



Whose Best Friend? Dogs and Racial Boundary Maintenance in a Multiracial Neighborhood¹

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In human–animal studies, dogs are often framed as promoters of interactions among strangers. Yet very few of these studies discuss how racial structure shapes human-to-human engagement. Similarly, race scholarship and urban studies have failed to incorporate human–animal studies fully to better understand racial dynamics and inequality in U.S. cities. I use in-depth interview data from an 18-month study of Creekridge Park, an urban, multiracial, and mixed-income neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina, to explore the role of dogs for white residents. I focus on identifying if dogs helped bridge social differences between white residents and their Black and Latinx neighbors in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood. I find that while my white respondents shared many examples of dogs facilitating neighborly relationships and friendship, these relationships were largely between same-race individuals. By reinforcing a white, urban, middle-class habitus, white residents used dogs to maintain interracial boundaries and feelings of safety, as well as navigate racial-ethnic differences between themselves and their Black and Latinx neighbors. These findings point to the necessity of more research that addresses racial structure and human–animal studies to better understand contemporary urban spaces.

KEYWORDS: boundaries; ethnicity; human–animal studies; interaction; race; social difference.

INTRODUCTION

“I think that many of us would say that it’s the dogs that are our connectors. [Dog growling] That’s how a lot of us have gotten to know each other.” —*Tammy, white homeowner*

Dogs and other animal companions are an important element of contemporary American life. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) estimates that Americans own between 70 and 80 million dogs and that approximately 37%–47% of U.S. households own a dog (ASPCA, n.d.). According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, in 2011 whites (65.6%) and Latinxs (62.5%) were most likely to own pets, while Asian/Pacific Islander/American Indian/Aleut Eskimo (47.7%) and African Americans were less likely to own pets (32.7%) (Burns 2013). While animal studies researchers have long advocated for the

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inclusion of human–animal studies to better understand modern life, U.S. scholars of race and ethnicity and urban studies have not fully incorporated an animal studies angle into our own research. The purpose of this article is not just to fill a gap in scholarship but to also illuminate a quotidian process in which racial inequality manifests and is reinforced.

By investigating how race structures dog-aided social interactions between white residents and their neighbors, I uncover how dogs help reinforce a white, urban, middle-class habitus in a multiracial urban neighborhood. Although dogs facilitated interactions between humans in CreekrIDGE Park,³ friendly interactions tended to be among white individuals. Dog–human interactions that included white residents and their Black and Latinx neighbors reflected and reinforced norms of social distance and social control characteristic of this Durham, North Carolina, neighborhood (Mayorga-Gallo 2014). My findings contrast with the otherwise optimistic narrative presented in animal studies research that frames dogs as a catalyst for positive human social interactions. Unfortunately, many of these studies have reinforced a color-blind narrative, assuming the universality of white experiences, and ignored racial stratification as an important component of urban living.

I argue that white residents of CreekrIDGE Park used dogs as the basis for negotiating boundaries, their feelings of safety, and racial-ethnic differences, resulting in high interracial social distance and white intraracial collegiality. By using the white, urban, middle-class habitus of CreekrIDGE Park as an analytic lens, we see how ideas around boundaries, safety, and race are expressed as common sense by white dog owners. To be clear, it is not that dog owners did not care genuinely about their dogs or were obscuring their true motives. In caring for their pets, however, they performed a particular type of urban white middle-classness that was centered on their own comfort and way of being at the expense of those who functioned outside this habitus, particularly dog owners of color. Black and Latinx dog owners were classified as deficient and subsequently surveilled and disciplined. The power of the classification and logic of this white, urban, middle-class habitus comes in its reinforcement of preexisting structural arrangements along race and class lines. In this space, dogs helped reinforce an inequitable system of whiteness.⁴ I argue that the discussions around boundaries and safety were not really about dogs but about white residents maintaining power in a multiracial neighborhood.

In the following sections I discuss the literature on human–dog relationships. I specifically focus on the research that discusses dogs as facilitators of interhuman contact as well as the potential contributions of human–dog studies to illuminating underexplored elements of race in America. I then present data from in-depth interviews with CreekrIDGE Park residents on the role of dogs in neighborhood meaning making and human interactions for white residents. In both roles, we see how white residents project racialized meanings onto dogs and use dogs as the basis for intraracial friendship and interracial conflict. I then conclude by arguing that racial structure must be addressed further in future human–animal studies and animal–

³ CreekrIDGE Park is a pseudonym to protect the identities of the respondents. All respondent names are also pseudonyms.

⁴ I use philosopher Charles Mills's (1997) definition of whiteness, which refers to a system of power relations that economically, socially, and politically benefits people of European descent.

human dyads should be incorporated into more urban and race scholarship, as animals are both an important base on which humans reproduce contemporary racial meanings in public and private space and actants in shaping neighborhood social relations.

BACKGROUND

The field of human–animal studies focuses on “the cultural, philosophical, economic and social means by which humans and animals interact” (Armstrong and Simmons 2007:1). Challenging anthropocentrism (the privileging of humans over other living creatures) is an essential goal of the field (Armstrong and Simmons 2007). More and more, social scientists and humanities scholars are applying bio-centric approaches to their fields. Urban geographers, for example, have begun to investigate the relationship between animals and identity, as well as animals and place formation (Holmberg 2015; Wolch 2002). While human–animal studies consider various animal species, below I focus my review on human–dog studies, specifically highlighting the role of dogs in facilitating social contact. Using Bruno Latour’s (1996) conceptualization, we may think of dogs as actants as they modify the actions of humans. While dogs may also have agency in these interactions, it is not the focus of this article.⁵

Many studies have explored the pet and owner/companion and guardian relationship between dogs and humans (Irvine 2004; Laurent-Simpson 2017; Rogers, Hart, and Boltz 1993; Sanders 2003; Shore, Riley, and Douglas 2006). Researchers have identified physical benefits for pet owners, including increased physical activity and heart health (Friedmann and Thomas 1995; Rogers et al. 1993; Toohey and Rock 2011). Other scholars have focused on the role dog ownership plays in building human relationships (Bueker 2013; Guégen and Ciccotti 2008; Hunt, Hart, and Gomulkiewicz 1992; McNicholas and Collis 2000; Messent 1983; Riskey-Curtiss, Holley, and Wolf 2006; Robins, Sanders, and Cahill 1991; Rogers et al. 1993; Toohey and Rock 2011). For example, in a 2007 study, Wood et al. found that non–pet owners appreciated residents who walked their dogs in the neighborhood because it allowed them to see their neighbors out and about. Psychologists have also explored these associations, with Guégen and Ciccotti (2008) discovering that dogs are associated with compliance for requests (e.g., for a phone number) as well as helping behaviors from strangers. In their 2000 experiment, McNicholas and Collis uncovered that strangers were more likely to interact with someone when their dog was present, regardless of the owner’s dress (smart versus scruffy). These field experiments, however, did not discuss the race of the strangers or the dog owners, limiting their applicability and reproducing racial ideologies of color blindness and post-raciality.

