Winkler-Reid S. Friendship, bitching, and the making of ethical selves: what it means to be a good friend among girls in a London school. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2016, 22(1), 166–182.

DOI link to article:

Date deposited:

01/02/2016

Embargo release date:

29 December 2017

Author's version

Friendship, bitching, and the making of ethical selves: what it means to be a good friend among girls in a London school

SARAH WINKLER-REID

Newcastle University

This article explores the relationship between friendship, personhood, and ethics among girls in a London school. While a Western ideal of friendship is posited as a personal, private, and spontaneous relationship between autonomous individuals, I argue that girls' friendships are a complex entanglement and interaction between forensic and mimetic dimensions of the self. Girls' ideals of friendship, and practices of making friends, suggest forensic pre-constituted selves acting with volition in order to become closer to other selves. However, bitching, exclusion, and breaking friendships foreground mimetic dimensions as girls shape each other and themselves according to gendered ethical criteria. Examining these analytical strands offers insight into how individuality is produced through sociality in everyday life.

Friendship, bitching, and the making of ethical selves: what it means to be a good friend among girls in a London school

I remember when me and Lara first started to become friends, we were working on a project together, we started chatting and it was like, everything she said was just like 'yes!' You know? We totally got each other. We started spending all our time together. We'd always be on the phone or having sleepovers at each other's houses. It's difficult to explain but she was like a drug, she was the most amazing person to be with, it sounds strange but I just had to be with her.

Then suddenly things changed. She started sitting with Katia, and not saving a space for me, she told her things but wouldn't tell me. Then one day I came into school and she wouldn't talk to me, I didn't know what I'd done wrong and she wouldn't tell me, she just cut me off 'bam'. I was really depressed, I used to dread coming into school and every day I used to cry after school … Afterwards I found out she'd been bitching about me with Katia, saying I copied her all the time and was really annoying.

Lilian

Lillian's story about the rise and fall of a friendship is still deeply felt and emotionally told, even though it occurred three years prior, when she was 12. As her account suggests, friendship between girls in school is a source of emotional investment; great highs ('she was like a drug') and terrible lows ('every day I used to cry after school'). In the London secondary school in which I did my fieldwork, it would be hard to overestimate the

importance of friendship for girls. Of all the things I heard them disagree about, the value of friendship was never debated.

Friendship is idealized by girls through notions of similarity, closeness, and depth: friends choose each other because they have much in common, they 'get each other'; they are physically and emotionally close, 'there for each other'; and they allow the expression of a true self, 'the real me', without fear of judgement. These descriptions mirror the Western ideal, advocated in the scholarly literature for hundreds of years. Friendships are personal, private, and voluntary relationships between autonomous individuals; they are based on choice and free will, and entail sentiment and intimacy (Allan 1979; Carrier 1999; Montaigne 2004 [1603]; Paine 1969). As scholars have noted, this ideal of friendship also implies a corresponding notion of the person: a pre-constituted inner self, an independent individual existing prior to social relations and the locus of autonomous intentionality (Carrier 1999; Spencer & Pahl 2006).

However, while girls' friendships may be spontaneous, personal, and private, they are also public and governed by social conventions, and while friends may be chosen, friendship in school is practically compulsory – to be without friends is an unequivocal sign of social failure. Bitching (saying negative things about someone behind their back) and exclusion, as well as positive recognition and belonging, are common experiences of friendship. Furthermore, while sentiment and affection are certainly a characteristic of girls' friendships in school, to understand them only in these terms is to ignore the range of affects these relationships entail (Evans 2010). In this article, I argue that an analysis of the complexities of girls' friendships can direct us towards a more satisfactory understanding of the person implied by these relations.

Girls' ideals of friendship both bolster and are structured by an ideology of the individual. However, this ideology is thrown into relief by practices through which girls actively and tenaciously shape each other. These processes map on to Michael Lambek's (2013) distinction between the forensic (self-same, unfolding over time, and continuous) and the mimetic (imitative, iterative, and discontinuous) as contrastive yet mutually constitutive aspects of personhood. I argue that this distinction illuminates the seemingly contradictory workings of girls' friendships, and the ways in which they manifest particular aspects of the self. Practices such as making friends invoke notions of forensic individuality, manifesting 'temporal continuity in the life of the individual while relatively disregarding continuity with other persons' (Lambek 2013: 849). At the same time, however, practices of bitching, exclusion, and breaking friends emphasize the mimetic, relational dimensions of personhood, manifesting 'continuity with other persons while relatively disregarding temporal continuity in the life of the person' (Lambek 2013: 849). While Lambek focuses on the 'the public side of personhood' and frames his argument in broad cross-cultural and historical terms, I use his forensic and mimetic distinction to explore the specifics of a particular kind of selfhood emerging between young people in London. I also shed light on the gendered nature of this production, focusing on the intimate, everyday ways girls make themselves, in relation to each other and ideologies of the individual person.

More broadly, this article contributes to anthropological accounts which delineate the complexity of Western ideas and practices of personhood, and in the process collapse simplistic distinctions between 'Western individualized' persons and 'non-Western "joined-up"' persons (Carsten 2004: 83-4; see also Evans 2010; Holland & Kipnis 1994; Kusserow 1999; Ouroussoff 1993). As Alexandra Ouroussoff argued twenty years ago, while

anthropologists carefully observe and analyse practices of 'exotic' personhood ethnographically, they have uncritically accepted the idea that 'Western society' is comprised of individuals. These ideas are derived from a tradition of liberal philosophy (of which anthropology is also a part), rather than the study of the 'day-to-day experience of westerners' (Ouroussoff 1993: 284). Furthermore, she argues, this idea of 'us' as individuals acts as the lens through which anthropologists analyse 'them', structuring and reinforcing the long-standing antinomy between the two. James Laidlaw recently identified a continuing tendency for anthropologists to use 'dyadic, us/them, West/Other contrasts' in writing on personhood as one of four key impediments to the development of an anthropology of morality and ethics (2014: 33). In this vein, I seek to contribute to a 'truly social conception of the Western person' (Ouroussoff 1993: 284), while at the same time taking seriously individuality as an illusion that creates reality (281; Toren 2012).

Ethics and personhood

The analysis of the ethical dimensions of friendship and personhood is key to this discussion. As Lambek argues, ethics are intrinsic to both continuous and discontinuous dimensions of personhood. He defines ethics as 'the condition in the first instance of being subject to judgement (in the broad sense of discernment)' (Lambek 2013: 840). Criteria for judgement are established in performative acts and subsequent practice, and events are judged accordingly. From this perspective, personhood is always ethical. 'Persons are human beings under a set of descriptions, criteria, and commitments put into place by means of successive performative acts. These descriptions render them in the first instance as ethical subjects' (2013: 845).

