson and step-grandfather in 2018.

Furthermore, new *Who's* three show runners, Russell T. Davies (2005–10), Steven Moffat (2010–2017) and Chris Chibnall (2018-present) have all accorded prominence to companions' families not only in individual episodes but in entire story arcs, culminating in climactic end-of-series finales. Russell T. Davies' era emphasised the contrast between safety at home and the danger of adventure, and so his 2008 series finale 'The Stolen Earth'/'Journey's End' (2008) reunites three of his companions with their families: Rose's mother returns from a parallel universe to help rescue her daughter; Martha's mother rejoices that 'at the end of the world you [Martha] came back to me'; and Donna's mother and grandfather are on hand to take care of Donna when she comes to grief at the end of the adventure. In Steven Moffat's first series, the mysterious orphanhood of companion Amy Pond (2010–2, Karen Gillan) emerges as a theme. In the series finale 'The Pandorica Opens'/'The Big Bang' (2010), the Doctor is obliged to 'reboot the universe' which means that orphan-companion Amy is united on her wedding day with parents who did not exist in the previous universe. Running through Chris Chibnall's first series is the familial relationship between two companions: Ryan Sinclair (2018-present, Tosin Cole), a young black man, and his white step-grandfather Graham O'Brien (2018-present, Bradley Walsh). Ryan's grandmother, who is Graham's wife, is killed in the opening episode. Thereafter, Graham's efforts to persuade Ryan to accept him as his granddad become an ongoing theme. The later episodes contain key moments in which Ryan calls Graham 'granddad' and tells him that he loves him. The family themes running through the story arcs serve to emphasise the centrality of companions' families to the modern programme.

Family has also served to modify the character of the Doctor. As Comer (2010) points out, at least initially in new *Who*, the Doctor (2005, Christopher Eccleston) disturbs domesticating narratives, whereas when companions relinquish the Doctor this is persistently linked to a return to domesticity. For example, he tells Rose that he 'does not do family' and that she must forget him and 'go home'. By contrast, some thirteen years later, the Doctor in her first female manifestation (2018–present, Jodie Whittaker) becomes a more domesticating presence, notably calling her companions her 'fam'. Indeed, she invites the 'fam' to push the TARDIS dematerialisation lever with her. This domestic collectivism forms a striking contrast to the programme's very first episode when the Doctor plunges down the lever by himself in order to kidnap Susan, Ian and Barbara, none of whom wish to remain in the TARDIS.

Furthermore, new *Who* has also contained challenges to the Doctor's traditional asexuality, most notably through his marriage to recurring character River Song (Alex Kingston). Quite apart from this, it is striking how often the Doctor gets dragged into his companions' key family events, in episodes such as 'Father's Day' (2005), 'The Big Bang' (2010) and 'The Woman Who Fell to Earth' (2018).

For new *Who*, the family element is a selling-point. As Britton (2011: 123) observes, the programme is now pitched at viewers accustomed to a new breed of hybridised fantasy in which family interactions form a major component. Hills (2005: 102) has categorised new *Who* as an 'intimate epic', which grafts the emotional realism of characters' feelings and choices onto epic, alien adventure narratives. This is reflected in the way in which family provides sanctuary from the harshness of adventures with the Doctor. Jowett (2017: 45) notes that most of the Doctor's female companions have some kind of family to situate them in 'real life' and to offer them something in return. On the negative side, this has on occasion led to the programme's authors giving female companions departures which involve finding husbands and settling down, rather than doing something inspiring (Franke and Nicol 2018).

It is readily apparent therefore that new *Who*'s incorporation of family represents a strong contrast to earlier *Doctor Who*. The shift towards family captured the spirit of the age. After Margaret Thatcher's decade as Prime Minister, Britain had a succession of neoliberal governments. Jenkins (2007) has chronicled how these governments, Conservative and New Labour alike, supercharged Thatcherism rather than discarding it. He argues that Thatcher's 'sons' – John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown – acted as convinced 'disciples', venturing even where their mistress feared to tread on privatisation, welfare reform and promotion of the profit motive. The coalition government 2010–5 further deepened neoliberalism by paring back normal public spending in order to afford the bailing out of the financial sector after the 2008 banking crisis. Statutes such as the Railways Act 1993, Bank of England Act 1998 and Postal Services Act 2011 provided legal foundation for this unending revolution. Ideologically, governments persistently promoted the 'hard-working family' as a British ideal. Indeed, there has been an increasing rhetoric of family since the 1990s with the mantra of the 'hard-working family' being endlessly repeated by Labour and Conservative leaders alike. The shortcomings of the welfare state, emphasis on individual responsibility, and spiralling housing costs all contributed to a more family-centred vision of national identity coming to the fore. The family softens the precariousness of seemingly endless neoliberal capitalism.