Some studies indicate that the role that dogs play in neighborhoods is complicated by issues of race, gender, and age. For example, Toohey and Rock’s (2011)

⁵ Due to the nature of my data (mostly interviews), I am limited to human accounts of events. These retellings rarely focus on the specific actions of their animal companions and how their dogs shaped their own actions. My data, therefore, fail to illuminate the social relations of human and dog actants. I hope future studies will address this data limitation via participant observation.

review of previous wellness studies finds that women, racial and ethnic minorities, and older adults may perceive dogs in their neighborhoods as barriers to physical activity. They posit that these findings are related to the danger of stray/unattended dogs. Emily Drew's (2012) study of a gentrifying neighborhood reveals how dogs became a chief arena of conflict between longtime Black residents and white newcomers. She writes, "Dogs were one of the most common topics at the [neighborhood] dialogues, ranging from assertions that white people get dogs as a form of intimidation or to provide security against their Black neighbors, to complaints about white people's refusal to obey leash laws and pick up their dogs' waste" (Drew 2012:108). Last, Catherine Simpson Bueker (2013) finds in her study that even in a predominantly white neighborhood, dogs do not lead to universally positive experiences, as cliques around dog breeds and disagreements over leashing indicate.

The racial history and cultural meaning of dogs in America is also an important backdrop of these interneighbor discussions. As Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998:194) argue, "animal bodies have become one site of political struggle over the construction of cultural difference and help to maintain white American supremacy." Certain ideas may be seen by dominant group members as universal, but are indeed culturally specific (Elder et al. 1998). This includes whether a dog should sleep in one's bed (Brown 2002) or what animals are acceptable for eating (Griffith, Wolch, and Lassiter 2002). Research has shown, however, that while behaviors and practices may differ, pet attachment and seeing pets as members of the family do not differ between racial-ethnic groups (Risley-Curtiss et al. 2006).

Dogs are also intertwined with the United States' racist history against Black Americans and other minorities (Wall 2014). For example, police dogs are an iconic symbol of civil rights repression in Birmingham, Alabama, but they were also used during slavery to capture runaway slaves (Franklin and Schweningen 2000). These "negro dogs" were vicious and caused serious harm, including death; they were used not just for capture but also deterrence against escape (Frankling and Schweningen 2000:164). Tyler Wall (2014:4) details a long list of examples of dogs as extensions of state violence, including "the lesser-known US project of training dogs to smell the blood of Japanese soldiers so that the dogs might then be unleashed to hunt Japanese soldiers en masse." More recently, dogs were used against nonviolent Native American protestors at the Dakota Access Pipeline Construction site, injuring adults and children (Manning 2016). As Wall (2014:7) argues, the "animality of police power is normalized and insidious." The reactions of racial and ethnic minorities to unleashed dogs, for example, are therefore not blank slate responses but must be understood through these cultural memories.

In addition to Drew (2012), other studies have focused on the role of dogs in gentrifying urban neighborhoods (Holmberg 2015; Tileva 2016; Tissot 2011). The narrative of dogs as harbingers of gentrification is well captured by alternative Seattle magazine *The Stranger* (Mudede 2015): "You Know the Central District Has Gentrified When Polite Drug Dealers Have Been Replaced by Obnoxious Dog Owners." In "Of Dogs and Men," social scientist Sylvie Tissot (2011) complicates the dog, owner, and stranger interaction posited by previous studies. Tissot finds that upper-middle-class gentrifiers lay claim to a quasi-exclusionary space (the dog

park), while branding themselves and the dog park as inclusive and diverse. In short, the dog park reinforces social distance between upper-class residents and “undesirables.” Anthropologist Toni Tileva (2016) also studied the role of dog parks in gentrification, arguing that “dog parks are a microcosm of gentrification” that re-create status distinctions and control of public space. These patterns mirror findings from other nominally public spaces, such as Union Square in New York City, that are characterized by power differentials and exclusion (Zukin 2010).

Creekridge Park is not a gentrified neighborhood; it is stably mixed income, with a consistent middle-income presence. It also does not share some of the attributes that scholars of dogs and gentrifying neighborhoods have identified as markers of upper-middle classness, such as dog parks and dog bakeries (Tissot 2011). However, two popular neighborhood establishments with white residents, Stella’s Café and The Bakery, are both considered dog-friendly due to their outdoor seating. A nearby upper-income neighborhood, Groveland Estates, has a park in which many white residents walk their dogs. While this park is not an official dog park, several white residents described taking their dogs for walks through Groveland Estates Park and even letting their dogs run around off leash.

Taken-for-granted norms, such as letting a dog run off leash in a standard park, are best understood using theorist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. He writes, “through habitus, we have a world of common sense, a world that seems self-evident” (Bourdieu 1989:19). While habitus is a “system of dispositions” that includes an individual’s actions and tendencies, it is also experienced as a shared “way of being” based on one’s social location (Bourdieu 1977:214). As such, I describe the dominant habitus in Creekridge Park, particularly for white homeowners, as a white, urban, middle-class habitus (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006; Mayorga-Gallo 2014). In other words, most white homeowners I interviewed agreed on the right and wrong ways to live in Creekridge Park and experienced these views as common sense. Using this framework, we are able to understand how everyday decision making reinforces a structure of whiteness in this neighborhood that marginalizes and devalues people of color.

METHODS

The purpose of my research was to conduct an in-depth study of a statistically integrated neighborhood and examine neighborhood norms and residents’ social relationships (see Mayorga-Gallo 2014). By studying a statistically nonsegregated space,⁶ I was able to investigate whether neighborhood norms still produced inter-racial social distance without spatial distance. My main research interests were the social interactions and relationships among residents, and during my time in the neighborhood, it became evident that dogs were an integral part of the social life of Creekridge Park. In other words, the role of dogs in neighborhood life was an emergent theme.

⁶ I computed dissimilarity indices for Creekridge Park, which range from 0 to 1, using 2010 census data. The 2010 index was .12 for Latinxs, .31 for Black residents, and .34 for whites. Using Massey and Denton’s (1993) .3 cutoff, these scores indicate relatively low segregation across these blocks.

For the purposes of this article, I focus on pet ownership data, which I collected via in-depth interviews, although I also reference my household survey data on dog ownership in Table I. Between 2009 and 2011, I interviewed 63 area residents. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to more than two hours, and we either met at the respondent's home or a neighborhood business. My introduction to CreekrIDGE Park and its residents came through a university connection. As I researched the neighborhood, which I identified using census data, I saw a familiar name on their neighborhood association web page. I met with Charles, a white homeowner and eventual key neighborhood informant. He then put me in touch with Deborah, a white homeowner and member of the CreekrIDGE Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA). After I had a preliminary interview with her, Deborah agreed to let me send my solicitation for interviews around the CPNA listserv. After I sent my e-mail detailing who I was and that I was interested in speaking with neighborhood residents, Deborah vouched for me saying that her interview with me was enjoyable. Some initial interviews came from the listserv, but many others came from respondent recommendations (snowball sampling) and meeting residents at neighborhood events.

I asked residents why they chose to live in CreekrIDGE Park, how they would describe the neighborhood, their relationships with neighbors, how they spend their free time, and experiences with various neighborhood establishments. I also asked residents if they owned any pets, and if they did, what kind of walking route (if any) they had with their pet.

I use a modified grounded theory approach to analyze my data, which entails multiple rounds of coding data using preexisting categories as well as emergent themes to produce new conceptual models. It is through this process that I identified the following categories as central to how white residents understand and frame dogs in CreekrIDGE Park. I have mildly edited the interview data presented below to improve readability (i.e., removing "um," "uh," and false starts).