[Building on Lambek's argument, I demonstrate that in the context of their friendships, girls judge each other according to gendered criteria – what it means to be a good friend and what it means to be a good person – and act on these judgements, for example through bitching and exclusion. Friendship in school is both contingent on being assessed as an acceptable person and a necessary prerequisite for being viewed as acceptable. Through these frequent exchanges of evaluation and judgement, girls are making (and sometimes unmaking) each other as ethical persons under a large set of criteria concerning both appearance and behaviour, from the major (character) to the minor (fingernails).

This rendering of friendship and ethical personhood can thus be situated within 'ordinary ethics' (Lambek 2010) and, more broadly, the rapidly emerging field of morality and ethics in anthropology. While the 'frontier-like quality' of this 'ethical turn' may mean that the theoretical positions and key intellectual debates are yet to be firmly established (Robbins 2012), ordinary ethics represents one approach around which some scholars are beginning to coalesce (or critique, e.g. Zigon 2014). While other theorizations seek to make a distinction between ordinary action with its norm-governed morality, and distinct moments of ethical deliberation (e.g. Robbins 2007; Zigon 2008), ordinary ethics foregrounds the routine and everyday as a key site of moral work (Das 2012; Lambek 2010; Mattingly 2013; Stafford 2013). However, while the ethical is understood as ubiquitous in activity, practice, and judgement, it 'does not simply go without saying' (Lambek 2010: 28), and so can be studied through attention to the practices and actions of everyday life.

Bringing recent anthropological debates on morality and ethics into dialogue with the anthropology of childhood and youth, Anne-Meike Fechter has highlighted the value of

ordinary ethics, which can train our attention on the ways in which the ethical becomes

manifest in the banal and unspectacular sites of growing up and micro-contestations

between peers (2014: 148). As Charles Stafford (2013) indicates, this approach also

dovetails well with the growing recognition that socialization, including moral learning, is

not the straightforward transmission and absorption of generational knowledge, but an

active process of meaning-making and creating anew (e.g. Evans 2006; Toren 1999).

The study of friendship

Engaging with this 'ethical turn' in anthropology, Valerio Simoni and Jason Throop argue

that attention to friendship's 'complex entanglements with morality' can shed light on the

'problematic and contested character of friendship' (2014: 4). While these are new

developments in the literature, there is a longer-standing interest in the relation between

friendship and personhood. Angela Torresan (2011) identifies two significant theoretical and

methodological strands within the anthropological study of friendship. In one strand,

authors view friendship as a particular kind of relationship dependent on a Western notion

of the autonomous individual. In contrast, a second strand of the literature views friendship

as an idiom of social relatedness found in almost all societies, enabling some scholars to

explore the relationship between friendship and different modes of personhood.

In the case of the former strand, as Torresan highlights, friendship is conceptualized

as a product of capitalist transformations, which separate individuals from society, and

private from public (e.g. Allan 1989; Carrier 1999; Paine 1969, Pitt-Rivers 1973; but cf.

Course 2010). For example, James Carrier (1999) accepts the Western ideal of friendship as

based on spontaneous and unconstrained sentiment emerging from an internal source, and

argues that this conception presupposes a particular notion of the autonomous individual

existing prior to social relations. In contrast, when personhood is understood as constituted by social relations, such as in Melanesia, we cannot speak of friendship.

Carrier starts from a narrow ideal of friendship and so establishes a correspondingly narrow definition of 'selves who can be friends'. In contrast, in the latter strand of literature on friendship, scholars have focused on how friendships are constituted in practice, and defined by friends themselves, highlighting that models and practices of friendship can vary considerably, 'making it difficult to offer a single, all-encompassing definition of Friendship with a capital F' (Santos-Granero 2007: 9; see also Bell & Coleman 1999; Killick & Desai 2010). In this understanding, the scope of practices and affects constituting friendship can highlight aspects of personhood that go against the grain of dominant ideologies of the person. For example, Gillian Evans (2010) shows that friendship among the South London boys in her study was characterized not by sentiment and affection, but by admiration, competition, and rivalry. Through these affects, the boys were producing themselves in relation to those around them; the intersubjective nature of the processes of friendship representing a challenge to conventional ideas about the autonomy of the modern Western person.

A number of other Euro-American ethnographic studies have also highlighted the very different modes of friendship for boys and for girls in school. Gender, perhaps unsurprisingly, emerges as an 'omnirelevant' principle of categorization in peer relations and networks (Sweden –Evaldsson 2007: 384; UK – Evans 2006; Hey 1997; Renold 2004; USA – Goodwin 2006; Thorne 1993). For example, in her ethnography of girls' friendships in two British schools, Valerie Hey demonstrates that in the context of a gendered hierarchy of visibility and space, girls' friendships often play out in the private and intimate

'interpersonal recesses of schooling' (1997: 30). By focusing our attention on these recesses, we can begin to untangle 'the dense relationship between forms of subjectivity produced in the privacy of girls' interpersonal lives and public forms of social power and regulation' (1997: 29). Furthermore, she argues, it is the private, personal, and intimate nature of these conduits of social meaning and power that make them so effective. Similarly, linguistically focused research has detailed 'the constitutive effect of talk on gender, friendship, and morality' (Evaldsson 2007: 380), and the ways in which girls as friends engage in 'relational talk' and 'collaborative judgement work' in order to morally index and order, exert power, and exclude or include (Sweden – Evaldsson 2007: 377, USA – Goodwin 2006).

Making friends in school

My fourteen-month fieldwork[1] took place in Collingson School, a large, non-selective, mixed-sex school in a relatively affluent area of London, between the suburbs and the inner city. The national school inspectorate body describes the school's 'social make-up' as 'average', with about 20 per cent of pupils receiving free school meals – a 'rough proxy of poverty' (Gillborn 2001: 7). The school is racially and ethnically diverse, '"mixed"-up roots and global routes' (Pollock 2004: 35) coexist with a simplified system of racial classification in terms of black, white, and Asian. In these simplified terms, approximately 35 per cent of pupils identify as white, 20 per cent as black, and 20 per cent as Asian. Other pupils are not classified within this simplified racial triad, and identify themselves in terms of ethnicity (Winkler-Reid 2015).

