

# Dogs and Practices of Community and Neighboring

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**ABSTRACT** Dogs are important facilitators of social interaction. However, little attention has been given to the specific mechanisms through which these relations proceed, or to the ways that dogs help to broker, maintain, and even disrupt social relations. This paper addresses this absence through an in-depth qualitative analysis of the everyday experiences of 24 dog owning households who live in apartments in Sydney, Australia. It shows that dogs encourage people to spend more time outside, make people recognizable within their neighborhood, provide a topic of conversation, and actively solicit the attention of strangers. Dogs help make people recognizable and identifiable to others, while also creating social distance. The paper connects to broader literature on neighboring and community practice to show that community relations shaped by dogs involve practices of inclusion as well as exclusion. Exclusion provides an important motivation for new community formation.

**Keywords:** community, companion animals, neighborhood, neighboring, social facilitation



Dogs can positively impact their owners' mental and physical health, sense of well-being, and sense of community (Garrity and Stallones 1998; Cutt et al. 2007; Wood et al. 2007). These benefits and the mechanisms through which they accrue have been extensively reviewed (e.g., Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; McNicholas and Collis 2000; Jackson 2012). However, there are two key limitations in existing studies. First, connections to broader practices of neighboring and community have received little attention (although see Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara 2005 and Wood et al. 2007 for important exceptions); second, when these concepts are considered, the emphasis has been on relations of inclusion (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Wood et al. 2007) and the development of social capital (Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara 2005). The idea that community equally involves active exclusion and disciplining practices, though widely explored within the related fields of neighborhood and housing studies (e.g., Cowan and Marsh 2004; Flint and Nixon 2006; Clark 2009), remains under-considered. This

paper addresses these gaps, examining the development of senses of community as well as exclusion from community. Through this focus the research connects human–dog relations to broader understandings of community practice at a neighborhood scale. A geographical inflection is brought to these questions, highlighting the spatiality of neighboring and community relations, and exploring how the connections that develop between people are shaped by the places within which they are forged.

Everyday community practices of people living in apartments in dense, urban communities in Sydney, Australia are the focus of the paper. This is a novel context. Much existing research examines low density neighborhoods or does not identify neighborhood type. Dense communities are characterized by the physical proximity of neighbors, limited open space, and often additional layers of governance specific to the residential building (e.g., strata title in Australia). They hence offer a distinct context for cohabitation with dogs. Interactions with others at the neighborhood scale, within five to ten minutes' walk from the home, are the focus of the paper. These spaces are key sites of human–dog interaction beyond the household as dogs are relatively spatially constrained, particularly in Australia where the Companion Animals Act (1998) tightly regulates canine presence in the public sphere. I first review the role of dogs in social relations, before discussing the nature of community and neighboring practices, and introducing the case study.

### *Dogs as Social Facilitators*

Pets play a significant role in human well-being, performing as key confidants, close companions, and family members (Belk 1996; Franklin 2006; Power 2008). This is particularly true of charismatic animals like dogs that are active in the development and maintenance of these close ties. The emotional capacities of dogs are widely noted by pet owners and are an important component of this bond. Dog owners frequently highlight the capacity of their pet to empathize with people and to offer comfort when needed (Sanders 1993, 1999), as well as their reliability in caring for and nurturing people (Cain 1983; Bonas, McNicholas and Collis 2000). People living alone and older people can particularly benefit from these relations, with pets providing an important buffer against loneliness by acting as a substitute for human interaction (Rogers, Hart and Boltz 1993; Keil 1998). The benefits of these relations are far-reaching: people with pets typically express a stronger sense of personal well-being and health, and greater satisfaction with their life than people who do not have pets (e.g., Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Wood et al. 2007).

Beyond providing individual companionship and support, dogs play a key role facilitating social interaction between people. Cain (1983, p. 78) notes the breadth of opportunities experienced by participants in her research: “some started conversations with people over pets; some made friends through obedience training classes; children met other children in their new neighborhood via their pets; one respondent began dating her veterinarian; and another met her husband while walking her dog.” People walking with dogs have up to three times as many social interactions when accompanied by a dog than when without (e.g., Messent cited in Sanders 1999; and McNicholas and Collis 2000), even when (as in McNicholas and Collis' research) the dog is trained to not solicit attention. When walking with a dog the frequency of interactions with acquaintances and unknown people increases, and interactions with acquaintances are characterized by greater levels of casual, brief, verbal interaction (McNicholas and Collis 2000). These changed interactions with acquaintances can continue for a period after the initial encounter, even when the dog is not present (McNicholas and Collis 2000).