This article's final set of observations relate to the *nature of Doctor Who's families*. The assumption in post-war Britain was that the typical family consists of a married heterosexual couple with perhaps a couple of children. What is striking in *Doctor Who* is how few companions' families conform. Amy's family consists of her two married parents and herself, but the family's normative value is compromised by the magical way it is conjured into existence and by the parents never featuring again in *Doctor Who*. There is also Yaz Khan's (2018-present, Mandeep Gill) family, made up of married parents along with Yaz and her sister.

All other families are less conventional. Informed by feminism, divorce, parental death and single parenthood, diversity within families reigns supreme. Indeed, there seems an unarticulated rule in new *Who* that every companion's family must be different from every other companion's family, thereby allowing the programme to ring the changes just as it does by experimenting with different kinds of companion. Thus Jackie raises Rose as a widow yet it is clear that she would have divorced her husband but for his early death. Martha's parents are divorced and quarrelsome. Donna lives with her difficult widowed mother and kindly grandfather. Amy is raised by her aunt. Clara Oswald's (2013–15, Jenna Coleman) mother dies young and she is presumably brought up by her father. Bill is an orphan who lives with her foster mother yet has imaginary conversations with her deceased mother. Ryan (like Mickey Smith) is raised by his grandmother but Ryan has a durable relationship with his step-grandfather. It is as if *Doctor Who* were intent on going through every possible permutation of family.

These diverse family narratives also give the programme the opportunity to experiment with diversity in class, gender, race and sexuality. Whilst being middle class is the default position in *Doctor Who*, some households are working class (Rose's, Graham's and Ryan's, Bill's). There is gender-swapping between Amy and husband Rory (2010–2, Arthur Darvill), with Rory assuming the caring, stabilising role associated with traditional feminine stereotypes (Jowett 2017: 43–47). (To this end the Doctor himself inverts the patriarchal assumption that a wife takes her husband's name by calling Rory, 'Rory Pond'). Martha Jones' period as companion enabled the programme to refreshingly represent an entire black family in speculative fiction (Robinson 2010: 162). When lesbian Bill departs, she does so having formed a same-sex relationship. Clara, who appears to be bisexual (she has a boyfriend in one series but in the next describes Jane Austen as a 'phenomenal kisser'), also leaves with a woman companion, perhaps with the hint of romance. If so, this gives each woman a post-TARDIS 'family', arguably consolidating the spirit of recent British legislation such as the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 and Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Amy-Chinn (2014) points out that the programme under Moffat advances a conservative agenda of family balanced against a utopian showcasing of feisty women, caring men and a taken-for-granted sexual diversity.

To be sure, the three show runners do not have identical ideas. Davies' commitment to including family pervasively is particularly strong and is reflected in his subsequent family-centred dystopian series *Years and Years* (2019). Part of Moffat's 'conservative agenda' is a prizing of biological parenthood (his depiction of Amy's parents and the memory of Bill's mother is more favourable than his portrayal of Amy's aunt and Bill's foster mother) whereas Chibnall appears to

relish non-blood relationships. Thus, in the case of Graham and Ryan, there is no blood tie, only a tie by marriage, along with different ethnicities. There is also a breaking of traditional gender stereotypes by Graham striving persistently to build an emotional relationship with Ryan. Traditionally, British men do not feel comfortable expressing their feelings. Over time, however, there has been an erosion of the British male's stiff upper lip. Graham's forthright expression of his feelings contrasts with the traditional 'ethos of stoical and undemonstrative masculinity' of British male characters (Chapman 2005: 321). In 'Resolution' (2019), Ryan encounters his neglectful father Aaron, whose conduct occasions a reprimand from Graham: 'Family isn't just about DNA or a name. It's about what you do. And you haven't done enough.' Aaron has to 'earn his spurs' as a relative just as Graham had. Graham thereby puts forward an expanded conception of family which the Doctor, as the programme's authoritative moral arbiter, embraces by referring to her TARDIS crew, Aaron included, as 'extended fam'.

Conclusion

The transformation of family in *Doctor Who* marks Britain's transition from social democracy to neoliberalism and from conformity to permissiveness. Back in 1963, the solidity of the family unit was perceived as part of Britain's heritage along with the British Empire. It was cracking but was not openly questioned, the institution of family being taken for granted and any deviation from it punishable. Family stood for stability, and so adventure necessitated escape. Marking a stark contrast to the 'orphan companions' of the programme's early years, new *Who*'s persistent representations of the British as family-orientated capture the spirit of the present age. Simultaneously, however, new *Who* involves more questioning of what exactly should constitute the 'good family', making engagement with family more engaging for the viewers. Unconventional families have come to the fore now that diversity is more acceptable. On the one hand, therefore, *Doctor Who* goes along with the establishment promotion of a family-orientated narrative of national identity. Yet, on the other hand, the programme distances itself from governmental promptings by persistently presenting families which are diverse. This active promotion of unorthodox families represents a distinctively broad-minded contribution to the conception of the British family.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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