Virtually all friendship groups in Collingson School exist within the boundary of the year group. Mirroring this organization, I spent the majority of my fieldwork with Year 11,

15-16 year olds in their last year of compulsory schooling, attending lessons and spending lunch- and breaktimes with the different friendship groups within the year.[2] The majority of groups in Year 11 were single gender,[3] these gendered groups displaying spatialized patterns of interaction. The boys' groups tend to be large and mobile, playing football or moving around the playground like shoals of fish. In contrast, the girls' groups tend to be smaller, stationary, and tightly clustered.[4] These visual differences also reflect the ways in which girls constitute relationships of intimacy and proximity, and use these relations as gender-appropriate ways to exert power. In this context, while 'acting big' was valued in boys as an indication of high status, it was viewed as unacceptable for girls as a transgression of appropriate femininity (Hey 1997). As I will discuss later in this article, friendship offers a gender-appropriate means by which girls can exert their will, in intimate but no less potent ways.

As Peggy Froerer (2010) notes, while the observation that people who share the same social space are more likely to become friends seems self-evident, the particular ways in which proximity enables friendships of different kinds to develop has been underexplored in the anthropological literature (see also Dyson 2010; Santos-Granero 2007 and). The institutional structure of school clearly shapes the conditions and possibilities of friendship.[5] Pupils are required to attend school seven hours a day, five days a week, segregated from the rest of society, and processed in narrow, age-specific groupings. As Vered Amit-Talai identifies, this specific organization of children and young people, typical in the West, 'compresses and hence intensifies adolescent peer interaction' (1995: 153). In school, peers encounter each other every day, and social distance is extremely hard to maintain. In this context, not making friends is an unequivocal sign of social failure, and the pupils in my

study saw being friendless as lonely and isolating. Great pains were taken by girls to minimize the time they spent alone – even when walking from one lesson to the next, or in the toilets. The importance of *visibly* having friends indicates that friendship in school necessarily involves both public and private dimensions. Friendships are personal and individual, and at the same conducted under the intense observation of peers in the public space of school (Amit-Talai 1995).

Sameness

While some friendships in school are defined in terms of difference,[6] this article focuses on friendships based on notions of similarity, closeness, and depth. These friendships are normally part of wider network of peer group relations, and are the ones in which girls invest the most time and emotion. The girls in my fieldwork discussed similarity in terms of shared 'priorities', 'tastes', 'values', 'sense of humour', and 'opinions on other people'. One girl, Sejal, told me that friendships are based on 'what people wear and what music they listen to', but also, as they grow older, on 'what people say and do'. Jenny offered an example, 'Like some people only care about drinking, they don't think GCSEs[7] are important, they're not the sort of people we'd be friends with now'. It was less usual for the girls to discuss similarities with friends in terms of broader commonalities such as class or race.

The girls' emphasis on the personal aspects of similarity, tastes, styles, and orientation to formal education evokes Bourdieu and habitus as a 'system of durable, transposable dispositions' which structure practice (1977: 53). As Cheleen Mahar, Richard Harker, and Chris Wilkes assert, '[O]ne's place [in the social field] and one's habitus form the basis of friendship, love and other personal relationships' (1990: 10). But if habitus, as a 'durable disposition', has analytical appeal in forensic (self-same and temporally continuous)

11

terms, it fails to account for the mimetic (iterating and imitating) manifestations of social commonalities observable in school. As a space apart from family, school allows pupils a flexibility of presentation and practice, ways of 'standing, speaking, walking' (Bourdieu 1977: 70), matching peers rather than parents.

In response to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Christina Toren suggests a simpler formulation: '[O]ver time every one of us makes meaning for ourselves (i.e. autonomously) out of meanings that others have made and are making; this inherently social process manifests itself as a transformational process in which continuity resides' (2012: 72). In this way, generational and collective history continually informs personal history, which is both structuring of experience, and evinced and transformed as it is lived. The specific intersubjective processes of girls' friendships both produce, and are structured by, these 'collective-cum-personal histories' (Toren 2012: 64). In contrast to Bourdieu, Toren's transformational approach allows us to account for both the forensic and mimetic expressions of social commonality observable in school and to recognize that both have their own histories. Relatedly, as Lambek argues, 'there is a whole ethics to history and social change' as performative acts recalibrate criteria and 'shift the ethical context' (2010: 56). Broader ethical shifts, for example in relation to gender, form part of the collective history from which the micro-ethical criteria of girls' friendships are constituted.

Ethnicity and race – connected but not synonymous – demonstrate the complex entanglement of social commonality in school that necessitates recognition of both the forensic and mimetic as structuring dimensions. For instance, ethnicity is salient in terms of a geographical history shared with parents, grandparents, and so on ('Where do you come from?' as the ethnic question *par excellence*: Wade 1997*)*. At the same time, there is a

simplified racial classification system (black, white, and Asian) in operation.[8] While these two dimensions were understood by pupils in forensic terms, as more or less unchanging aspects of a person, a third aspect of ethnicity-race needs to be understood in mimetic terms. Pupils of any ethnicity-race could engage in black or white coded youth practice and style, observable, for instance, in particular, racialized ways of talking and dressing (Chun 2011; Winkler-Reid, 2015). Furthermore, these mimetic expressions of racialized London-based youth practice and style have their own histories (cf. Back 1996; Wulff 1995). The girls in my fieldwork might identify none, some, or all of these aspects of ethnicity-race as relevant to notions of similarity and 'shared-ness' in their friendships. However, it was the mimetic, racially coded dimensions of youth style and practice that were the most structuring of friendship groups. Likewise, ethical criteria established in judgements between friends may, or may not, have a racialized or ethicized dimension ('That's not the way a black girl should act', 'We don't do that kind of thing as Columbians'), depending on a range of factors.

Thus, girls' friendships are historically constituted and part of a larger order of things that is manifested both forensically and mimetically, judged according to a subtle multitude of ethical criteria, and transformed in the process of being lived. Consequently, ideas of similarity and difference emerge in manifold ways in the context of friendship. As outlined above, the particular focus of this article is an exploration of friendship in relation to individual personhood and gender – both understood by pupils as a self-evident and overarching aspect of similarity, as something (that 'should' be) shared by everyone.

Depth and proximity

13

In addition to similarity, friendship is understood in terms of depth and proximity. Friends acknowledge and accept you for 'who you are' – the real internal you. With friends you can 'be yourself' without fear of judgement. Best friends Eleanor, Megan, and Jane explained the importance of their friendships. Eleanor said, 'I'm really, really shy, it doesn't really show when I'm in front of my best friends and stuff because they're the only people with who I feel completely comfortable'. I asked why they feel comfortable with each other. Megan answered, 'Because they know you', Jane adding, 'Because I know they like me'.

