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(Just) a walk with the dog? Animal geographies and negotiating walking spaces

In this paper we present findings from interviews conducted with people who walk with dogs. Drawing on new walking studies and animal geographies as our theoretical framework, we adopt the view that walking is more than *just* walking; it is often a highly sensual and complex activity. We argue that walking *with* dogs represents a potentially important cultural space for making sense of human-animal relations. We show how the personalities of both dog and walker can shape not only walking practices, but also the human-animal bond. We contend that the walk is a significant arena where relations of power between animal and human are consciously mediated. We also provide evidence which indicates the contested nature of walking practices and spaces. We conclude that the dog walk is a useful practice through which to examine human-animal relations and thus to contribute to the field of animal geographies.

Keywords: Dogs, Animal geographies, human-animal relations, pets, new walking studies

Introduction

It can be argued that the United Kingdom (UK) is an animal friendly nation as, according to the Pet Population report, 40% of UK households are home to a domestic animal (Pet Food Manufacturers Association, 2016). Further, there are 8.5 million dogs in UK homes and these animals feature strongly in the everyday lives of these residents. In addition to having a high number of dog 'owners',¹ the UK is also home to a large population of walkers. According to the Ramblers (2010), 22% of the English population walk recreationally (that is, for fun) for at least 30 minutes over a four week period. Elsewhere in the UK, 30% of adults in Scotland and almost a third of adults in Wales (31.6%) walk recreationally at least 2 miles over a four week period. Throughout the UK, these figures rise to over 80% if we account for people walking as a form of transport, commuting to work for example (Department for Transport, 2013).

The statistics on dog walking in the UK are also illuminating. According to a study of 3,000 dog owners by Esure Pet Insurance (2011), dog owners walk 23,739 miles during an average dog's lifetime of 12.8 years. Accordingly, the average person walks with their dog for eight hours and 54 minutes a week, covering 36 miles. A separate study of 5,000 people, reported in the UK press, found that dog owners gain more exercise from walking their dogs than an average gym goer does (The Telegraph, 2009). In spite of this evidence we actually know very little about how walking and the spaces in which we walk feature in our relationships with dogs. This paper will go some way towards addressing this issue by examining how the relationships between humans and dogs develop over time through the routine practice of walking in public spaces.

There is a belief within the literature on animal geographies that we need to go beyond regarding animals as mere signifiers of human endeavour and meaning to acknowledge the complex ways in which animals shape individual and collective human identities (Buller, 2014). It is no longer sufficient to simply incorporate, represent and ultimately define animals as 'other' presences and bearers of meaning within humans' cultural spacings and placings (Buller, 2014). Instead, animals should become, in Whatmore's (2006) phrase, 'agent provocateurs' for thinking by and about ourselves (cited in Buller, 2014, p.4). To date, however, little attention has been given to how the

¹ Use of the term 'owner' is problematic because it assumes a one-way power relation in which the human is dominant and the animal is viewed as a possession. We acknowledge that domestic dogs are bred and sold on a regular basis, but caution the use of the term 'owner' out of respect for the animal's agency (see also Dashper, 2014).

social relations of walking 'crosscut the divide between humans and animals, and between the pacing of two feet and of four' (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p.12). For Ingold and Vergunst, walking with an animal further illuminates human-animal relations, animal agency and action. A good example of this is with regard to the tightness of a dog's lead/leash. They argue that a slack lead indicates that human and animal are walking in harmony, tuning their steps to each other. In contrast, a tight lead is a sign of conflicting agencies; that is, the human and animal possess different views of how the walk should be conducted. Thus, 'the balance of power ... can swing like a seesaw as first the human and then the animal gains the upper hand. Each alternatively "walks" the other' (p.12). Dogs, then, are both agents and companions in the walk, not objects to be moved. In this sense, humans and animals are united in a shared ontology (Gooch, 2008). In this paper we present testimonies from humans about how *they* negotiate the walking experience with their companion animals. As this experience is not straightforward, the walk becomes a significant arena where relations of power between animal and human are consciously mediated.

This paper will therefore argue that, far from being a mundane activity, walking is highly sensual and potentially empowering, but also heavily contested and negotiated. In line with thinking in the animal geographies field (Johnston, 2008; Buller, 2014; Moran, 2015), we contend that when undertaken with a dog, the ways in which we would ordinarily conceptualise 'the walk' and/or the practice of 'walking' must be reconsidered on the basis that both these things have been constructed in human terms. In other words, literature has tended to focus on the ways in which *humans* walk, why *humans* walk and how *humans* understand the walk. To date there has been limited research examining the relationships between humans and dogs while they walk together (see also, Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Cudworth, 2011). Thus, throughout this paper we present and consider examples of human attempts to understand the relationship between themselves and their dog(s). We explore how these efforts show a commitment to 'listen to' dogs, thereby allowing them some degree of agency and action.