Dogs appear to facilitate social interaction by acting as a social lubricant or “ice breaker” that overcomes the social distance characterizing interactions with unknown others in public spaces (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; McNicholas and Collis 2000; Wood et al. 2007). Dogs make people attractive to strangers and subsequently become a focus of attention and resource for conversation (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Wood et al. 2007). Conversation is typically oriented toward the dog, which acts as a “bridging device” (Goffman 1963 cited in Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991, p. 9), protecting the initiator from social rejection and a loss of face if the interaction is rejected (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; and see, for example, Jackson 2012). Reflecting this dynamic, dog owners report that they typically learn the name of dogs that they meet before they learn the name of the person walking them (Jackson 2012). In park-based social interactions, where people and dogs are in a contained space in close physical proximity, these practices are valued as “easy” and “safe” (Jackson 2012). Dog walkers reinforce this social distance by avoiding greeting and farewelling park newcomers by name, a tradition that can persist through several weeks of regular meetings before a dog walker is acknowledged as belonging and allowed to progress beyond dog-focused conversation (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991). Over time these informal interactions can build senses of community and social capital, including triggering reciprocity between neighbors. Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara (2005) and Wood et al. (2007) describe this as the “ripple effect” of pet ownership.

### ***Community and Neighboring: Dynamic Social Practices***

In research investigating connections between dogs and community sociability, community has overwhelmingly been examined as a positive concept and the outcome of open and communicative relations between people who encounter one another in public space. However, research from neighborhood and housing studies shows that community production is often contested and is as much about exclusion as inclusion. Involving processes of boundary marking through the identification of “us” (community) as opposed to “them” (not our community) (Cowan and Marsh 2004), community can result in the exclusion and marginalization of groups and individuals and result in divided neighborhoods and unequal opportunities (Davidson 2010). At the same time, these processes can trigger the formation of community amongst marginalized groups, or groups perceiving they are under threat. In this iteration, community formation is a response to marginalization from a broader community, and can provide protective fortification for individuals and groups that feel threatened (Cowan and Marsh 2004). This notion of community as involving processes of exclusion remains unconsidered in the literature on dogs and community formation.

Also under-considered are the moral dimensions of community practice and the ways these processes discipline the behavior and activities of members and non-members. Though there has been some discussion of moderation within park-based communities (e.g., Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Jackson 2012), the ways these relations play out across the broader community, and the ways that interactions with and around dogs mesh with these conventions, has not been examined. The moral capacities of community operate informally and depend upon self-regulation, with the risk of social exclusion if transgressions against community norms are made (de Certeau, Giard and Mayol 1998). These informal modes of regulation function through unspoken moral codes and normalized practices that shape social interaction in local neighborhoods. Laurier, Whyte and Buckner (2002) build on Gans’ (1967) and Richards’ (1990) foundational work to identify five key rules or codes of neighboring that are common across western nations. These rarely spoken rules outline responsibilities and expected forms

of behavior between neighbors, and are as much about bringing neighbors together as ensuring “appropriate” social distance. The rules include 1) an expectation that new neighbors will be provided with opportunities to meet existing residents in ways that allow them “to mark social distances, shared interests, and conversational mentionables and unmentionables” that will underpin their ongoing relationship; that households will 2) “maintain [their] property in a similar state to those of [their] neighbors”; 3) “Where it is acceptable, pass [their] neighbors on to other neighbors or acquaintances, especially if they are seeking help”; 4) “Watch the neighbors and the neighborhood. [ . . . but where] this rule of thumb is balanced between being reasonably aware of what neighbors are doing— ‘knowing your neighbors’ and being a ‘nosey neighbor’”; and 5) not intrude upon their neighbors’ privacy (Laurier, Whyte and Buckner 2002, pp. 349–352). These normalized moral codes shape the performance of community and are arguably central to the production of successful and harmonious neighboring. It is cogent to note that these are culturally based norms that can work to discipline and exclude individuals and households that do not perform within expectation.