Friendships were defined by the girls according to degrees of closeness (friend, close friend, really close friend, best friend), with the understanding that even within one group of friends, different people will be closer than others. Some girls declared their best friendship as one of the first things they told me about themselves. Their description of their best friend as 'my other half' or 'like we're one person' attests to an ideal of best friendship as the closest sameness.

On the day I first met Samantha and Sejal, they declared 'we are best friends'. Their time in school was choreographed to manifest and express closeness, sameness, and constant exchange. Working against the confines of the lesson timetable that routinely separated them, Samantha and Sejal met before and after school, and the first thing they did when the bell rang was to seek each other out among the pupils milling through the corridors. They hugged and kissed, even if they had been apart for just one lesson; they linked arms, held hands as they chatted with other friends, or stood a little way off from the rest of the group, heads close together, whispering – visibly sharing their secrets. When Sejal told of a fight with her parents, Samantha listened to her vent, and when Samantha was let down by a boy, Sejal comforted her as she cried, and reassured her that he was the

one making the mistake. One word, an elliptical reference to a private joke, could send them into fits of laughter. They made plans for sleepovers or parties on Friday, and on Monday they happily recounted their activities back to each other.

As suggested by the lengths Sejal and Samantha went to, shared time and space is a vital expression of the closeness of a friendship.[9] Best friends spend all available time together within school, and as much as possible outside school. The closer the friend, the closer the area of proximity: hand-holding, arm-linking, hugging, and sitting on laps are all ways to express closeness with friends. Shared time and space is also important in the maintenance of friendship groups, indicated by a commitment to spend as much free time (e.g. lunch- and break-times) as possible in a designated shared space. Spending a significant amount of time with another group outside lessons – spending time alone is not an option – is a sign of tenuous or shifting loyalties.

> You're friends with a lot of people but you just don't hang out with them at lunch because there are just set places. There are such specific places that if I was to go specifically from the canteen to the field it would be like saying [in mock serious voice] 'Bye group, I'm going with this group', it would be such an extreme thing (Jane).

Within this shared space and time, talk is the primary medium of exchange (James 1995). Girls use every possible opportunity to talk, talking up to (and often beyond) the last second before the demands of formal schooling are imposed by teachers. When friends are required to be apart, they extend their opportunities, over the phone or via instant messenger. Whether discussing last night's TV, passing on a juicy piece of gossip, making

plans for the weekend, or offering advice, friends talk. Talk between friends is a key place in which 'the social is indexed' (Hey 1997). In these processes of identification, categorization, and classification, girls manifest, transform, and reflect on a larger order of things, including ethical criteria, as I will expand on later. Like space and time, the closer the friendship, the more talk is expected, and the more effort is made to create opportunities for talking. When Kadia told me the story of her friendship group, she explained that within the group some people are closer to each other than others. She illustrated this in terms of talk. Samiya and Grace are 'not that close, they had a falling out a few years ago, they're alright now, but they still don't speak on the phone or anything'.

Within talk, disclosure is particularly important. As in Amit-Talai's study, 'intentional disclosures' were made 'to deepen the intimacy of friendship. Friends deliberately divulged material that would not otherwise be readily available through school interaction' (1995: 156). It is both the information that is important in disclosure and also the act. Within school, disclosure is visible as friends physically remove themselves from the rest of the group, turn their backs, or whisper in each other's ears. Again, what is disclosed, and the frequency of disclosure, are expressions of the closeness of a friendship, with the understanding that best friends 'tell each other everything'.

These practices and exchanges of friendship mirror the Western ideal of 'like-minded' selves sharing time and space and revealing their depths without fear of judgement ('We can tell each other everything'). Making friends illustrates the forensic dimension of the person, as 'an agent, characterized by her own actions and accountable for them' (Lambek 2013: 849). Pre-constituted selves act with volition in order to become closer to other pre-constituted selves ('people I like', 'my sort of people'). In other words, selves who

can be friends come first, and friendship comes second (Carrier 1999). However, as we will now see, girls' friendships also entail the mimetic shaping of selves (own and others).

Breaking friends in school

The same resources used to make friends, and maintain or increase closeness, can be used to increase distance or end friendships. School is littered with painful stories of exclusion, break-ups or 'dumpings' (non-reciprocal break-ups), and peer groups divided or permanently split by the acrimonious end of a friendship. Spending less time together, no longer sharing the same space, not disclosing or not speaking, are all signs of rupture. To halt the exchanges of friendship is to end the friendship, and girls often say 'We don't talk anymore' to mean a friendship has ended. This might be explained in terms of a gradual 'growing apart' ('We didn't have much in common anymore'). Often, however, the end of friendships, or their temporary suspension, is justified in terms of ethical judgements based on gendered criteria of 'how friends should act', and 'how girls should act'. Furthermore, as I will also discuss in this section, exclusion and inclusion offer girls a gender-appropriate medium of intersubjective influence.

Sejal and Samantha were close friends with Nadia (unusually she has a long-term boyfriend in place of a 'best friend'), and together they made up a subgroup within a larger, mainly male, peer group, the 'Misfits' (see note 4). I got to know them well, so I was surprised to hear that, until recently, Nadege had been part of this close group – I had never seen them so much as acknowledge each other, even though they were in many of the same lessons. Sejal later told me that she, Nadia, and Samantha 'stopped talking' to Nadege because she was 'talking behind their backs' and because she liked to 'mess with people'. Now Nadege will not speak to them either. More alert to the interactions between these

former friends, I observed in lessons how the girls carefully maintained space between themselves, ensuring they never had to sit next to each other. In one lesson, Nadege whispered to Jenny, Jenny sighed and asked Sejal to pass the paper – avoiding even the most functional exchange.

The exchange of talk is a subtle and powerful tool to express disapproval and unhappiness towards a friend and its withdrawal is not always permanent. Maria was upset when her close friend Cheryl got together with a boy she had recently split up with, especially as she felt Cheryl was 'always doing things like this'. Maria did not tell Cheryl this directly but instead stopped talking to her, with her reasons passed on by friends. After a few months Maria decided to start talking to Cheryl again because, 'He's only a guy and it isn't worth losing a friend over'.

Nadege and Cheryl were both judged as 'bad friends' according to ethical criteria of how friends should act: Nadege was not 'nice enough', while Cheryl put a boy before the friendship. Both girls upset their friends, and were sanctioned through the withdrawal of talk. Furthermore, even if a girl's behaviour does not directly impact on their friends, it may still be punished. Actions judged wrong have the potential to reflect badly on friends, highlighting mimetic dimensions of the person 'as a subject, informed by others and their representations' (Lambek 2013: 849). For example, if a friend is behaving like 'a slag' (acting, or appearing to act, sexually promiscuously), she will often be sanctioned by friends, not because it affects the friendship, but because it may lead to a 'bad reputation' for both the girl herself, and her friendship group (Winkler-Reid 2014).