In this article, I focus on the experiences of dog owners to illustrate how dogs helped reinforce a white, urban, middle-class habitus in this neighborhood. Given my field position and access,⁷ my data are mostly from white residents. These data, however, allow me to uncover how power works in CreekrIDGE Park. While CreekrIDGE Park is a multiracial neighborhood, power—defined as the ability to achieve your desired outcomes (Giddens 1984)—is most effectively wielded by white residents. As social theorist Anthony Giddens (1984:24) explains, "It is always the case that the day-to-day activity of social actors draws upon and reproduces structural features of wider social systems." Therefore, it is no surprise that CreekrIDGE Park reflects a broader system of whiteness (Mills 1997). The control of space and neighbors by white residents is exemplified through dog-human interactions, so the following sections analyze the reported behaviors of white dog owners. I will, however, highlight data from residents of color where relevant.

⁷ For a broader discussion of my field experience and its effect on my data collection, see Mayorga-Gallo and Hodge-Freeman (2017) and Mayorga-Gallo (2014).

Table I. Creekridge Park Demographics and Dog Ownership Rates

	2010 Census (%)	Interviewees (N)	Survey Respondents (N)	Dog Owners, Interviewees (N)	Dog Owners, Survey Respondents (N)
White, non-Hispanic	34%	49	64	27	44
Black, non-Hispanic	39%	7	11	3	0
Latinx	26%	6	6	0	1
Total		63	154	30	50

THE SETTING: CREEKRIDGE PARK

Creekridge Park is located in Durham County, North Carolina, and is home to more than 1,500 residents.⁸ The neighborhood association describes the neighborhood as “diverse” and “mixed income.” On the 2010 census, 34% of residents identified as white, non-Hispanic; 39% identified as Black, non-Hispanic; and 26% identified as Latinx. Creekridge Park is mixed income, with most respondents agreeing the “mix” includes working- and middle-class households. In 2011, housing values varied approximately between \$69,000 and \$201,000.⁹ White residents were equally as likely to be renters or homeowners, while Latinx and Black residents were more likely to be renters (87% and 83%, respectively).

Of the 63 respondents, 34 were dog owners at the time of their interview. Of these dog owners, 6 were renters and 28 were homeowners.¹⁰ In comparison, seven interviewees were current cat owners and all of them were white homeowners. The Black and white dog-owning patterns I found in Creekridge Park reflect the American Veterinary Medical Association pet ownership rates discussed in the introduction, while the Latinx dog-owning numbers do not correspond across the two data sets (see Table I).

Many white residents characterized Creekridge Park as a dog-friendly neighborhood. I heard comments such as “it’s a very doggie neighborhood,” “it’s a very dog-intensive neighborhood,” and “there’s that kind of animal lover in the neighborhood.” Keith, a white homeowner, also used care for animals to characterize neighborhood residents. He speculated, “I get the feeling that it’s... got a lot—more than the average number of people who are aware of the ecology and that sort of thing... Like proper treatment of animals, proper concern for the environment kind of thing.” Keith’s description moves beyond the dog friendliness character to a political stance of environmentalism.¹¹ Keith’s repeated use of “proper” also reflects

⁸ In order to protect the identity of my respondents, I have slightly changed the demographic details included here. The percentages, however, are comparable.

⁹ This estimate is based on respondent reported data and Durham tax records.

¹⁰ Residents of Pine Grove Apartments were allowed to have pets. According to Lois, a white renter and dog owner in Pine Grove Apartments, the fee in 2010 was \$200. The pet fee has since been raised to \$300, and residents also have to pay a continuing monthly \$12 pet rental fee.

¹¹ The whiteness of environmentalism and the U.S. environmental movement has been identified by many scholars. See Finney (2014) for a brief overview.

a moralistic undertone, indicating that dog friendliness is not just a neutral descriptor but perhaps even an ethical obligation for residents.

Others, like newcomers and white homeowners Brendan and Katie, moved in because of its dog friendliness: “We notice a lot of people walking. . . the streets and walking their dogs and stuff and so we really like that feel.” As part of her block captain duties, Debbie compiled a file of her neighbors’ pet pictures so residents could identify and return any pets who got out. Here, we see how dogs not only help create meaning of place (e.g., desirable neighborhood), but also how they help construct meaning of residents (e.g., “animal lover”) and what makes a good neighbor (e.g., watching out for lost pets).

This dog friendliness also extended to a general acquiescence in regard to select dog-related conflicts among some residents—namely, noise and poop. Even when there was conflict, residents usually approached one another about it. For example, Cynthia, a white homeowner and cat owner who lives on Harris Street, indicated that dog barking “makes me crazy,” but that there is not much one can do besides approach the owner. Keith, who lives on Central Street, said that his elderly neighbor’s dog “does irritate me,” but it did not keep him from having a neighborly relationship where they chatted with each other. Three residents also mentioned dog poop as an issue in the neighborhood. Cheryl, a Black homeowner who does not own a pet, had a laissez-faire approach to life in CreekrIDGE Park, although she wished she did not have to pick up someone else’s dog poop on her property. Luke, a white homeowner who owns a dog and lives down the street from Cheryl, had a different approach. He said that he confronts neighbors about “letting your pit bull poop on that other neighbor’s property.” It is worth noting Luke’s use of a pit bull in the example of a misbehaving neighbor, as pit bulls are associated with Black and Latinx men in CreekrIDGE Park.

Overall, the dog-friendly characterization of CreekrIDGE Park creates an ethos of acceptance of predictable dog behavior (i.e., barking and poop). As Alan explained, it can be an irritant, but these issues do not usually create a problem between dog owners and others. I start with these examples because they show how some behaviors do not lead to major conflict; most of these examples are between white neighbors. There is mild annoyance, perhaps a discussion, but neighbors mostly leave one another alone. These reactions of “live and let live” are significant because of the discordance between them and the types of responses recounted in the following sections, particularly toward neighbors of color.

DOGS, RACE, AND NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE

Construction of Safety

Dangerous Space Understandings of safety are deeply connected to normative ideas about race, class, and gender. Anthropologist Sally Engle Merry (1981:8) argues that familiarity is integral to constructions of safety in urban neighborhoods. She explains, “Although danger. . . is a cognitive assessment of personal risk alone, it incorporates more general social understandings about who and what is dangerous. It draws on shared images of what kinds of persons are violent, immoral, and inclined to commit crimes, and where such persons are likely to appear” (Merry 1981:13). In

Creekridge Park, sharing a white, urban, middle-class habitus is how many white residents construct safety and familiarity. Those who existed outside of its logic (e.g., many residents of color and owners of “scary” dogs) were therefore suspect.