We begin by providing an overview of the new walking studies and animal geographies literatures which underpin this paper. This is followed by a discussion of our research methodology. We then present and discuss our findings before offering some conclusions and recommendations for future research.

New walking studies

For many in the western world, walking is mundane, taken-for granted and ostensibly aimless (Horton, Christiensen, Kraftl & Hadfield-Hill, 2014). It might be considered aimless in the sense of walking purely for walking sake – that is, with no clear end purpose or destination in mind. Walking is often thought of in instrumental terms, as a means of travelling from A to B. What happens between A and B, however, is often neglected (Horton et al., 2014). For Horton et al., much of the literature in this area is 'predicated upon rather static, simplistic notions of space, and of journeying from place-to-place' which fails to account for the embodied nature of everyday mobilities (p.96). For example, a range of studies have focused on walking principally as a form of exercise and as a means of facilitating physical activity amongst inactive populations (in relation to dog walking, see Christian et al., 2013; Degeling & Rock, 2013; Johnson, Beck & McCune, 2011; Reeves, Rafferty, Miller & Lyon-Callo, 2011) or for its mental health benefits (Robertson, Robertson, Jepson & Maxwell, 2012; Doughty, 2013). However, there 'has tended to be something of a silence about how such identities are constituted and intersect in practice ... in the course of everyday mobilities' (Horton et al., 2014, p.96-7). For Horton et al., therefore, much of the current literature on walking is limited because it neglects walking as 'practice' – that is, it fails to attend to what happens during the walk and why the walk matters.

This paper adopts the view that walking is more than *just* walking; it is often a highly sensual and complex activity where, '[d]ifferent encounters with objects and materiality, peculiar sensations and ineffable impressions may be experienced' (Edensor, 2008, p.123). We recognise that whilst walking is necessarily a mode of transport, it is far more than movement alone. Ingold and Vergunst (2008), for example, argue that walking is a quintessential feature of human forms of life; a mechanism for thinking and feeling and a means for articulating cultural forms and norms.

We situate this paper broadly within the discourse of 'new walking studies' (Lorimer, 2011). According to Lorimer, academic interest in walking is burgeoning, though he warns that much of the current literature is impersonal and unreflexive. The core argument in new walking studies is the need for a more critical appreciation of the various forms and practices of walking; that is, understanding the *walk* – as an event; the *walker* – as an embodied subject; and *walking* - as an embodied act. Lorimer's conceptualisation of new walking studies revolves around four assumptions. Firstly, walks ought to be understood as the product of place; secondly, walking represents an ordinary feature of everyday life; thirdly, walkers are embodied subjects; and finally, walkers are wilful and artful. According to Lorimer (2011) then, while for some people walking is part of the quotidian; something done for fun, enjoyment or leisure, for others, walking may be much more purposeful and political. For example, used as a means of establishing and demarcating social, cultural, political and economic boundaries.

Many of the foundations for Lorimer's recommendations were initially put forth by Edensor (2000, 2008). Edensor is critical of the tendency to treat walking as an activity through which the world is merely observed and represented. He argues that such depictions present a disembodied view of the sensual experiences of walking. Like many other everyday physical enactments, Edensor (2008) claims that walking is often considered 'an unreflexive and habitual practice' (p.82). By viewing walking as an embodied activity, he argues, we can open it up to critical speculation which offers a diversity of 'distinct experiences which defamiliarise the encounter between feet and world' (p.123). Indeed, according to Legat (2008), we can understand the world by walking in/on/through it and we leave impressions for others to follow in, and learn from, as we walk.