Community and neighboring relations can also be more formally mobilized as disciplining forces. Such capacities are mobilized in a neoliberal context to constitute a form of de-centered, locally derived governance that “neatly fits the predominant motif of neo-liberalism—rule without ruling—for it enables individuals to be governed through their associations” (Cowan and Marsh 2004, p. 846). Flint and Nixon (2006), for example, show that local neighborhood, and in particular housing, has become a key site through which civility is regulated in the UK. In this context, the promotion of “civil” behavior is framed as a key function of responsible citizens, and neighbors and community members are encouraged to monitor and report uncivil behavior. McGuirk and Dowling (2011) observe similar relations in an Australian context, highlighting the contractualization of community and neighboring in apartment buildings and new master-planned estates. In these places, strata and community by-laws codify the “material and behavioral elements of middle-class respectability” (McGuirk and Dowling 2011, p. 2623), outlining “common sense” behavioral expectations such as the importance of a clean property and not impinging on others’ right to the quiet enjoyment of their property. Central to these formal codes is the self-disciplining of resident behavior, reinforced by the potential for other residents to complain and take formal (anonymous) action through the strata committee.

Understandings of community and neighboring practice as involving processes of exclusion and disciplining provides an analytical lens for understanding the place of dogs within community and neighboring relations in local neighborhood areas.

## Methods

This paper draws on research undertaken in 2011 exploring the experiences of people living in apartments in Sydney, Australia with dogs. Apartments are a new context for cohabitation with dogs in Australia and few apartment buildings are pet-friendly. Pet-friendly apartments tend to be new and/or close to the city. Reflecting this, participants were drawn predominately from suburbs to the north, east, and inner-west of Sydney. Only one participant lived in an outer suburban location.

### *Neighborhood Type (physical design)*

Fourteen households were in apartments aged 1–10 years old, while 10 were older-style apartments constructed during the 1960s and 70s. Newer apartments were located in Sydney’s inner east and west, typically within major urban redevelopment sites that included a

numbers of parks within walking distance of participants' homes. Older apartments were predominately in older, inner-ring suburbs to the north and east of the central business district. These areas had a greater housing mix, combining apartments and detached houses. They typically included a lower number of local parks, with most participants able to walk to one local off-leash park only.

### ***Governance Context***

Apartment living is governed by Strata Title (Strata Schemes Management Act 1996), which enables individual ownership of unit lots within a building and makes building management the responsibility of apartment owners. Strata by-laws provide guidelines about decision making processes, property appearance, and the rights and responsibilities of residents; pet ownership must be approved by the owners' committee.

### ***Participants***

Participants were sourced through local media and advertising, including fliers delivered to known pet-friendly apartment buildings. Participants were nearly all women (21 women; 5 men), a statistic that reflects the gendering of pet care (Fifield and Forsyth 1999), and were from two distinct social groups: retired, or young professionals. This reflects the demographics of apartment residents in inner-city suburbs in Australia, where apartment living is seen as a transitional arrangement for people entering the housing market for the first time, and an option for downsizing retirees (Randolph 2006). Participants were middle to upper middle-class.

### ***Research Process***

Participants took part in a brief diary-interview method: keeping a photographic diary for one week, followed by a one-hour recorded interview with the researcher. The aim of the photographic diary was not to develop a comprehensive and accurate log of a week, but rather to 1) encourage participants to prepare for the interview by reflecting on their everyday routine with their dog in their apartment building, and 2) allow the researcher to be part of a broad range of activities that people took part in with their dogs. Participants were asked to photograph activities involving their dog and were particularly encouraged to consider "everyday" activities when they may not specifically be engaging with the dog. This method is a way of bringing participants' everyday practices into the research process (Latham 2003), and is effective in enabling participants to reflect upon their interactions with companion animals over a broader timeframe than possible within a typical interview (Power 2008). Participants photographed a range of vernacular activities and interactions including when they first encountered their dog in the morning, went for walks, visited local cafes, moved around the apartment building, and slept.

Interviews were semi-structured and explored participants' everyday routines with their dog, familiarity with others living in the apartment building and how they had come to know them, and how people in the building respond to their dog; they were also asked to discuss the strata context, including their familiarity with strata laws relating to dogs and how these function in practice. Photographs from participant diaries were used to prompt discussion of routines and to recount and re-live the activities of participants' weeks (cf. Latham 2003), including explaining the significance of photos and their connection to broader events or routines that may not have been captured in the previous week. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and participants were provided with the transcript for review. Participants' anonymity was assured through the consent process; they are referred to using a pseudonym.