Dogs helped create meaning of neighborhood space through the construction of a “safe” neighborhood for white residents. Many residents indicated during their descriptions of neighborhood spaces that they felt safe in Creekridge Park and specifically mentioned how they took their dogs for walks at night as evidence of that characterization. Others, however, did not necessarily feel safe walking around the neighborhood at night *without* their dogs, so their dogs were integral to their characterization of Creekridge Park as a “safe” neighborhood. Dog breed and size also play a role in this process of meaning making. Emma, for instance, who is a white homeowner and Duke University graduate student, stated that she felt safe in the immediate area but that she would not walk toward the Food Lion, a regional grocery store in lower-middle-income neighborhoods, without her “big hound dogs.” She went on to explain that someone pulled a gun on a friend of hers while she was walking her “little tiny froufrou dog” around 7:00 p.m. Interestingly, before moving into Creekridge Park, Denise, a white renter and Duke postdoctoral fellow, was told by her previous landlord, a Duke graduate student, not to walk in the area surrounding Creekridge Park and to avoid shopping at the neighborhood Food Lion. An Australian immigrant, she regretted taking his comments at “face value,” which she said was “a really silly thing to have done.” Now having moved to the area, she realized his comment “was all crap.”¹²

Race and gender are important parts of who feels safer walking around the neighborhood with their dog; everyone who mentioned this distinction to me was a white woman. Emma, Jamie, and Julie all mention that their dogs are big, which is why they feel safer with them; they are protectors. Interestingly, both Jamie and Julie clarify that their dogs are not scary dogs. For example, Jamie explained, “I have two dogs. I mean, they’re not ferocious, badass dogs or anything. They’re very sweet and mellow actually. But people don’t know that. And I’ve walked them up and down this street and around [. . . at] all times of the day and night.” Neither of them wanted to be linked with scary dogs (usually defined as pit bulls and Rottweilers, as we see below), which are generally associated with nonwhite masculinity. Owning a “ferocious” dog would classify someone as outside the white, urban, middle-class habitus of Creekridge Park. Here again, we see dogs as the basis for interneighbor boundary work and the importance of race and gender to these boundaries (Glenn 2002). It is worth noting that none of the Black dog owners mentioned feeling safer due to their dogs, although Mary, a Black longtime renter, mentioned that her neighbors, Luke and Emma, were safe from burglaries due to their three dogs; Mary herself did not own a dog anymore. That only white women made these claims about their dogs points to how constructions of safety vis-à-vis dogs are tied to ideas of white womanhood and their particular vulnerability and need for protection in multiracial urban spaces (Ware 2015). As Vron Ware (2015) points

¹² Because many Duke students (both graduate and undergraduate) are transplants to the Durham area, they often rely on word-of-mouth characterizations to help navigate Durham’s landscape. Denise provides us with an example of how these portrayals can rely on racial and class stereotypes of dangerous space, particularly for white students who are not from cities.

out in *Beyond the Pale*, this does not mean that crime does not happen in cities but that white women's taken-for-granted and unique vulnerability is constructed in contrast to a presumed nonwhite male perpetrator in urban space.

Animal studies scholar Harlan Weaver (2015:350) argues that identifying dogs as part of the family fails to achieve the potential "inhuman queerness" of dog-human connections and reinforces both hetero- and homonormativity rather than a transformative landscape that will "build a better multispecies world." While none of my respondents explicitly identified their pets as part of the family in the way other scholars have identified (see Greenebaum [2004] on "fur babies"), their actions did reflect familial ties. For example, white residents Thomas, Denise, and Charles said that needing a home suitable for their dog was one of the reasons they chose their single-family homes in Creekridge Park. In this way, dogs are part of the justification for these insular and traditionally heteronormative domestic arrangements. Rather than create an environment where queer constructions of community are welcome, dogs are part of shaping insular family and community formations in Creekridge Park. These formations are of course also raced, as white residents are more likely to be dog owners, live in Creekridge Park's single-family homes, and have relationships with fellow white residents.

Constructions of safety are thus simultaneously constructions of community. Dogs help facilitate a sense of protection for whites in areas where "community" is broader and contains too many axes of difference—whether across race or class. The areas that Julie, Jamie, Emma, and Denise are afraid to walk around without their dogs are all areas that are predominantly nonwhite and lower income—areas they do not frequent or see as their own. Why areas where poor and minority residents live *feel* dangerous to white residents and how these feelings shape their behavior is a product of the particular white, urban, middle-class habitus of Creekridge Park. These feelings are common sense within this habitus. The everydayness of these racial understandings is reflected in discussions on the CPNA listserv, where residents (particularly white residents) identified suspicious people and socialized one another in the appropriate behavior to maintain neighborhood safety (e.g., watch your neighbors and call the police). The large amount of racial segregation in Creekridge Park networks, where whites in particular have very racially homogeneous networks (85% of the friends named by surveyed whites in Creekridge Park were white), reflects these raced and classed constructions of community and safety. These patterns of segregated friendship networks reflect broader U.S. norms (Ingraham 2014; Munn 2017).

Dangerous Dogs A corollary of neighborhood safety in this white, urban, middle-class habitus is the construction of dangerous dogs. In her study, psychologist Deborah Wells (2004:340) addressed the effect of dog breed on the facilitation of social interaction between strangers; she found that "the social catalysis effect [of dogs] is not generic, but dog specific." While Wells does not directly address race, the racialization of animals is essential to the conceptualization of certain dog breeds as approachable or not. The construction of certain dogs, such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, and pit bulls, as dangerous is directly connected to American ideologies of race, gender, and class. As Weaver (2013:694) contends, "the contemporary

production of the pit bull in the United States as a kind of being frequently relies on, overlaps with, and connects to human racial categories.” The ideas that we have about these breeds are a result of the ideas we have about their owners, often stereotyped as men of color involved in criminal activity. For example, North Carolina legislators proposed a bill in 2013 that would require owners of “aggressive breeds” to undergo criminal background checks and training by the Humane Society to obtain a permit.¹³ The sponsor of the bill, Representative Rodney Moore, explained that “some dogs have aggressive natures” and that owners need to take responsibility in their ownership for their dogs (Leslie 2013). Interestingly, a focus on owners is in part how the American Pit Bull Foundation approaches discussions of pit bull attacks; they argue these acts of aggression are the fault of owners, not the dogs themselves. They also point to the American Temperament Test Society, which tests the temperament of dog breeds. As of April 2016, the American pit bull terrier had a passing rate of 87.4%, which is above the average overall passing rate of 83.4%. Despite efforts to destigmatize pit bulls, articles such as “The Problem With Pit Bulls” still dominate discussions around the breed (Alter 2014).

Not surprisingly, pit bulls were seen as particularly “bad” and scary by residents of CreekrIDGE Park. For example, Adrienne, a white homeowner, described her neighbor’s pit bulls as scary: “she had a renter who had these really crazy pit bulls that were kind of scary. And he was a really nice guy and we got along with him just fine. . . . He was a really nice guy, we didn’t have any problems with him. Just his freaky dogs.” Adrienne does not give specifics about what makes the dogs freaky or scary but relies solely on their identity as pit bulls. This is a perfect illustration of dogs as the basis for boundary work in CreekrIDGE Park. Adrienne states multiple times that her neighbor, who is a Black male, was a nice guy; the reference to pit bulls and their freakiness, however, communicates her discomfort without having to give specifics or any evidence of what scared her. In this white, urban, middle-class habitus (and reinforced in popular media), it is common sense that pit bulls are scary. As we saw earlier, with Jamie and Julie’s insistence that their dogs are not scary, I argue that the type of dog you own says a lot about you to other CreekrIDGE Park residents. So while Adrienne says her neighbor was a nice guy, his freaky dogs serve as a counter-argument. In other words, how can a nice guy have freaky dogs? This juxtaposition parallels research on color-blind racism and dog whistle politics where nonracial language is used to signal and discuss racial matters (Bonilla-Silva 2013; López 2014).