Legat's view romanticises walking as an activity that is somehow transformational for both people and places. Such a view reflects some criticisms of new walking studies emerging from the literature. Horton et al. (2014) for instance argue that new walking studies is, on the whole, preoccupied with 'wilful, artful, activist, clever and self-evidently meaningful and remarkable forms of walking' (p.98). Middleton (2010) argues similarly that new walking studies leaves very little room for 'what could be considered the less remarkable, unspectacular and unreported everyday experiences associated with walking' (p.576). However, Waitt, Gill and Head (2008) suggest that routine walking can be seen as a performative approach to relations with nature and that different 'styles' of walking can create 'possibilities of making dis/connections with human and non-human worlds that sustain a personal sense of order' (p.44). Further, as Wylie (2005) demonstrates in his account of a day walking a coastal path, the act of walking is not a coherent practice. As he writes, 'through a walking narrative [the] subject may be disassembled and differently cohered and scattered', exposing a complex and unique story of landscape and self (p.237). As we attempt to articulate here, walking with a dog is significant for understanding and revealing how human relations with animals, and conversely, animals with humans, are shaped in part by the spaces we occupy and share.

It is important to stress that walking may also be highly constrained. This is literally the case for those with physical disabilities or visual impairments for example (Imrie, 2000; Whitmarsh, 2005). But notions of constraint must extend beyond the physical to account for figurative and symbolic forms of in/exclusion. The literature on walking geographies tends to focus on how people engage with

urban and rural spaces, and it suggests that our experiences of walking differ markedly in each environment. In the context of urban settings, it has been noted that our bodies and movements are restricted by, amongst other things, surveillance, policing, CCTV and aesthetic monitoring (Edensor, 2008). For Edensor, urban walkers are restricted by what he calls 'performative conventions': 'preferred techniques, styles of comportment and bearing, and dispositions to the surroundings' (Edensor, 2008, p.125). He argues further that adherence to such conventions limits our capacity to express ourselves and experience the material world whilst we walk. The result, according to Sennett (1994), is that walking has become sterile, 'a mere function of movement' (cited in Edensor, 2008, p.131). Sennett laments how, throughout modernity, as the requisites of speed and rationality have begun to predominate urban life, walkers have become desensitised to the sights, smells and aesthetics of their environments. Indeed, the contemporary urban walker is more likely to be found chatting, texting or updating social media profiles on their smart phone than s/he is to be found exploring the land, observing wildlife or interacting with other passers-by.

In addition, walkers are literally excluded from certain spaces. Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2010) note how UK legislation, known as the 'Right to Roam', restricts recreational and leisure access to many rural spaces, for example, including for activities such as walking. A sense of exclusion is often exaggerated for people accompanied by animals, as many public spaces for example shops, restaurants, parks and public fields outright exclude dogs (excluding assistance dogs) and other companion animals. To illustrate, a new report by The Kennel Club (2016), highlights that responsible 'owners' could be penalised by what are referred to as 'increasingly tough restrictions on dogs'. The report notes that dogs are banned from over 2,200 public spaces in England and Wales and must be kept on leads at all times in 1,100 public spaces. Spaces used by dog walkers in the UK are generally shared with other people, although there has been an emergence of 'safe walks' where land is enclosed. As we argue in this paper, sharing the spaces in which we walk can present a number of challenges to dog walkers, and an examination of these challenges can further our understanding of human and animal geographies.

Animal geographies and companion animals

Human beings are not the only inhabitant of the urban industrial landscape. The city teems with non-human forms of animal life; from dogs, cats, foxes and rodents to birds, insects and spiders. Apart from domestic animals with which urban dwellers knowingly share their homes, these non-humans do not usually significantly impact our everyday lives (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Moran, 2015). According to Dashper (2016, p.1), 'Whether as companions, working partners, farmed species, tourism attractions, or participants in sporting competitions, animals play important roles in human social relations'.

The academic literature on animal geographies has grown apace over the last two decades (see Buller, 2014, 2015, 2016). This sub-field within human geography explores interspecies interactions, and recognises that human-animal relationships cannot be understood simply through ideas of dominance and submission. One of the principal tasks facing animal geographies is to better understand the social world of humans and animals as they exist side by side, co-producing spaces (Hens, 2009). The discipline of geography can make an important contribution to this task, as the spaces and places in which these relations take place are central to an understanding of the relations themselves (Buller, 2014; Philo & Wilbert, 2000; Wolch, 2002). Buller (2014) contends that animal geographies need to account for three problematics. First, to acknowledge the agency of animals both on our cohabited worlds and in resistance to them; second, decentralise the 'human' from human geography as a way of enabling a different view of the animal itself; and finally, to create a more

radical politics that might accommodate all of this complexity. It is not our intention to answer each of these callings. Rather, this paper most explicitly addresses point one and responds specifically to the contention that,

Taking the nonhuman seriously needs to be more than a matter of recognition of the ways in which animals affect the lives of human beings ... it requires the very cry of the nonhuman to be heard. (Johnson, 2008, p.636)

Most scholars involved in animal geographies argue that animals are not just resources for human consumption and pleasure. Rather, as the lives of human and animal interact and intersect, animals become firmly embedded within broader societal orderings (Philo, 1995). For Brooks (2006), it is important that scholars acknowledge how these discursive orderings also have spatial consequences. She writes:

Animals are enmeshed in complex power relations with human communities and are deeply affected by social practices linked to ideas about particular animals and where they ought (or ought not) to be. Subjected to various inclusions of exclusions ... animals are discursively constructed as either “in place” or “out of place” in *particular spaces*. (p.12, emphasis in original).