## *Analysis*

Transcripts were analyzed to identify interactions with people in the local neighborhood that were shaped or otherwise impacted by the presence of dogs, including interactions with people from participants' own buildings, as well as in the broader neighborhood. Attention was given to instances when dogs motivated or encouraged these interactions, social relations took place around dogs, and dogs disrupted social relations. These formed the basis of the coding framework, with subsequent coding exploring the ways these relations took place and the role (if any) of dogs in these relations.

The remainder of the paper presents the results. Dogs are shown to play a central role in the facilitation of human social relations both as agents that motivate social interaction and in more passive roles, such as making people recognizable to others. The particular character personality of dogs impacts upon the nature of these encounters. The spaces within which encounters take place further shape the nature of interaction that develops between people. I start with an overview of the social context within which human–dog relations are situated.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Local Neighborhood Sociality*

All but one participant noted the private and sometimes unfriendly nature of their apartment building, observing it was common for neighbors to acknowledge one another in passing with a casual greeting such as a nod or “hello” when they met in common areas such as foyers, hallways, and lifts, but that neighbors would rarely stop for a chat or conversation, even with people they knew. Additionally, participants typically knew only a small number of neighbors by name (1–3 was most common), unless they were members of the strata (owner's) committee, in which case they would likely know most residents who attended. Adam, who lived with his partner Helena, explained the importance of this dynamic:

The thing about strata living, as far as I'm—I don't want to live in each other's pocket but it's friendly. Everyone says hello in the lift. Everyone says have a good day, how've you been. But I don't want people knocking on my door all the time and saying, what are you up to? Can I come in?

In some buildings it was equally common for neighbors to ignore one another and even avoid eye contact. In Rhada's building, for example, neighbors actively avoided eye contact when they met in the hallway: “at first I was like trying to say hello to everyone I saw and then afterwards I guess you kind of give up as well. You just think oh well, that's just how it is.” Interactions in local neighborhoods were also characterized by this distance. Avoiding eye contact or limiting conversation to casual and generic greetings are central techniques through which people maintain a sense of privacy in a context where people live in close proximity. Through these interpersonal practices residents performed “good” neighboring, avoiding appearing “nosey,” or intruding on neighbors (e.g., Laurier, Whyte and Buckner 2002). People who transgressed this convention were viewed as annoying and “in the way.” Helena and Adam, for example, laughed about one neighbor who attended a party they held and subsequently would “stop us in the lift all the time and have a conversation. Go away! [laughs].”

The brief and perfunctory nature of social interactions changed when participants were in the common spaces of their apartment buildings with their dog/s. Participants perceived that people were more likely to go out of their way to say hello and more regularly stopped to chat,

producing longer interactions than when they walked without their dog. Rhada described a dramatic change after she brought Tin Tin home as a puppy:

we've finally gotten to know more people in the apartment after we've got our dog [ ... ] it wasn't until we got Tin Tin that we'd stop in the corridor and have a chat. You know, they'd ask how is he going and all of that because he's a puppy as well.

For Rhada, as for others, not all residents enthused to the dog, but those that did were likely to stop. Similarly, when walking in local streets or parks, participants perceived that they were more frequently greeted by strangers than when they walked alone, and began to make friendships and other more strategic connections with people in the local neighborhood area. These interactions were seen as less intrusive and less annoying than when unaccompanied by a dog.

### *Dogs as Facilitators of Interaction*

Four factors underpinned increased social recognition and sociability when people walked with dogs. First, participants believed they spent more time outside of their apartment once they got a dog, including in apartment common areas such as hallways, stairwells, lifts, and foyers (which they traversed on any trip in or out of their apartment), as well as local streets, parks, and cafes. Dog ownership was an important trigger for this changed behavior, dogs actively encouraging people to go outside for exercise, socializing, and toileting. For a small proportion of participants these walks were the key time that their dogs toileted, and they discussed the importance of getting the dog outside regularly during the day—usually when they first woke in the morning, again before they left for work, when they arrived home, and again later in the evening. Participants with more flexible or varied working hours, who worked from or close to home, or who were retired, might include additional walks during the day. Ben and Tina, for instance, walked their dog four to five times a day, once or twice for a “proper” walk and then for brief visits to toilet on a grassed area at the bottom of the building. This made participants more available for interaction with neighbors and meant they were more likely to come across the same people (other residents of the neighborhood area) on a regular basis.