Similarly, non-disclosure is a resource for ending friendship or increasing distance. A friend withholding information which they share with others is viewed by girls as a clear

indicator that something is wrong in the relationship. As recounted at the start of this

article, Lillian knew there was something wrong between her and Lara because 'she stopped

telling me things'. Shortly after, Lara stopped talking to her completely and their friendship

ended.

In Year 9, Georgia was excluded completely from all friendship networks. Rhiannon,

who admits to being instrumental in her exclusion, recounts: 'You know Georgia? Well, all

band two[10] hated her and they made her come into our band but we all hated her as well'.

Her misdemeanour was transgressing the feminine imperative to act humbly: 'She just

thought herself better than everyone, so then me and some of our friends didn't want her

talking to us so we were just really rude to her so she said we were bullying her and then

there was this massive thing like *Mean Girls*'.[11] In time, Georgia managed to rehabilitate her

position in the year by learning to work within the gendered conventions of her peers,

acting more humbly, and so becoming 'less annoying' and 'more liked', as Lexy, Rhiannon's

friend recognized: 'Georgia has changed a lot, she's really different. She was really annoying.

No one really liked her before'.

As we can see, the resources of friendship are not only used to make or break

personal and private relationships, but are also a collective project of defining, producing,

and acting upon the ethical conventions of action in school. Most of the girls in my research

accepted the practice of exclusion as legitimate, even if they questioned the legitimacy of

some acts of exclusion, or the truth of justifications given ('I think they're being out of

order'). Furthermore, the point where a friend stops being a friend is performative,

changing the criteria by which both parties will be judged. Former friends are no longer

mimetically connected, 'like we're one person', with intertwined reputations. Instead the ex-friend is held as a person forensically responsible for her actions.

The ability to exclude, either singly or communally, also offers girls the ability to exert their will. 'The idea of the will implies agency and choice between possible actions. It also implies a kind of determination to carry out an action once it has been chosen; a positive drive or desire to accomplish an action' (Stewart & Strathern 2010: 140). More specifically, exertion of will in this context represents the (successful) extension of intersubjective influence, formed through the dynamics of action, 'by means of specific practices' (Munn 1986: 10) – getting other people to do what you want (or not do what you do not want).

Through the practices of friendship, successful girls are able to control who can talk to whom and who can spend time with whom, and where (Evans 2006). In these ways, they can influence both the behaviour and relations of others, and constitute formations of time and space. The intimate scale of these interactions contributes to their potency; being excluded by friends, those supposed to recognize your 'true self' and related to you in terms of similarity and closeness, is particularly painful. Furthermore, this exertion of will through friendship is gender-appropriate, intimacy guarding against the gendered transgression of 'acting big'.

In this section, I have described friendship both as a criterion for ethical judgement, and as a medium of intersubjective influence. These two dimensions of girls' friendships are not mutually exclusive. It is often the judged wrongness of actions that is used to justify exclusion. Girls extend their intersubjective influence to create social fields, to shape each

other, and also to separate themselves. To break a friendship is to stop being connected,

and to make each party responsible for her own actions.

'Girls just have a bitchy nature': bitching as practice and performance

>]epi[I think with girls they're just analytical about how other girls act and they're just
>
> judgemental ... It's because of bitchiness, girls know that they're going to be
>
> analysed about everything they do. I think with girls it's mainly like, 'Did you see her
>
> wearing that?', 'She's talking to that person and I don't like it', 'She's talking to that
>
> boy, what does she think she's doing?'.
>
> Caroline

> I think everyone bitches about their close friends, because they know the most
>
> about them so they know what to bitch about, they know more. I think everyone
>
> bitches about their friends.
>
> Lexy

Bitching – 'when you talk bad about other people, when you're nice to someone's face and

then the next thing you're talking about them' – further exemplifies the ways in which girls

as (dis)continuous persons hold each other to ethical account. While exclusion is often

preceded and accompanied by bitching (which justifies the exclusion), these practices do

not necessarily go hand in hand. If practices of inclusion and exclusion can be understood in

terms of distance (drawing closer, pushing away), bitching can be understood in terms of

hierarchical difference ('she's like that, and, [by implication], I'm not'). Thus, the forensic

nature of the self, 'what I'm like as opposed to what she's like', is emphasized. As Ruby

explains, 'It sounds funny but they are your friends, it would never go to they dislike you, it's

just that you annoy them a little bit'. 'Yeah, because there's a difference between not liking someone and bitching about them', adds Samiya.

So while girls idealize friendship in terms of 'depth', bitching highlights the dangers of being known. Friendship poses a 'delicate see-saw between concealment and revelation' (Amit-Talai 1995: 156). On the one hand, self-exposure is necessary for the creation of intimacy and expression of depth. On the other hand, bitching is a continuous reminder of vulnerability as a result of revelation. The forensic is further evinced when we consider that bitching is a form of disclosure, sharing what you *really think'* about a person as a way to recognize like-minded selves, and so is a practice in the making and maintenance of friendship. However, bitching also acts to shape the behaviour of others and is a performative, iterative act that can instantiate new criteria by which girls (both speaker and target) are subsequently judged. Thus, the forensic dimensions of bitching are implicated in its mimetic effects.

Both girls and boys see bitching as a 'natural quality' of girls. The popular rhetoric is that girls deal with tensions and disagreements by bitching, while boys 'have it out' physically. Girls and boys work together to maintain this rhetoric, despite the contrary evidence that boys do bitch, and fighting is rare for both boys and girls. The 'naturalness' of bitching means that it is viewed as an inevitable part of friendship. With few exceptions, the girls in my study accepted that bitching between friends was 'just the way it is'. In addition, the covertness of bitching enables girls to maintain the gendered ideals of friendship as 'close sameness', while also judging each other according to a range of ethical criteria, including interrelated ideas about how girls should act and how friends should act.

One breaktime, sat closely with Sejal and Dee Dee on the wall, Nadia reported an altercation between Georgia and Samantha she had just witnessed:

Nadia: Georgia was having a go at Samantha, because Samantha had had a go at Ling about her birthday.

Dee Dee: Yeah, Samantha was really upset that Ling had forgotten her birthday.

Sejal: I don't know why Georgia got involved, it has nothing to do with her.

Nadia: And how would Georgia feel if Ling forgot *her* birthday?

Dee Dee: Apparently Ling never remembers *anyone's* birthday.