As we will demonstrate in this paper, animals are caught up in human orderings in a number of ways. This is especially the case when animals accompany humans into shared spaces where relations extend beyond human and animal to consider more explicitly, our relationships with the land. Therefore, animals are critical to the making of places and landscapes.

Some animals have featured more than others in these discussions. Dogs in particular have featured prominently within this literature, and also increasingly in debates surrounding the animal as a social individual (Burton & Collins, 2015). For Philo (1995), dogs and cats have taken on privileged positions in many human societies. They are now accepted as valuable members of the civilised world and legitimately positioned within domestic spaces of co-existence with humans. Moreover, many are treated with luxury in the process. To illustrate, there is now a relatively comprehensive literature documenting domestic dogs and their role(s) in human households and families (Fox, 2006; Power, 2008, 2012; Tipper, 2011). There are however, relatively few studies that have considered dogs and the experience of walking with dogs.

In contemporary western societies, dogs are most commonly associated with human life as domestic companion animals (Power, 2008, 2012; Fox, 2006). Whilst many breeds of dog continue to have high utilitarian value as ‘working’ animals, the vast majority are never utilised in this capacity. In most cases, they become pets; viewed as a(nother) member of human families. Burton and Collins (2015) suggest that emerging work on ‘pet geographies’ has been notable in its efforts to challenge human-nonhuman binaries through the exploration of notions such as family, species and otherness.

In this paper we adopt the position that dogs, like other animals, are sentient beings that think, feel and have their own personalities (Sanders, 1990, 1993; Bekoff, 2003; Shapiro, 2006). This has wider implications for conceptualising relationships within the context of human-animal geographies, which are well articulated by Dashper (2016). Dashper argues that because animals have been domesticated, humans ‘have direct duties to animals in their care ... on the basis of the animal’s inherent worth, as well as the animal’s worth in relation to human activities’ including walking (p.3). As Anderson (1997) suggests, the very processes of domestication meant bringing animals into the human frame. But she stresses that bringing animals ‘in’ need not necessarily be based on mastery and dominance. Similarly, Haraway (2008) asserts that the domestication of dogs is more about

'entanglements of becoming together' (p.208). Haraway contends that the human-dog relationship is an ambivalent one; where the very concepts of 'human' and 'animal' are iterative and performative. She goes further, suggesting that we need to find new nouns and pronouns for describing humans and animals as neither is sufficient in our more than human world (Haraway, 2003). Within this context, the walk is not just experienced by the human, but is dependent on and interactive with animals.

Building on this existing research, the study presented here examined how we share spaces with our animal counterparts and how we negotiate the social settings and spaces of the walk. The walk is considered to be a partnership, involving co-knowing (Haraway, 2008) and 'anticipatory knowledge' (Brown & Dilley, 2012, p.43), all of which is negotiated (and to a degree, managed) by human walkers. Brooks (2006, p.12) identifies that, '[t]he animal experience – not unlike that of marginalised groups of human beings – is one of having geographies imposed upon them'. In a similar vein, Fox (2006) argues that the pet occupies the liminal spaces between 'human' and 'animal'; considered by their 'owners' to be 'capable of rational thought and emotion, yet also treated as objects or possessions to be discarded if they do not conform to human expectations and values' (p.526).

Such liminality, according to Buller (2014), places the notion of the animal as being somehow 'out of place' or 'improper' in the context of human spaces; 'a transgressive being that, in its occupation of "in-between" spaces ... causes conflict with human users, human intensions and human categorizations' (p.4). Haraway (2003, 2008) has been influential here in thinking through how we 'become with' non-humans. She states, 'in relationship, dogs and humans construct "rights" in each other ... Possession – property – is about reciprocity and rights of access. If I have a dog, my dog has a human; what this means is concretely at stake' (2003, p. 53). She considers how both human and animal are shaped by experiences of cohabitation; negotiating everyday behaviours as each becomes accustomed to the other. Notions of cohabitations are therefore, inevitably complex. In this paper we argue that the walk provides a vital social milieu for negotiating such complexity.