Second, dogs made people recognizable. This was particularly notable for people who lived in large apartment complexes and did not know many other residents. Judy, for example, lived in a medium-rise building with approximately 20 other households. She knew a significant number of residents in her building after attending a number of strata meetings and going out of her way to introduce herself to people when she first moved in. However, she did not know anyone from the adjacent building within the same complex. She explained:

but also people know me because they see me with Mickey. So I'll walk out and people in the other apartment blocks will smile at me because they see me and they know who I am, rather than me necessarily knowing who they are.

Similarly,

The dog, by contrast, even yesterday I was walking back through and some guy, I didn't know his name, he was like he's grown up quick, so he's obviously seen Sparky when he was a bit little. (Rhada)

Well half the time people don't recognize you if you don't have your dog, but I've made some really good friends in this neighborhood that I wouldn't have probably done more than nodded or said hello to, if it hadn't been for the dog. (Janice)

More than simply making people appear friendly or approachable (Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Wood et al. 2007), dogs performed as identifying devices. The great diversity and relative rarity of dogs (compared with people) marked participants out and helped make them identifiable to others, who then acted familiarly toward them. Interestingly, as in these examples, it was often only the person with the dog who was recognized.

Third, dogs provided a neutral conversational device with wide ranging opportunities for conversation. Whether in local parks, on the street, or within apartment buildings, interactions between people followed a similar formula: people bumped into one another or congregated in a public space and began a conversation based around the dog:

I just went down there and people just say, Oh, what's your dog's name? Everyone just starts talking to everyone that's got a dog. [ ... ] What sort of breed are they? People with dogs just talk to each other. (Casey)

They might just say hello, but without an animal it's sometimes difficult to know what to talk about isn't it? You know, you end up saying it's a lovely day and then they get out of the lift. Whereas with a dog, then they start talking. People would say well I had a dog. I haven't got one now, but I had one. [Interviewer: It's just talking to you about him?] Yes. You just talk dogs really. It's something that just gets you into easy conversation. (Leisa)

Dogs are quite sociable or create a sociable environment where people who love dogs talk to them, and some of the pictures I've got will show you where we've just gone out for a coffee and people in the cafe have started talking to the dogs. But then by the same token, people who don't have dogs see owners with dogs and stop and talk to the dogs and talk to the owners. So it's actually a way of brokering a social environment. (James)

The role of dogs as social ice-breakers has been noted in previous research (see Wells 2004; Wood et al. 2007). The experiences of participants in this research elucidate these social practices, suggesting that dogs provide an entry to an "easy conversation" that enables people to "just talk to each other," as captured above. This sense of comfort and ease is striking and contrasts markedly with the more stilted and brief interactions described when participants met people without their dog. The broader literature on community and neighboring practice points to why dog-focused conversations are so successful: dogs provide a neutral conversation point that enables people to be friendly with strangers without invading their personal space or privacy, or feeling that their own is jeopardized. The dog acts as a shared topic of interest with a number of diverse conversational directions, enabling the conversation to continue for either a short or long period of time and to comfortably recommence if people happen to meet again at a later date. The centrality of dogs to these exchanges was clearly expressed, and many participants reflected that they knew the names of more dogs than people. As Casey noted, "You end up knowing the dog's name, then you can get the owner's name." Dogs thus bring people together but also perform as distancing devices that enable people to maintain a sense of privacy, which is crucial to good neighboring practice.

Fourth, dogs actively solicited neighborhood sociality. In off-leash parks, casual chatting between people was prompted by dogs playing together. If the play was successful (both dogs became involved and neither was overly aggressive), people would stand, watch their dog play, and begin to chat with the owner of the other dog. As Chloe explains, this reflects the purpose of the walk which was usually to exercise and socialize the dog:

... the dog is the focus, the dog is the rationale for stopping and having a chat, because if the dogs are playing together and interacting well, you stand there and have a chat while they're chasing each other around. (Chloe)

The personalities and interactional skills of dogs impacted on the range of people that participants were likely to meet. More than people being simply attracted to a particular breed (Wells 2004), some dogs actively solicited attention with lively and friendly behavior. Dogs behaving in puppy-like ways attracted particular attention:

as soon as she sees someone, her whole body starts wagging hoping she'll get a pat because I think she's quite deprived. She's constantly craving more affection. So yeah, she's a happy little dog who likes to say hello and she's very gentle with children. (Rosie)

Dogs that were calm or relaxed attracted different attention:

you come up in the lift with a dog and people that like dogs, but they don't necessarily have one, they did like my Dalmatian because he was a very calm character. He was not at all boisterous or anything. He was just very quiet and people could pat him and that. You get to meet people in the building as you are even just coming into the building up and down in the lift. People are always getting in and out of the lift. They all knew my dog. (Leisa)

Social interaction between people was significantly shaped by the ways that dogs interacted with dogs and people. Through these interactions dogs significantly determined the number and range of people that their owners were likely to meet when outside the apartment.