Nadia: I don't know how though, because it was up on Facebook.

Sejal: She can be really self-centred.

In this bitching exchange, both Georgia and Ling are the targets. In the case of Georgia, the girls are questioning her right to talk ('I don't know why Georgia got involved, it has nothing to do with her') – articulating conventions on communication. With Ling, they are critical of her behaviour (forgetting Sam's birthday), particularly as it is not a one-off ('Ling never remembers *anyone's* birthday'). Furthermore, it is not only Ling's actions being judged as selfish but her character ('she can be really self-centred'). Thus in their bitching the girls are articulating conventions of communication, exchange, and a gendered, ethical position on how friends should treat each other (Evaldsson 2007; Goodwin 2006; Shuman 1986). And through their bitching, the girls are defining themselves positively in contrast (as people who remember birthdays and so are not 'self-centred'). Both of these aspects are performative, in that they can change the criteria by which both the bitchers and the bitched-about are subsequently judged (as self-centred or empathetic).

Bitching acts as a constant reminder of the micro-surveillance that girls place each other under. As a form of communication that happens behind the back of the target, it also encourages second-guessing, doubt, and the impetus to subject yourself to the judgement you imagine others might be subjecting you to:

> I hate the way that everything between girls is implied. You spend all your time trying to read between the lines, you don't know if someone is annoyed or angry with you, and even if they were they wouldn't say. You're always worried you've done something wrong, and you go over what you've said or done just in case. It can be really tiring (Sejal).

The minutiae of bitching further increase its effects; every detail of the self may be subject to judgement. Samiya describes: 'Girls will bitch about everything, from your features to your personality, even your toes! Like there was this rumour going around that Samiya's got ugly toes. Even your nails! Like so and so has got such dirty fingernails'.

Like inclusion and exclusion, bitching also represents a powerful medium of intersubjective influence. Covert and between friends (or potential friends), bitching can enable domination by intimacy. Michael observes:

> Girls being friends with girls is a really nasty kind of relationship. Most of what you hear is girls bitching about other girls. A guy will try to be really macho but actually there is the same kind of thing for girls to do with status and how you outwardly appear … there is a hierarchy but it exists *behind* the groups, the groups are kind of like a front. Like a girl will be in a group of supposedly 'best friends' and will then go and bitch to some other girls about their 'best friends'.

Competent bitching involves appreciating the nuanced criteria by which friends, girls, and their communications will be evaluated and judged. 'Ethical practice requires the sustained judicious balancing of commitments and criteria, including when to engage in new performative actions' (Lambek 2013: 844). Attempts to exert influence through bitching without, for example, fulfilling other ethical expectations of friendship can result in accusations of malevolent manipulation – 'messing with people' – and result in exclusion. Bitching can be directed at an ethical failure of practice ('she's not being a good friend'), and can also be a performative act that changes the criteria by which girls are judged.

Recognized as a 'normal' part of girls' friendships, bitching is often practised through the intimacy and proximity of friendship space-time and illuminates both the mimetic and forensic dimensions of selves. Bitching is about the active shaping of others: everyone is bitching and bitched about, and everyone is vulnerable. Despite the ideal that friends know you and accept you for 'your true inner self', bitching represents an intimate exchange through which girls shape each other. At the same time, bitching is a practice of differentiation. Even in relations of 'closest sameness', bitching allows an emphasis on 'what she's like', and, by implication, 'what I'm not like'; this rests on ideas of the continuous self, 'accountable both for past acts and for living up to future commitments' (Lambek 2013: 848).

Bitching and the ethics of individuality

So far, I have discussed a range of friendship practices, including the performative acts through which the forensic or mimetic dimensions of selves are variously brought to the fore. While my discussion has focused on these notions as ways in which girls are producing

themselves in everyday life, this production is, of course, shaped by a broader context in which 'the maximally socially distinct and temporally continuous individual is the ideological exemplar of the modern person' (Lambek 2013: 842). Girls are making themselves and each other as particular kinds of persons in this context, and as we will see, their judgements are often based on criteria drawn from this ideology of individualism.

For example, a common subject of bitching is imitation. This might be in terms of copied clothes, hairstyle, favourite band, opinions, or ways of speaking? Like other aspects of friendship, accusations of copying often represent the tipping of a delicate balance. As friendship is the good match between pre-existing true selves, friends are expected to have lots in common. Similarities are seen as spontaneous, equal, and the expression of depth. Copying accusations arise when these similarities are judged as inauthentic, superficial, and not coming from 'who you really are.' Persistent copying is accepted as legitimate grounds for breaking friendships, and subsequent exclusion.

After being dumped by Lara, Lillian discovered she had been accused of copying. Lillian described copying as a key factor in the breakdown of another friendship made after Lara had dumped her. Lillian introduced her new friend, Maya, to her group, and this previously shy girl had, according to Lillian, copied her way of interacting with its members (who were mainly boys). At first Lillian said she felt flattered by having her own 'clone', but then she began to feel that Maya was acting 'more like me than I was' and taking over her role in the group. Leah also expresses these tensions in friendship between expectations of similarity and expectations of difference:

Being good friends is a really hard thing. It's like I'm me and I know who I am, then when you're friends with someone you're like 'Don't be you, be me'. But then it's

like 'No, don't copy me, be you' … Friendships are so much easier at the beginning, they're much more difficult later on.

Another common, and related, subject of bitching is 'inauthentic behaviour'; friends often assess if someone is 'acting fake', for example 'changing their behaviour in front of a boy', or 'acting differently around different people'. Being 'genuine' rather than 'fake' is frequently given as an important quality for a friend to have. Leah observed the differences between Sophia inside and outside school, where they were both part of the same religious community. 'Inside school she talks quite chavvy, outside school she talks quite posh'. As such, the reason she has very few friends in school, according to Leah, is 'because she's not being herself, everyone can just tell she's not being herself, they don't know who she is, they can just tell she's not being herself'. As discussed earlier, talking and dressing like peers, as opposed to parents, was quite common in school and was not necessarily negatively judged. However, in the case of Sophia, this same behaviour was mobilized as evidence of inauthenticity, and her lack of friends was evidence of the unacceptability of this way of acting. While the presence of a 'true, unchanging, inner self' is central to the ideal of the forensic person, it can be legitimately evaluated and critiqued by peers. Failure is evidenced in terms of 'fakeness', 'attention-seeking' or 'try-hard', and success in terms of 'being yourself'. Subsequently, these evaluations of the forensic self can justify the mimetic shaping of others.