Method

In this paper we draw upon in-depth semi-structured interviews with people in northern England who walk with dogs. The study location was selected purely out of convenience, reflecting where the authors live and walk with their own dogs. We are both unquestionably 'insiders' within this environment and our position in this regard facilitated data collection (Fletcher, 2014). Respondents were recruited purposively via the authors' personal walking networks. Both authors and our dogs are 'known' by the dog walking communities within our respective localities. This meant that identifying and recruiting respondents was relatively straightforward. The research took place in the spring and summer of 2014 and involved ten interviews, totalling 12 respondents. The respondents were aged between 28 and 66 years and the majority were female (one male was interviewed alone, plus another as part of a couple). For the sake of anonymity, all respondents and their dogs have been given pseudonyms.

Interviews took place at respondents' homes, places of work and cafes, lasting between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. Interviews were guided by a template of core questions which had been devised by both authors. As both authors walk their dogs, we were already participating in the social world of our research and understood many of the cultural practices and language that pervade this activity. We were, therefore, well placed to conduct this research. Interview themes addressed our theoretical framework which, as indicated in the previous section, broadly related to walking,

walking spaces, and animal geographies. The new walking studies literature prompted us to ask respondents to reflect on what their walking meant, how it featured in their lives and how it is experienced, whilst also considering the sociality, interactivity and embodied nature of walking. In line with other work on animal geographies, we view dogs as sentient beings that think, feel and have their own personalities, and understand our relationships with dogs to be co-constructed. Reflecting this approach, respondents were asked to broadly discuss their dog's personality, what their dog(s) meant to them and how their relationships with their dog(s) had developed and been negotiated.

For the majority of interviews, respondents' dog(s) were also present. We did not consciously ask respondents to be accompanied by their dogs, but we did implicitly encourage this by suggesting 'dog friendly' spaces to conduct interviews in. In many cases, having dogs present during the interviews acted as a catalyst for story-telling. On recounting stories where their dogs had been naughty or disobedient for example, respondents would frequently address their dogs directly with some utterance of disapproval. Moreover, both authors were frequently described by respondents as 'dog people' and we found that making a fuss of respondents' dogs facilitated interaction; easing situations where ordinarily, respondents may have been reticent about sitting down in an interview setting.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. All data underwent inductive analysis and manual thematic 'coding'. As qualitative research and data analysis are subjective processes, each interview was coded by both authors. We read each transcript, highlighting pertinent text and adding reflective notes on how the data linked to the theoretical framework. Coding was conducted in Google Docs so that each author could view the same document simultaneously, thereby overcoming the geographical and sometimes, theoretical 'distance' between us. We then met to discuss the initial analysis and combine our insights. Effort was made to identify salient themes shared by the authors as initial codes were accepted, edited or eliminated to determine the key themes. This coding process revealed two distinct analytical themes, and we turn to discuss these now.

Walking *for* their dogs

In this section we demonstrate how the walk, including its timing, length and place, was often determined by the respondents' interpretation of what their dog preferred. We also discuss how respondents endeavoured to 'listen to' their dogs. This contention illuminates a number of debates within animal geographies related to the notions of negotiation and co-knowing.

It was common for respondents to speak of the walk as something they did for their dog. Each respondent believed that dogs possess their own unique personality, likes and dislikes. Indeed, in most cases, characteristics of the walk were determined by their dog's personality and what they, as humans, thought the dogs liked and disliked the most. We will discuss this in more detail shortly. But it was common for respondents to talk about walking as something they did *for* their dogs. As is the case with other studies into interspecies relationships, the ideas of caregiving and responsibility were frequently articulated. The comments of most respondents reflected the human tendency to view animals as requiring human protection (Carter & Charles, 2013; Dashper, 2016, 2017) by speaking of their responsibilities to keep their dog(s) safe and healthy. Harriet, who is the human companion of Zak (a whippet, Jack Russell cross), said:

It's responsible to walk him. He spends time outside in the garden. But he enjoys a walk; he needs a walk. I think walking is good for a dog's health and wellbeing, whether physical

or psychological ... I read that twice a day is recommended. So that's why he goes twice a day.

Most respondents spoke about walking being good for their dog's health and wellbeing. Walking patterns varied significantly between individuals, but there was consensus that around thirty minutes, twice a day was acceptable.