The negative associations attached to owners of “bad dogs” often lead to policing by white neighbors. Sometimes specific dog breeds, such as pit bulls, were the marker white CreekrIDGE Park homeowners used to justify surveillance, whereas other times, certain suspected activities, such as dog fighting or gang activity, were the impetus. Brendan, a newcomer to CreekrIDGE Park, shared a story about a monitored house and pit bulls: “It’s a Hispanic gang, so. . . it’s kind of a bad, bad house. . . . I mean, everybody’s in agreement with this house, I mean that they’ve gotta go. . . . We called in about their dogs and other stuff.” Emma also called the police after she suspected dog fighting down the street and the police “came almost immediately” to the suspected house. Similarly, Seth, a white homeowner, described

¹³ The bill almost immediately died in committee due to public outcry (Leslie 2013).

some bad neighbors he had as follows: “they were raising pit bulls and selling drugs out of their house and generally unruly people who were disrespectful to other people.” He shared that these tenants eventually moved away after involving the police department, landlord, and county commissioner. When I asked Seth how he knew dog fighting and drug deals were happening, he replied, “It’s typically observation.”

Debbie described some of her neighbors as “trash people,” which she said meant “ignorant poverty”; these neighbors bred dogs for fighting among other things that mobilized neighbors to call the city until they also moved away. While it is unclear whether these “trash” neighbors were people of color or “white trash,” the broader surveillance of these owners reinforces the idea of good dog owners who fall within a white, middle-class, urban habitus and those who do not (e.g., poor people, people of color, gang members, criminals). When American discourse links men of color, criminality, and certain dog breeds (Weaver 2013, 2015), one can argue that even if Debbie’s “trash” neighbors were white, their whiteness is tainted due to their affiliation with nonwhiteness via certain dog breeds. By participating in dog fighting and owning bad dogs, these “trash people” are marked as outside the dominant white, urban, middle-class habitus of Creekridge Park—even if they are white. This points to the mutually constitutive nature of race and class. The dominant neighborhood habitus is not just a white one but also a middle-class one. Worth noting is that the only time race is mentioned in association with owners of these breeds is when they are people of color, as Brendan’s “Hispanic gang” example shows.

In this white, urban, middle-class habitus, certain breeds are a signal that residents need to be vigilant of their neighbors and often involve the police and city officials when conflict arises. As Seth explains, the ideal situation involves a neighbor-to-neighbor discussion, but with folks like the “dog raisers,” that is unlikely to be effective, and you therefore involve the police. As I discuss in *Behind the White Picket Fence* (Mayorga-Gallo 2014), when there is a conflict, Creekridge Park residents are more likely to have conversations with neighbors they already know. Because friendship networks in the neighborhood were highly segregated, white neighbors were most likely to know other white neighbors. Therefore, this seemingly nonracial practice of calling the police on people you do not know produces racialized outcomes.

Brendan and Seth are not the only residents who used certain dog breeds to support their characterization of some neighbors as potentially dangerous and as a challenge to their safe neighborhood. For example, Connie, a Black homeowner, explained that she recently found out one of her neighbors was involved in illegal activities: “I do [feel safe in the neighborhood]; I think it’s a pretty safe neighborhood. Like I said, I was shocked about the gun arsenal that guy across from me [had]. My neighbor said that there had seen drug activity. . . . And I knew they had built a fence and they had these really bad dogs, like a pit bull or Doberman or something. . . . I wasn’t trying to go up there and talk, but they didn’t make it inviting.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Although I did not confirm the race of the neighbor, Connie described her street as predominantly white. Connie also mentioned that one of her white male neighbors seemed to have some sort of racial bias toward her after she asked him not to park in front of her house: “‘Cause you ask nicely but then it escalates,” as she put it. It is unclear from her comments if this neighbor is the same person who owned the dogs and gun arsenal that she refers to in the text.

Connie avoided interactions with her neighbors in part because of their “bad” dogs. While white residents were more often the ones to enact these good/bad characterizations, Connie illustrates that subordinate group members can also enact the common sense of the white, urban, middle-class habitus, although the distinct racial history of African Americans arguably also shapes Black resident experiences with dogs (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Hall 1986).

These stories illustrate how dogs helped construct place and imbue CreekrIDGE Park and its residents with meaning. Dogs served as the base for white residents to discuss issues of safety and neighborhood norms, and reflected a white, urban, middle-class habitus. They also facilitated neighborhood boundary construction, both spatial and interpersonal.

Dog Treatment Norms

Tammy’s Campaign Dog treatment norms are perhaps the most effective example of the white, urban, middle-class habitus at work in CreekrIDGE Park. Many white residents had distinct ideas about the appropriate ways to treat pets, particularly dogs, and were active in maintaining these as neighborhood norms. This led to issues of interracial conflict, particularly with Latinx neighbors. The assumptions about appropriate behavior also created a normative sense of surveillance, where they policed dog owners not just in public but in private spaces as well.

Tammy, a white homeowner in her fifties, is an exemplar of how individuals can shape neighborhood norms as well as how one’s habitus creates commonsense understandings that may conflict with those who are in different social positions. Tammy took an active role in shaping her neighbors’ treatment of dogs. She was even identified as a neighborhood leader for her efforts. Matt, a white longtime homeowner, described these efforts during our interview: “Tammy is a leader. . . . And I think she’s hoping that people will treat each other better off the example of her insisting that people treat dogs with humanity.” Most of my interview with Tammy centered on her work related to the treatment of animals. She explained, “I’ve taken in a lot of dogs. And helped a lot of dogs. That’s the main thing that I do.” As Tammy describes the situation with a particular dog, she becomes very upset and starts to cry.

[*sniff*] I’m not sure what country they’re from, but they’re Latino and so there was a language barrier. . . . I started going over there every day and making sure he had water and food and a nice bed for his doghouse. . . . And finally as I was leaving one day, one of the little kids came running out of a car with her mother and said, “Can you help us find a home?” . . . And then that other one, Minnie, a little beagle mix lived up the street with another Latino family. And they’re from Mexico, and someone gave her to them and they just kept her tied up 24/7. And so—and she was being abused. One of the little kids was hitting her. . . . Then I started taking her for a walk twice a day for an hour. . . . And then finally they let me take her. They wouldn’t let her in the house. Then they got another dog, and I got involved with him. [*sigh*] So it’s a different story every time, but basically it’s the same reason.

Tammy later revealed that she found Minnie because “I went in the backyard with binoculars because I couldn’t see the dog from the street.” She explained that she went into the woods behind her house to get a better angle on the dog, and then

the father of the house came home and saw her. “So I lied, and I just said, ‘I’m trying to look at the other dog, see what the deal is.’” Tammy’s comments point to several norms around the treatment of dogs: no tethering, large pen, multiple daily walks, and access to inside one’s home. These changes reflect a particular set of contemporary U.S. beliefs and practices that do not necessarily parallel norms in Latin America or U.S. history—they are not universal, common sense, or best practices for everyone (Ritvo 1987; Schaffer 2009). She also illustrates how ideas about dog treatment are not limited to what one witnesses in public parks but can lead people to police their neighbors’ private lives. In this way, Tammy implies that the potential mistreatment of a pet is more important than her neighbor’s privacy.