Contrastingly, dogs could behave in ways that made it difficult for their owners to meet others, for example, by ignoring or disliking a group:

Some people do have dogs that are either too boisterous for her—bigger dogs—or they're just a bit obnoxious. Sometimes Daisy, like most dogs, will take a dislike to a particular dog for no particular reason that you can identify, they're just either not interested in them or they don't smell right. Dogs can be quite cliquy. (Chloe)

There's also some people who see you walking and they've got a dog of their own and they'll cross because their dog might not be friendly. (Rosie)

We don't like going somewhere where there's lots of dogs, only because Rory doesn't really love all the dogs. So we've got to be a bit careful about where we take them. Like, he hates big black dogs. (Sandra)

Dogs' choices often selected toward, or away from, certain groups of people based on their interest or lack of interest in the dogs that these people were with. Some were afraid of particular dogs or types of dog (e.g., big dogs), so their owners avoided parks where these dogs congregated. Participants with nervous dogs were much less likely to spend time in off-leash parks out of concern that they might lose their dog, or that it might behave in an aggressive manner; they were therefore less likely to spend time chatting in parks and public spaces. Rosie particularly noted the changes in her social circle since her first, very friendly, dog had died. Her new, more anxious dog was more human-focused and would not play with other dogs in off-leash parks. To ensure the dog got enough exercise, Rosie instead used a linear park that she drove to after work; she found that she quickly lost contact with the park-based community.

### *Types of Neighboring and Community Relations*

Social interactions between dog owners in public spaces were of three key types. Some were casual and informal, others involved transactional elements, and sometimes friendships developed. Informal transactional relationships were most common, emerging from parks and shared gardens where people congregated regularly. The most common transaction involved sharing of dog-focused information. Rhada got advice about basic dog training techniques when she first got her puppy, while Andrea had assistance toilet training her dog from other dogs and their owners in her building. These people met her in the apartment common area at set times with their own dog/s, which acted as role models and encouraged her dog to toilet outside before bedtime. Transactions also involved sharing information about strata processes and sharing contacts. For example, when Casey had problems with Strata Committee member who did not like dogs living in the building, other park users who had experienced similar problems offered to put her in contact with another local resident who was a lawyer and had fought similar action in his building. Transactions involving the care of other's dogs were also common. In Janice's neighborhood, a number of local dog owners exercised a local resident's Guide Dog when her illness prevented her from getting out. Janice explained, "So it was actually mutually beneficial and then it's just continued, different people have done it, different people have moved out and couldn't do it. She's not of very good health herself, so it's also a thing of looking out for her."

A different type of transaction involved the performance of "responsible dog ownership" within apartment buildings, where participants attempted to ensure that theirs and others' dogs behaved appropriately (e.g., ensuring that dogs were quiet and droppings removed from common areas). Participants used diverse methods to ensure this, including speaking directly with other residents who had dogs (e.g., advising them their dog was barking during the day, as James and Tim did for a friend within the building) and indirectly (e.g., Rosie asked a neighbor to help her clean up after "other" people whose dogs were toileting in the common area, even though she was sure he was the culprit), and leaving both named and anonymous notes in common areas. These strategies were to ensure that dogs did not cause a disturbance within the apartment building, which could result in non-dog owning neighbors revoking the right to keep pets in the building. People and dogs on the outside of these practices were often marginalized from the community of dog owners, made unwelcome within local dog-based gatherings, and in some cases faced pressure to relinquish their pet or move house. For example, Lucy evicted a tenant of hers three months into their lease because their dogs barked and she did not want her neighbors to begin objecting to dogs; James and Tim reported the "disappearance" of one dog after complaints of barking were issued, and the ostracism of another; Gabriella's sister considered de-barking her dog to stop her neighbors' complaints, despite disagreeing with the practice; Irene reported neighbors selling their harbor-view penthouse following ongoing harassment from neighbors who objected to their two terriers.