Thus, friendship is idealized both through depth and similarity, and through a correct order of things: selves who can be friends should come first, friendships second. When the correct order is judged to be reversed – as in the case of copying or faking – bitching and

exclusion often follow. In these ways, an ethical criterion of individualism is established, and action is evaluated within these terms. However, the possibility of change is also inherent in these judgements. Girls can redeem themselves through their actions and subsequently be judged accordingly: 'She used to be really fake, she's much more genuine now' or 'She used to be a copycat'.

Conclusion

]p[In this article, I have illuminated the ways in which girls' ideals of friendship are implicated in the ideology of the forensic person, including a correct order of selves who can be friends first, and friendship second. Making friends is thus understood as an increasing proximity between pre-existing like-minded selves, and friendship is defined in terms of this closeness as well as knowing each other's depths. These ideals inform an ethical criterion of what it means to be a good friend, and this ethic is closely linked to an ethic of the forensic individual: real friends know the real you, and so copying and 'acting fake' (not being yourself) are an affront both to the ethics of friendship and to the ethics of individualism.

At the same time, a focus on the range of friendship practices highlights both the mimetic and forensic dimensions of girls' selfhood, and the ways in which these dimensions are implicated in each other. As we have seen, friendship entails the mimetic effects of potentially being tarnished by another's actions, while breaking friends reinstates forensic responsibility. Bitching depends on mimetic dimensions for efficacy as it 'entails the ways in which what a person says and does draw from what other people have said or done, or serve in turn as examples or foils for others' (Lambek 2013: 848). But bitching also entails differentiation and notions of individual responsibility, even between those defined in terms

of the 'closest sameness', and therefore also rests on ideas of the forensic self (who she is, who I am).

In all of this, ethics are intrinsic. The intensity and frequency of judgements which girls in school subject each other to can be observed in their interactions. Placing each other under particular sets of 'descriptions, criteria, and commitments' (Lambek 2013: 845), girls are invested in producing each other as particular kinds of ethical persons. Making friends, breaking friends, and bitching are examples of performative acts instantiating or changing criteria by which girls subsequently judge and are judged. As I have shown, the criteria are gendered – what it means to be a good friend, and a good person, is specific for girls. Furthermore, it is the ethical dimensions of action that justify some girls in exerting their will, and extending their intersubjective influence. Through inclusion and exclusion, and the creation and maintenance of particular formations of closeness and distance, girls are creating social fields structured through time, space, exchange and ethics.

If there has been a historical tendency in anthropology to accept the ideal of the forensic Western person, a study of friendships offers a productive step to counterbalancing this. It encourages a focus on intersubjectivity, and the quality and nature of engagement between persons. As such, the study of friendship can contribute towards a more satisfactory understanding of personhood in 'the West', derived from the ethnography of everyday practices of real people rather than the ideas of political philosophers (Ouroussoff 1993; Toren 1999). In this article, I have utilized the mimetic and forensic as analytic strands through which to capture the fundamental sociality of the production of girls' personhood – without denying that individuality is experienced and valued by girls in their daily lives.

Author's version

NOTES

[1] Fieldwork took place in 2007-8. The research was made possible by a Brunel Social Sciences Studentship.

[2] All the pupils discussed in this article are Year 11s (15-16 year olds), except for Year 13's Jane, Megan, and Eleanor (17-18 year olds).

[3] While girls and boys described themselves as friends with each other, most peer groups were single gender. Often, however, these had close links to an opposite-gender group, and class friendships (see note 6) were often mixed gender.

[4] There were some exceptions to this pattern, for example the self-named 'Misfits' were a large group comprised of a majority of boys and a minority of girls, while an exceptional few girls were friends only with boys.

[5] As such, it is also important to recognize that definitions and processes of friendship and their attendant affects and effects may vary not only cross-culturally but also over the course of a lifetime (see, e.g., Jerrome 1981 on women's friendships in later life).

[6] These friendships are often called class friendships, because although valued, they do not extend beyond the classroom to shared peer group spaces. Difference does not preclude notions of closeness, but closeness is defined in a more limited sense, with no expectation of shared time or space except in the classroom (see Winkler-Reid 2015). Liking, a personal and positive evaluation and appreciation of the person, is the starting-point for all friendships, regardless of whether they are defined in terms of difference or sameness.

[7] The set of exams taken by 15-16 year olds in Britain.

[8] A person might not necessarily be classified/identify in terms of both of these ways. For example, South American and Middle Eastern students were understood as 'not white' and 'from somewhere', but did not fit within the simple racial classification system.

[9] In contrast, Graham Allan writes about adult friendship: 'The first feature to note about real or true friendships is that they frequently continue even though face-to-face interaction is rare' (1979: 66). Again, this illustrates the importance of appreciating the situational and life-stage-related dimensions of friendship.

[10] The year group was split into two for administration, band one and band two.

[11] An American teen comedy film about status and popularity among girls in high school, released in 2003.

Author's version

REFERENCES

AMIT-TALAI, V. 1995. The waltz of sociability: intimacy, dislocation, and friendship in a Quebec high school. In *Youth culture: a cross-cultural perspective* (eds) V. Amit-Talai & H. Wulff, 144-65. London: Routledge.

ALLAN, G. 1979. *A sociology of friendship and kinship*. London: Allen & Unwin

————— 1989*. Friendship: developing a sociological perspective*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

BACK, L. 1996. *New ethnicities and urban culture: racisms and multiculture in young lives*. London: UCL Press.

BELL, S. & S. COLEMAN 1999. The anthropology of friendship: enduring themes and future possibilities. In *The anthropology of friendship* (eds) S. Bell & S. Coleman, 1-19. Oxford: Berg.

BOURDIEU, P. 1977. *The logic of practice* (trans. R. Nice). Stanford: University Press.

CARRIER, J.G. 1999. People who can be friends: selves and social relationships. In *The anthropology of friendship* (eds) S. Bell & S. Coleman, 21-38. Oxford: Berg.

CARSTEN, J. 2004. *After kinship*. Cambridge: University Press.

CHUN, E. 2011. Reading race beyond black and white. *Discourse & Society* **22**, 403-21.

COURSE, M. 2010. Making friends, making oneself: friendship and the Mapuche person. In *The ways of friendship: anthropological perspectives* (eds) A. Desai & E. Killick, 154-73. Oxford: Berghahn.

DAS, V. 2012. Ordinary ethics. In *A companion to moral anthropology* (ed.) D. Fassin, 133-49. Oxford: Wiley.

DYSON, J. 2010. Friendship in practice: girls' work in the Indian Himalayas. *American Ethnologist* **37**, 482-98.