While Tammy says she intervenes whenever she sees a neighbor treat a dog in a way of which she disapproves, she used multiple examples that involved her Latinx neighbors. This may mean that Tammy uses racial logic to identify and/or interpret “good” and “bad” behavior in the neighborhood. Tammy’s narrative of intervention and salvation also echoes the “white man’s burden” of decades past, where white men and women justified genocide, slavery, and other atrocities in the name of “saving” people of color from themselves. We can see Tammy’s actions on behalf of these dogs as part of a longer history of white women as arms of oppressive systems of social control. She deems her actions as necessary and morally good due to the flawed humanity of her Latinx neighbors (Ware 2015). Rather than seeing herself as the locus of control, Tammy frames her actions as the inevitable result of her neighbor’s behavior; their inhumanity forced her hand. To be sure, I am not advocating that animal mistreatment is acceptable. What mistreatment means, however, is often dependent on the bodies in action and is shaped by racial logic (Elder et al. 1998). By framing her ideas about dog treatment as culturally specific, we can challenge Tammy’s claim to “doing what needed to be done” and acting on behalf of a universal good.

Given the limited interactions between whites and Latinxs in CreekrIDGE Park¹⁵ and the power Tammy wields as a white homeowner, we see how something as seemingly “good” or neutral as intervening on behalf of a dog replicates interracial social distance and whiteness. This echoes Elder et al.’s (1998) claim about the role of animals in the maintenance of white supremacy. When dealing with an inequitable distribution of power, as in CreekrIDGE Park, we need to ask ourselves, what are the repercussions of Tammy’s good intentions? Is her behavior contributing to the increased marginalization of residents of color? And are the exchanges between Tammy and her neighbors just about dogs or also about white entitlement to dictate neighborhood norms? I argue that Tammy’s good intentions lead to the marginalization of residents of color, particularly Latinxs.

“Sense of Community Ethic.” While Tammy’s example may seem extreme, it is one end of a continuum of behaviors that reinforced the norms of a white, urban, middle-class habitus in CreekrIDGE Park. Although the following examples may not be as explicit in their surveillance of neighbors, the logic that undergirds Tammy’s approach informs other neighborhood interventions and

¹⁵ See Mayorga-Gallo (2014, 2015) for more detail on white–Latinx relations.

attitudes. For example, Alan, a white homeowner in his fifties, mentioned during his interview that he worked for the Coalition to Unchain Dogs, a Durham-based volunteer organization. According to their website, the Coalition to Unchain Dogs was founded in 2006 by volunteers interested in getting anti-tethering legislation passed in Durham. They anticipated resistance to the measure, so they began building free dog fences in 2007 to build support for the ordinance. They also spay and neuter dogs for free.

Like many in CreekrIDGE Park, Alan spoke of untethering dogs as a taken-for-granted positive. He explained that sometimes dog owners contacted the coalition directly, or neighbors would call after seeing a dog tied up, or coalition volunteers noticed a dog tied up as they drove around town. Alan's description of the coalition's work highlights how residents who occupy this particular white, urban, middle-class habitus considered surveilling neighbors and their dogs' acceptable behavior. Thomas and Denise identified the same norms of vigilance during their interview. They explained that the neighborhood association listserv is an effective avenue to elicit information before an intervention. In one example, Thomas explained that neighbors inquired, "Look... there's a house with chained-up dogs. Does anyone know about this? Does anyone know the owners? Can someone who knows them at least speak to them before we take it?"¹⁶ Denise elaborated, "I guess you feel a sort of sense of community ethic. Like that, to me, is somebody who's saying, 'All right, the way we're going to do things here is not going to be about being punitive and spying on our neighbors; it's going to be about talking to our neighbors.'" Thomas and Denise's "sense of community ethic" is an excellent characterization of habitus. Thomas and Denise experience the discussions about tethered dogs on the neighborhood association's listserv as a communal agreement to act in particular ways; within this white, urban, middle-class habitus, these are understood as the *right* ways. White residents can frame surveilling neighbors as good community ethic because of broader norms around policing communities of color. Rather than be the result of overzealous community members, these surveillance practices reflect and reinforce national patterns of structural inequality that overwhelmingly entangle communities of color in social control practices (Alexander 2010).

One way that residents consistently surveilled their neighbors was via dog walking. Terry stated that he and his wife Jamie's frequent walks allow them to "see everybody and we know who people are." Jamie explained that these repeated walks make her and Terry very good neighborhood watch captains "because we're always walking and looking, going by people's houses two or three times a day." This serves as another example of both the normalization of surveillance of neighbors and how dogs help facilitate this process. Luke, a new homeowner, argued that dog walking was connected not only to personal safety but also reduced the risk of crime in the community for everyone. He reasoned that the more people walk

¹⁶ It is unclear from the interview who would take the dog (our conversation moved quickly to another point and I did not ask for clarification), but my understanding is that residents would mobilize (whether to place the dog in a different home or get the owners a fence) if there was concern of mistreatment, including being chained up all day. For an example of what this type of intervention looks like, see the story of CreekrIDGE resident Tammy and her neighbor's dog, Minnie, in the text.

around, the more it will deter “people who might be up to no good.” He also suggested that the more people walk their dogs, the less afraid they become of the neighborhood. He corrected: they “might be a little afraid [*laughs*], but not so afraid that they’re not gonna get out there.” This then leads to a sense of community and “a shared sense of responsibility.”

Deborah, a longtime resident and white homeowner, explained that this kind of surveillance is based on neighborhood watch principles. She argues that when criminals are looking to commit crimes, they are looking for “anonymity” where people do not notice what their neighbors are doing. She also connects this to broken windows policing, where “if you’ve got a house full of dead pickups in the yard and trash and garbage cans on the street that’s part of the whole thing of ‘oh, it’s just whatever goes.’” It is worth noting that the relationship between criminalizing low-level offenses and reducing more serious crime is contested by scholars (Harcourt 2005). Regardless, for some, surveilling neighbors while dog walking was not just common sense but also a positive action. While this may seem innocuous and race-neutral, surveillance is not equally enacted. As we saw in the previous section, suspicion is not a general characterization but one constructed within a particular race, classed, and gendered logic. In this white, urban, middle-class habitus, suspicion is largely aimed at Black and Latinxs, particularly men. We see an excellent example of this in the next section, where I continue my analysis of dog walking by discussing the role of dog walking routes in maintaining racial segregation in the neighborhood.

Dog Walking Routes

Carving Neighborhood Space Figure 1 is a map of the dog routes white Creekridge Park residents said they use. The routes are represented by dashed lines; the larger the dashes, the more popular the route. No Black residents shared their dog routes.¹⁷ It seems that most dog owners have two kinds of routes: short and long. Many of the short routes concentrate around their place of residence. The Central Street loop, which is 0.9 miles long, is the most common for white residents, although not everyone who uses this route lives on the loop. Russ, a white homeowner in his fifties who lives on Central Street, stated, “I just do the walk around the circle, basically. . . two or three times a day, you know, and I see other people walking their dogs.” Emma, a white homeowner in her late twenties who lives on Colony Street, also commented on the popularity of this route, saying she sometimes avoids it because it can be distracting for her dogs and takes too much time as a result.