Jane made the distinction between a dog's 'need' to walk and his/her 'right' to walk. She qualified this by referring to her dog, Copper (lurcher), as a rescue dog. Jane believed that, as Copper's early life was subject to human neglect, it was now her human family's responsibility to ensure his life with them was filled with love and enjoyment:

It's [the walk] almost like ... dog rights. It's dog rights ... he needs that. And his food, and for us to love him. And as a rescue dog it's important that he has that.

The data do, to some extent, reinforce the findings of numerous other studies which highlight a strong relationship between dogs, human obligation and the walk (Christian et al., 2013; Westgarth et al., 2014). However, unlike these studies, the notion of obligation was far more implicit within respondent testimonies in this research. In most cases, the human sense of obligation was actually overshadowed by their own *want* to walk. This is significant because the majority of literature frames dog walking as something that *must* be done - a chore - rather than something that human agents enjoy doing. Naturally, we should not overstate the significance of this, as it remains the case that dogs normally rely on humans to initiate the walk. Unlike cats, which, in many cases are able to move in and out as they please (e.g. via a 'cat-flap'), dogs are largely confined to the home, until the walk is instigated by the human (or maybe provoked by the dog 'asking' to go out).

Respondents perceived their dogs to have subjective experiences that were linked to their dog's emotions (Sanders, 1993). This was evident in the way their *want* to walk was generally framed around a desire to see their dogs having fun. In this sense the walk was seen as an invaluable opportunity for dogs to 'be dogs'. There was widespread belief that dogs are happiest when out in the open, and it is here that they are able to best demonstrate their 'dog-ness'. This was important because, despite the respondents acknowledging that their dogs had been domesticated, they also took pleasure from seeing them behave 'like dogs'. Jane for example, spoke with real emotion about watching Copper run:

One of the biggest joys for us is when one of us stands at one part of the field and the other, and he just runs. And we've managed to time him. He does 30 miles an hour. And he looks like a cheetah, he looks like a wild animal. And it just makes your heart, I mean, I feel a physical change in my body when I watch him run, which has never been created by anything else, really.

Andrea also described choosing walking routes where her dog, Flora (English setter), could do the things that come 'instinctively'. She referred to the Yorkshire Moors as Flora's 'favourite' and her 'stomping ground':

We usually take her up onto the Moors. That's her favourite. That's like her stomping ground because there are pheasants and partridges. We just let her go. Flora's instinct is to chase birds and pheasants. And I wouldn't have her any other way - because that is what she's bred to do.

A discussion about how different breeds of dog were expected to behave in certain ways due to how they had been bred is outside the scope of this paper, but it is nevertheless important to reflect

on how respondents interpreted and normalised certain behaviours. Ray, for example, loved to see Gilly (lurcher) running and exploring. However, a tension existed for him because he was also aware that lurchers are renowned for poaching and hunting:

We were worried about small breeds and, with her being a lurcher, she does run after rabbits a lot and kill rabbits. She is a good “rabbiter”. We were more worried about small dogs but she is great. Thankfully, she can tell the difference between a rabbit and a dog!
(laughs)

Ray demonstrates an awareness of Gilly’s ‘dog-ness’ and how he felt this must be accounted for when planning their walk. Ray generally kept Gilly on a lead because he worried about her attacking and killing other small animals. Thus, Gilly’s ability to run free was often curtailed by her ‘other’ instincts and Ray’s interpretation of these.

These examples bring into focus two fundamental ideas. Firstly, the importance of ‘anticipatory knowledge’ - of how one’s companion animal may behave (Brown & Dilley, 2012); and secondly, the tension between human authority and animal submission. In Ray’s case, whilst he may be limiting Gilly’s movements, he rationalises this on the basis of ensuring that other animals are kept safe. While his intention was undeniably good, it does raise a number of questions about the ethics of domesticating animals to suit human needs, which we are unable to investigate fully in this paper (see Power, 2008, 2012; Wolch, 2002; Anderson, 1997 for further discussion).

The ‘type’ of walk was central to how the respondents attempted to understand what their dogs enjoyed most. Nadia is the human companion of Penny (labrador, border collie cross) and Fern (labrador) and also owns a dog walking business. Nadia believed that a routine walk ‘around the block’ would become boring for Penny and Fern, and so she preferred to take walks that enabled them to explore independently off their leads:

If you look at the photos I take of them whilst they’re out ... leaping over things, exploring, smelling. The other day Fern went kamikaze crawling under a little bridge, and I was wondering, “what the heck is she doing under there?” and she came out with a manky little tennis ball that looked as if it’d been there for years. Just little things like that, when you see them exploring and leaping about ... it’s got to be more fun than just around the block!