EVALDSSON, A.C. 2007. Accounting for friendship: moral ordering and category membership in preadolescent girls' relational talk. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* **40**, 377-404.

EVANS, G. 2006. *Educational failure and working-class white children in Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

——— 2010. The value of friendship: subject/object transformations in the economy of becoming a person (Bermondsey, Southeast London). In *The ways of friendship: anthropological perspectives* (eds) A. Desai & E. Killick, 174-96. Oxford: Berghahn.

FECHTER, A.M. 2014. 'The good child': anthropological perspectives on morality and childhood. *Journal of Moral Education* **43**, 143-55.

FROERER, P. 2010. Close friends: the importance of proximity in children's peer relations in Chhattisgarh, Central India. In *The ways of friendship: anthropological perspectives* (eds) A. Desai & E. Killick, 133-53. Oxford: Berghahn.

GILLBORN, D. 2001. "'Raising standards' or rationing education? Racism and social justice in policy and practice." *Support for Learning* **16**, 105-111.

GOODWIN, M.H. 2006. *The hidden life of girls: games of stance, status, and exclusion.* London: Blackwell.

HEY, V. 1997. *The company she keeps: an ethnography of girls' friendships*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

HOLLAND, D. & A. KIPNIS 1994. Metaphors for embarrassment and stories of exposure: the not-so-egocentric self in American culture. *Ethos* **22**, 316-42.

JAMES, A. 1995. Talking of children and youth: language, socialization and culture. In *Youth culture: a cross-cultural perspective* (eds) V. Amit-Talai & H. Wulff, 43-62. London: Routledge

JERROME, D. 1981. The significance of friendship for women in later life. *Ageing & Society* **1**, 175-97.

KILLICK, E. & A. DESAI 2010. Introduction: valuing friendship. In *The ways of friendship: anthropological perspectives* (eds) A. Desai & E. Killick, 1-19. Oxford: Berghahn.

KUSSEROW, A.S. 1999. Crossing the great divide: anthropological theories of the Western self. *Journal of Anthropological Research* **55**, 541-62.

LAIDLAW, J. 2014. *The subject of virtue: an anthropology of ethics and freedom*. Cambridge: University Press.

LAMBEK, M. 2010. Toward an ethics of the act. In *Ordinary ethics: anthropology, language, and action* (ed.) M. Lambek, 39-63. New York: Fordham University Press.

——— 2013. The continuous and discontinuous person: two dimensions of ethical life. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) **19**, 837-58.

MAHAR, C., R. HARKER & C. WILKES 1990. The basic theoretical position. In *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: the practice of theory* (eds) R. Harker, C. Mahar & C. Wilkes, 1-25. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

MATTINGLY, C. 2013. Moral selves and moral scenes: narrative experiments in everyday life. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* **78**, 301-27.

MONTAIGNE, M. DE 2004 [1603]. *On friendship* (trans. M.A. Screech). London: Penguin.

MUNN, N.D. 1986. *The fame of Gawa: a symbolic study of value transformation in a Massim (Papua New Guinea) society*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

OUROUSSOFF, A. 1993. Illusions of rationality: false premises of the liberal tradition. *Man* (N.S.) **28**, 281-98.

PAINE, R. 1969. In search of friendship: an exploratory analysis in 'middle-class' culture. *Man* (N.S.) **4**, 505-24.

PITT-RIVERS, J. 1973. The kith and the kin. In *The character of kinship* (ed.) J. Goody, 89-105. Cambridge: University Press.

POLLOCK, M. 2004. Race bending: 'mixed' youth practicing strategic racialization in California. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* **35**, 30-52.

RENOLD, E. 2004. 'Other' boys: negotiating non-hegemonic masculinities in the primary school*. Gender and Education* **16**, 247-65.

ROBBINS, J. 2007. Between reproduction and freedom: morality, value, and radical cultural change. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* **72**, 293-314.

———— 2012. On becoming ethical subjects: freedom, constraint, and the anthropology of morality. *Anthropology of This Century* **5** (available on-line:

http://aotcpress.com/articles/ethical-subjects-freedom-constraint-anthropology-morality/,

accessed 28 October 2015).

SANTOS-GRANERO, F. 2007. Of fear and friendship: Amazonian sociality beyond kinship and affinity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) **13**, 1–18.

SHUMAN, A. 1986*. Storytelling rights: the uses of oral and written texts by urban adolescents*. Cambridge: University Press.

SIMONI, V. & J. THROOP 2014. Friendship, morality, and experience. *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* **39**, 4 - 18.

SPENCER, L. & R.E. PAHL 2006. *Rethinking friendship: hidden solidarities today*. Princeton: University Press.

STAFFORD, C. 2013. Ordinary ethics in China today. In *Ordinary ethics in China* (ed.) C. Stafford*,* 3-25. London: Bloomsbury.

STEWART, P.J. & A. STRATHERN 2010. How can will be expressed and what role does the imagination play? In *Toward an anthropology of the will* (eds) K.M. Murphy & J. Throop, 140-57. Stanford: University Press.

THORNE, B. 1993. *Gender play: girls and boys in school*. New York: Rutgers University Press.

TOREN, C. 1999. *Mind, materiality and history: explorations in Fijian ethnography*. London: Routledge

———— 2012. Imagining the world that warrants our imagination: the revelation of ontogeny. *Cambridge Anthropology* **30**, 64-79.

Torresan, A. 2011. Strange bedfellows: Brazilian immigrants negotiating friendship in Lisbon. *Ethnos*: *Journal of Anthropology* **76**, 23353.

Wade, P. 1997. *Race and ethnicity in Latin America*. London: Pluto.

Winkler-Reid, S. 2014. 'She's not a slag because she only had sex once': sexual ethics in a London secondary school. *Journal of Moral Education* **43**, 183-97.

———— 2015. Making fun out of difference: ethnicity-race and humour in a London school. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* **80**, 23-44.

Wulff, H., 1995. Inter-racial friendship: consuming youth styles, ethnicity and teenage femininity in South London. In *Youth cultures: a cross-cultural perspective* (eds) V. Amit-Talai & H. Wulff, 63-77. London: Routledge.

Zigon, J. 2008. *Morality: an anthropological perspective*. Oxford: Berg.

———— 2014. An ethics of dwelling and a politics of world-building: a critical response to ordinary ethics. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) **20**, 746-64.

Sarah Winkler-Reid is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Newcastle University. Her research concerns growing up in contemporary Britain, focusing on young people's ordinary ethics and subjective formation and their relationship to sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity, and appearance and body image.

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, Claremont Bridge Building, 5th Floor, Claremont Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU, UK. sarah.winkler-reid@newcastle.ac.uk