Many dog owners also specified that they had longer routes that took them to areas where they do not live. These areas, however, tended to be green areas in other neighborhoods. For example, there were a handful of residents

¹⁷ One Black resident whom we will hear from shortly, Angela, did not take her dog on walks. I did not ask the other two Black dog owners, George and Lawrence, if they took their dog on walks. I interviewed them early on before I added the question to my interview guide. They did make it clear that they wanted a house with a backyard so they could let their dog out.

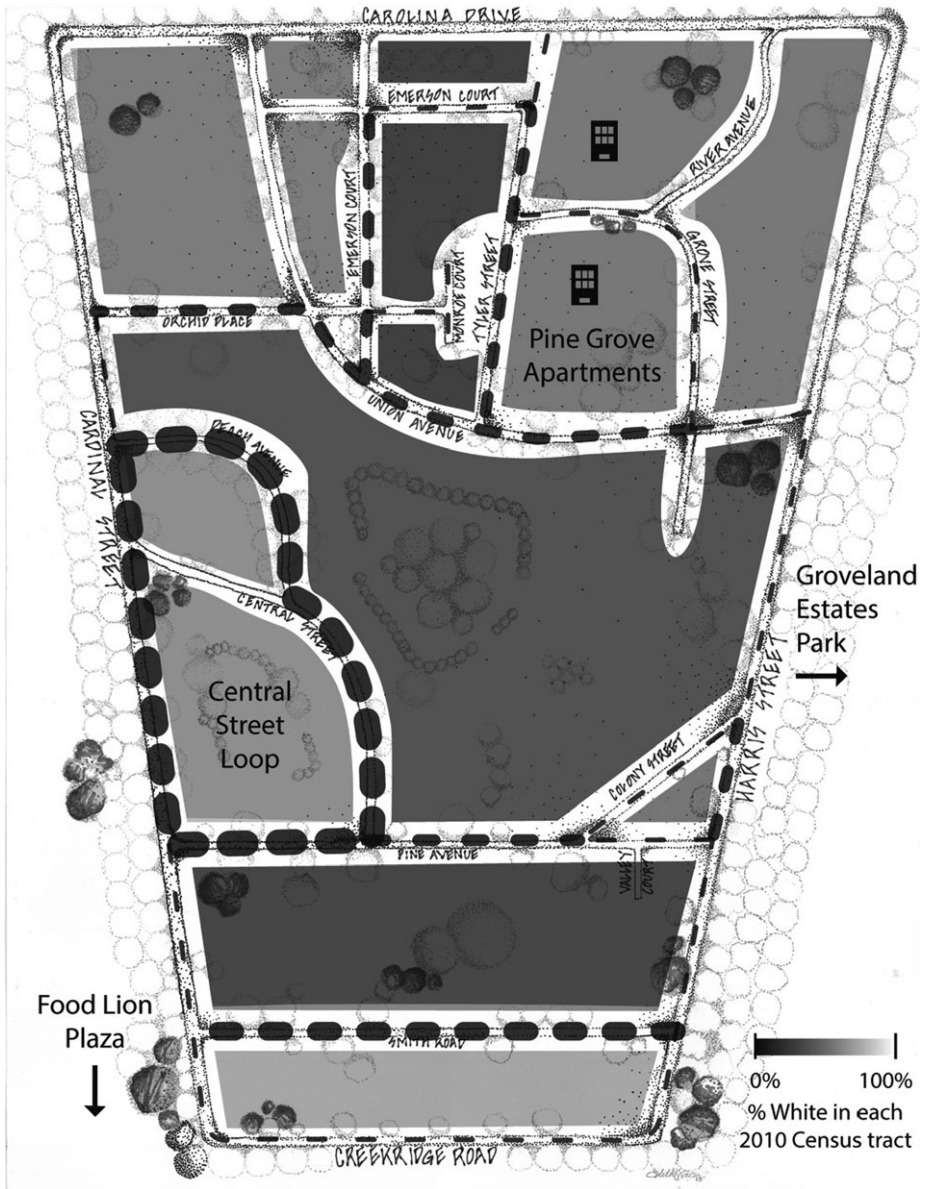


Fig. 1. Dog Route Map, based on interview data.

who mentioned dog walking in Groveland Estates Park. Groveland Estates is an adjacent affluent neighborhood that is predominantly white. Many white residents who lived on the southern and eastern sides of CreekrIDGE Park brought their dogs to the park in that neighborhood. Groveland Estates Park is not an officially sanctioned dog park, but it is where many white residents take their

dogs for a walk and let them off leash to play with other dogs. Letting dogs off leash violates city rules,¹⁸ yet most white residents were met with no ramifications. This is certainly a racial privilege; the murders of unarmed Black people by police officers across the United States illustrate that committing minor infractions, such as selling loose cigarettes and driving with a broken taillight, can lead to death if you are Black. Interestingly, Valerie, a white homeowner who lives in Groveland Estates, says that she used to let her dog off leash until a neighbor complained to the police two years prior and a police officer was stationed at the top of the hill watching dog owners. She explained how upset neighbors got about this “non-cause cause,” “everybody was like ‘you got crime on the eastside;’¹⁹ why is this policeman sitting here waiting to give tickets for their dogs?” This policing no longer seemed to be an issue, however, as multiple Creekridge Park residents still let their dogs off leash at the park. A couple of residents who live on the western side of the neighborhood also mentioned going toward a nearby green area in an adjacent neighborhood. Thomas and Denise said they specifically chose this area for walks so they could let their dogs off leash.

While white dog owners are sometimes accessing a green space not available to them in Creekridge Park when they leave the neighborhood, three residents mentioned going toward these green spaces for their walks even if they did not go to the park. As such, it is not clear why they rarely, if ever, walk around the predominantly nonwhite areas of the neighborhood that are equidistant to the park. Walking from Harris Street to Groveland Estates and back is about two miles; this is the same distance if one walks from Harris through the northern, multiracial part of the neighborhood, and back down Pine Avenue. Similarly, Emma mentions that she has a longer route that takes her through the southern part of the neighborhood, which is predominantly white and has more single-family homes. A route from her house on Colony Street through Union Avenue, which is more nonwhite and home to some apartment buildings, would be the same distance, but she chooses to go south. This indicates that dog routes are not just a question of proximity or convenience but are chosen using other criteria as well.

Shaping Social Interactions When I asked if they had any friends in the neighborhood, many of the white homeowners in Creekridge Park indicated that their friends were people they met while dog walking. For example, Charles stated, “I think about 90% of the people I know in my neighborhood I met walking my dog.” Per Charles’s description, within minutes of walking his dog during his first week in Creekridge Park, he met the neighborhood association president and another neighbor. White renter Denise mentioned that her neighbor’s dog “is like our dog’s best friend,” and her husband, Thomas, chimed in, “We get together so the dogs can play.” They also said that “dog crazy” Tammy, who lives down the

¹⁸ The City of Durham requires that all dogs be leashed while off their owner’s property. There are a few official dog parks where dogs may be off leash, but they are still expected to be “under control (voice or leash) of their owners at all times.”

¹⁹ Old East Durham is a low-income, predominantly Black neighborhood.

street, asked for dog playmates for her dogs over the neighborhood association list-serv. They answered the call and enjoyed themselves, “so we had her over for Christmas dinner.” While some of these dog-based relationships are more acquaintanceships, some are close friendships. For example, Ruth goes on vacations biennially to Maine with Laura and Ron, whom she met while walking her dog in Groveland Estates Park.