Nadia stressed the importance of fun throughout her interview. She described how she liked to take Penny and Fern on days out so they could experience new places. The notion of fun was shared by other respondents too. Andrea described how her husband encourages her to give Flora more freedom to do her ‘own thing’ by allowing her to explore local fields. Andrea was conflicted because as a puppy, Flora had a habit of running away, sometimes for days at a time. Andrea’s fear of this reoccurring meant that Flora was largely restricted to lead walking. While Andrea justified this approach as an attempt to keep Flora safe, she also acknowledged Flora’s need for ‘her’ time to do ‘doggy things’:

She’s been stuck inside on her own all day. She needs some of “her” time doesn’t she? That’s what [husband] always says. If we go on a walk together and I can’t see her and I’m whistling her, [husband] will say, “leave her alone, this is her time”. I’ll be freaking out and he’s just like, “leave her, she’ll come back when she’s ready, she’s having some of her time, rummaging around”.

In each of these testimonies respondents made reference to their dog's individual character and also demonstrated a commitment to 'listen to' their animal companions. This process of listening involved human actors thinking carefully about their own embodied position in relation to the embodied position of the animal (see Dashper, 2016, 2017). As Andrea's comments above suggest, the imperative for dogs to be exercised and have fun may sometimes be in conflict with the preferences of their human companion(s). However, rather than human preferences automatically being met, we can see that our respondents endeavoured to make space for and anticipate their animal's agency, while also demonstrating a commitment to please their animal companions. In so doing there was an acknowledgement of the agency of the animal, and an appreciation of the 'bestly' nature of dogs (Philo and Wilbert, 2000).

The tendency to humanise domestic dogs by speaking on their behalf is common throughout the literature on companion animals (Arluke & Sanders, 1996; Carter & Charles, 2013; Fox, 2006; Peggs, 2012). In Dashper's (2016) analysis of horses, she argues that whilst animals are able to demonstrate some agency by, for example, *choosing* to interact with or ignore humans, their choices are 'bound by the human-centric context in which these interactions take place' (p.4). This was evident in our research in terms of how humans judged what *they* thought their dog might/might not want and/or enjoy. Human interpretation of animal 'instincts' and behaviours constitute one part of the broader assembly of animal representations and influences; begging the question over what forms of knowledge are acceptable to project onto nonhuman beings. For Burton and Collins (2015) animals may be diminished symbolically by the imposition of such roles and practices. While we remain mindful of such considerations one of our primary aims in this paper is to demonstrate how humans attempt to 'listen to' their animals which necessarily involves humans imposing their own interpretations and dispositions onto animals and their (in)actions. We will return to this in the discussion. We now move to consider how the walk is negotiated. We pay particular attention to walking spaces and the relationships between the humans and animals who share these spaces.

Dog walkers, space and negotiation

This section examines the experiences of humans in negotiating walking experiences that are shared with dogs. In their study of dog walking behaviours Laurier, Maze and Ludin (2008, p.22) conclude that, 'It is obvious that dogs are good walking companions' but we would directly contest that an ability to be a 'good' companion should not be taken for granted. In the UK there is not the same tradition of 'dog parks' as seen in the US or Australia for example. Therefore, walking spaces are shared with other users (such as families, horse riders, cyclists, rambblers and 'wild' animals), not to mention other encounters with dog walkers which can be unpredictable and may require negotiation.

The majority of the literature on dog walking generally endorses the activity's sociality, suggesting that walking with a dog can help to expand a person's social networks (Graham and Glover, 2014). This is especially the case amongst the elderly and people with disabilities (Westgarth et al., 2014). Robins et al. (1991) have suggested that dogs can facilitate 'contact, confidence, conversation, and confederation among previously unacquainted persons who might have otherwise not spoke' (cited in Graham & Glover, 2014, p.219). In contrast to these studies, the evidence from this research is less conclusive.

Some respondents did emphasise how their dogs could act as a conversation starter, but this only occurred with other dog walkers. For example, the case of Hannah:

I wouldn't stop and talk to a stranger if they didn't have a dog. It is just a friendly area. Most people who go out walking and rambling like to stop and chat. If you have a dog it helps sometimes. It is an opening. It is an introduction.