Transactional relationships amongst dog owners in local neighborhood areas highlight two interesting components of neighboring and community practice around dogs. First, the production of community amongst a group that feels minoritized within a local neighborhood area. In this case the development of community enabled people to share information about their dogs and share knowledge and resources to assist in what could be a tense relationship with non-dog owners in the strata committee. Second, these practices point to the disciplining potential of dog-owning communities, not just within parks (e.g., Robins, Sanders and Cahill 1991; Jackson 2012), but also extending into the private residential context. Within apartment

buildings, knowing and speaking regularly with other dog owners assisted participants to keep up to date with arising issues and also to exercise social and peer pressure to ensure that others behaved “responsibly.” For those perceived as performing “irresponsible” dog ownership, the experience of community was shaped by currents of exclusion.

Friendships also frequently developed from park-based relationships. As Rosie and others describe, these relationships were usually motivated by dogs that began playing with one another, which prompted their human owners to chat:

Our dogs adored each other. My dog was so obsessed with her dog, that the trainer had to put a barrier between them to make them concentrate in class because Daisy adored Cody, absolutely adored her. Cody was really frightened and she'd often be hiding under the chair of Melinda and I think Daisy just brought her out of her shell so much. They'd have play dates and because like I ever, when they were really little, if I had to go out for a long time, I'd drop Daisy around there and she'd have both the dogs. **[Interviewer: That evolved because of how much the dogs liked each other?]** Mm. Then Melinda and I realized we liked each other as well and she's got two kids and then we'd meet on a Sunday morning. (Rosie)

I've made a few friends that are now really good friends, that it's got nothing to do with the dogs anymore, it's just really close friends. [ ... ] Well you see them so often and then in the case I'll try and think of like Laura and Jim, who've become really good friends, I think it came from just chatting while we walked the dogs and then saying do you want to go to the RSL and have a drink, then minding each other's dogs and then before you know it you're friends. (Janice)

There was a lady down there that we go out—that we've met and she was on her own and in the same sort of situation as me. We've met and gone to dinner a couple of times. We go to the RSL up here, once a fortnight to the raffles and have dinner. So we do that once a fortnight. But I met her down there. **[Interviewer: How did that come about? Like how did you go from it just being someone that you happen to see down at the park, to ... ]** Yeah, well we got chatting and I remember one day she was really upset and she was crying, with her marriage split up and that. So we just became—and then I gave her my phone number and said, give me a ring and we'll do something. Get out and do something. So yeah, that came from that. We've become good friends. That's over—probably about four years ago, I met her. (Andrea).

Discovering shared interests or experiences was key to the progression of these relationships which followed a similar formula: meeting and chatting in the park, followed by informal social “get-togethers” that were usually activity-based and allowed participants an “out” if they did not getting along. Often dogs would continue to be part of the friendship, but not essential.

## Conclusions

This paper adds critical, empirical detail to understandings of dog-motivated community sociability, highlighting four ways that dogs shape relations of neighboring and community: encouraging people to spend more time outside, making people recognizable within their neighborhood, providing a topic of conversation, and actively soliciting the attention of strangers. Through these practices the paper connects with and expands upon the broader

literature about community and neighboring practice in three key ways. First, the discussion suggests that dog-based sociability acts as a proxy for more formally organized social events within neighborhoods (see, for example, the earlier discussion of Laurier, Whyte and Buckner 2002). Through informal meetings within parks and other shared spaces, including within apartment buildings, people meet and generate social connections with others in their local neighborhood. In this context, dogs act as “identifying devices” that make their owners identifiable to others. This is particularly valuable for people who have recently moved into a neighborhood and within new communities where most residents have moved away from existing social networks. Second, dogs act as “distancing devices,” enabling people to maintain a social distance that is foundational to good neighboring and community practice. Third, the paper highlights the powerful role of exclusionary relations in the establishment of dog-based communities. To ensure the ongoing place of dogs within local neighborhood areas, participants actively disciplined and excluded people and dogs that did not fit within local expectations of “responsible” dog ownership.

Finally, the paper points to a spatiality of relations of neighboring and community. People meeting in places such as parks and common garden areas within apartment buildings were more likely to form relationships with transactional components such as sharing information and resources. People meeting only in transitional spaces such as streets, apartment corridors, and lifts were less likely to form these types of relations. The clear social and community benefits gained from transactional relations suggests the importance of ensuring that open, shared spaces that allow and facilitate extended visits are available within local neighborhood areas. This is of particular note in countries such as Australia where off-leash dog access to open park spaces is strictly regulated and limited within many neighborhood areas.

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