Even residents who do not own dogs acknowledge the role that dogs play in facilitating neighborhood interactions, as Wood et al. (2007) found in their study. For example, Beth, a white, fifty-something homeowner who does not own a dog, explained that she has seen dog owners introduce themselves at the neighborhood association’s annual picnic by identifying the person’s dog (e.g., they’ve got the black-and-white greyhound). Lori, a white homeowner, stated that she met many dog walkers while she gardened: “I’m not sure where all of them live. I just know that I see them fairly regularly.” Julie used her interactions on dog walks to characterize the neighborhood as friendly. She recounted, “I’ll walk past [on my dog walk], and they’ll be sitting on their porch having dinner, and they’ll be like, ‘Come on over, we’ve got more than enough food.’” In these examples the repeated exposure to the same people facilitates interactions and relationship building while dog walking. These repeated routes, however, also seem to limit with whom you are likely to connect.

In theory, residents could explore various neighborhood areas while dog walking; however, the majority of my evidence is of the reinforcement of racial segregation within Creekridge Park. Charles used his discussion of dog routes and boundaries to distinguish the areas he does not frequent from the areas he does. For instance, his reported dog route did not take him to multiracial Tyler Street and the streets surrounding the predominantly Black and Latinx Pine Grove Apartment complex; his route centered on Central Street, Peach Avenue, and the southern part of the neighborhood. While the literature argues that dogs help humans connect with strangers (Robins et al. 1991; Wood et al. 2015), here we see that these boundary crossings are not a given when the boundaries are racial. Consequently, even though the neighborhood is racially and economically diverse, interactions seemed to reinforce relationship building between white homeowners. This finding adds specificity to the popular narrative that dogs facilitate interactions among strangers; dogs in Creekridge Park facilitate interactions among white strangers.

One exception to this came from Australian immigrants Thomas and Denise. Thomas described how when he and Denise first moved in, the Latinx residents of a nearby apartment complex stared at him as he passed by, but once he waved at the children, it was a quick change in demeanor. He attributed their initial distance to the “rabid” anti-immigrant sentiment at the time. The kids now chat with them and want to see their dog when they walk by. Thomas’s actions created an opening for his and Denise’s interactions with their Latinx neighbors, and their dog served as a continued point of connection between themselves and the Latinx children. Outside of the hellos, however, they do not have any sort of relationship with the adults, which they attribute to language barriers.

Not all dog owners participate in the dog walking ritual, however. Judy, a white homeowner, said that she does not take her dog on walks anymore because her dog is too old. She did specify, however, that her regular route used to be the Central Street loop. Angela, a Black homeowner in her fifties, is one of the few Black residents I spoke with who owned a dog. She joked during her interview that her small dog's misbehavior impeded her ability to take her dog on a walk. Her experience brings up an important point—not all dogs (or their owners) have the same walking needs or abilities. This echoes Emma's sentiments that she sometimes avoids the Central Street loop because her dogs get too distracted. While Angela, like Beth, acknowledged that it was nice seeing her neighbors as they walked their dogs in front of her house, it was not something she participated in or saw as necessary for her own small dog. While dog walking does facilitate social contact, different rates of dog ownership and participation in dog walking generally make it a white social process in Creekridge Park, not a cross-racial one.

Moreover, dog-based neighborhood interactions are not universally positive experiences for residents. Days before our interview in his home, the workers of Stella's Café, a neighborhood gourmet café, accused Jerry, a Black homeowner in his sixties, of panhandling from customers seated in the restaurant's outdoor area.²⁰ While he was at Stella's, Jerry spoke with several customers who were outside the café with their dogs. Jerry's assessment of the situation was that because he is a Black disabled vet who was wearing his old army uniform, the staff at Stella's assumed he was a panhandler and was asking customers for money. Harris et al. (2005) identify being treated with suspicion as a key element of consumer racial profiling, or "shopping while Black." Jerry explained, "To me, I think they're prejudiced toward Black people [at Stella's]. I see Black people there. But if you don't fit in that whatever they call a good Black person, then you got a problem." He goes on to describe the scene at Stella's that day. The people on the patio had dogs similar to ones he used to own, so he approached them to chat about the dogs. As he talks with the dog owners, the staff at Stella's comes out and asks him to leave and accuses him of asking the dog owners for money. The dog owners correct the staff saying he is not asking for money, but Jerry is still forced to leave.

As Jerry's experience highlights, the interactions that dogs facilitate in this neighborhood do not occur in a vacuum, and ideas about who belongs are often imbued with racial and class-based logic. As an enactment of social control, it was successful: Jerry will never go to Stella's again. While the dogs at Stella's created an opening for cross-race interactions between Jerry and the other customers, the staff impeded this connection, classifying Jerry as outside the bounds of the white, urban, middle-class habitus of this neighborhood space.

²⁰ I held several interviews with white residents at Stella's. It is a neighborhood space white residents frequently cite as a favorite neighborhood spot. Their prices (e.g., \$8.50 for an a la carte sandwich in 2010) also served to attract a specifically middle-class clientele.

CONCLUSION

Race is central to social life in the United States, and as such, the role of dogs in facilitating social interactions between CreekrIDGE Park residents was subject to racialized logic. In this article I showcase how dogs were the base on which discussions of neighborhood norms took place in CreekrIDGE Park. They also served as the basis for replicating interracial social distance and maintaining a system of whiteness. For example, while dogs did facilitate positive social contact among white residents, dog-based interactions between whites and Black and Latinx residents were more likely to be negative. This study illustrates that future research on dog-human-stranger relations in the United States must consider race to fully understand how these social interactions unfold. It also showcases the benefits of including a biocentric perspective for scholars of race and ethnicity and urban studies.

As this study focuses on one neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina, it is not meant to be representative of all U.S. neighborhoods. The focus of this article is illustrating *how* social processes unfold in a multiracial neighborhood and one way high interracial social distance is replicated in CreekrIDGE Park. How prevalent these processes are across U.S. neighborhoods is outside the scope of this study. The racially skewed rate of dog ownership of the CreekrIDGE Park residents I interviewed also certainly influenced the data to which I had access. If more interviewees of color owned dogs, would interracial dog-based social interactions look different? I cannot say firmly one way or the other. National dog ownership data, however, indicate that whites are more likely to own dogs than nonwhites (Burns 2013). Also, my findings point to the commonsense ideas whites use to interpret nonwhite dog ownership. These ideas are not dependent on a certain percentage of nonwhite dog owners but a racial logic that devalues and stigmatizes dog owners of color as deficient and dangerous.

My findings point to the importance of including race in studies of dog-human interactions and vice versa. Racial inequality and dogs are two important facets of contemporary urban living. If narratives about the benefits of dog ownership dominate the field of animal studies and fail to include a discussion of relevant racial logics that produce inequitable experiences, then dogs can continue to serve as a base for the maintenance of systemic whiteness. Last, while some studies of multiracial urban spaces point to the civility of these shared spaces (Anderson 2011), my work in CreekrIDGE Park highlights how power must be at the center of our analyses of these spaces. Otherwise, we risk mischaracterizing sharing space as equity.

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