Hannah also distinguished the 'regular' walkers (with whom she was happy to engage in conversation) from the 'Saturday morning dog walkers' (who she only saw at weekends). There was a strong demarcation on Hannah's walks between those she perceived to be 'real' dog people and the 'others'. She said that there was a sizeable dog walking community where she lives and that members of that community were generally friendly with one another. However, she noted that a culture of judgement did exist, whereby people who were known only to walk their dog(s) sporadically were actively excluded from this community by, for example, being ignored by other walkers.

Whilst the social interaction encountered on a dog walk can be positive, we can also see how dog walking can be cliquy and potentially exclusionary (see Bueker, 2013). Most respondents preferred to walk alone and, contrary to existing research, some actively avoided interacting with other walkers, whether these others were accompanied by a dog or not. Some respondents felt their walk would be negatively affected if they met other people/dogs. According to Bremborg (2013), silence is important while walking. She argues that, in addition to intensifying an awareness of one's surroundings, silence locks other participants out, gives a space for reflection and is an opportunity to be 'non-social'. The concept of being non-social has not been discussed previously in the walking literatures. We are not suggesting that walking a dog has a negative influence on a person's development of social networks. However, we should not assume that all dog walkers – or all dogs for that matter – either *want* or are *able* to facilitate social interaction (McNicholas & Collis, 2000). For example, not all people are fond of dogs and some breeds of dog may actually discourage interaction with other people and their dogs. Maher and Pierpoint's (2011) and McCarthy's (2015) examination of dangerous dogs are cases in point.

Respondents acknowledged the problematic nature of human and dog interaction, with some discussing how the spaces chosen for walks were selected purposefully by humans to ensure a relatively straightforward (and pleasurable) experience is maintained for both dog and walker. Some respondents chose to walk routes they knew would be quiet. They did this for two reasons. Firstly, they did not want to socialise with other humans (or their dogs); and secondly, some believed their walk would be easier and less stressful if their route was human and dog free. As Andrea said:

I like the peace and quiet of being out. Because it's time on my own. I know it's time with Flora, but it's nice just to be able to walk. Do you know what? I don't like bumping into people. I like it when there's nobody there. And if I see other people with their dogs I just think, "for God's sake, I just wanted to come out on my own".

Jane offered a similar response, discussing how she engaged other walkers in what she refers to as a 'dog chat', but only on the shared understanding that the interaction would be brief. Reflecting Edensor's (2008) notion of performative conventions, Jane spoke of there being an understanding among dog walkers of what constitutes appropriate walking conversation etiquette:

I'm friendly; we have a kind of "dog chat". "How's it going?" It's usually the weather. Actually, it's always the weather. Anyway it's something that lasts "that" [*gesturing*] long, you know, that kind of carrying on walking and, oh, they've disappeared. So the conversation lasts as long as it's socially acceptable to talk whilst you're walking.

Carol similarly identified that there were people she knew who would give a friendly wave across the field but who knew she did not want to stop for a chat. 'I believe you should keep moving' was Carol's

philosophy. Her focus and attention were maintained by her dogs, two playful collies. More conventionally, interaction may also be hamstrung by time pressures, particularly for those who work and/or have family commitments.

In a very different case, Jen, who does not 'own' a dog, only goes on dog walks to meet up with her friend. During a difficult time in Jen's friend's life, this was the only time they were able to socialise. Therefore, Jen's whole purpose in walking was to access a form of human-human interaction. Interestingly though, this did not excuse her from the same kinds of negotiations already discussed. Indeed, Jen had to negotiate these shared spaces in much the same ways as regular dog walkers do. Crucially, however, Jen is afraid of dogs and this presents her with challenges:

I tried to be brave but what 'they' forget - the dog owners - is that when you are standing around with them all their dogs are standing around as well. It's like "ooooohhhh" and they would be like, "this is [name]'s very anti-social friend".

Jen is aware of her Otherness to the dog walkers and provided an interesting insight into dog walking culture from the perspective of an outsider:

There is a chap ... [my friend] knows him and if I wasn't with her she would stand and talk to him ... He has got two huskies ... I am not keen on these two huskies, I feel outnumbered and [name] will say "Oh you are with your friend are you?" In other words "the one that doesn't like dogs". I think he is slightly offended by it but you just have to get on with it and she just goes, 'I can't chat today' and we scuttle by. A very different social situation for her.

This finding is shared in Bueker (2013) who noted how dogs can serve as both social 'markers' and 'dividers' in certain communities. Graham and Glover (2014) found that some people, along with their dogs, can become excluded from walking communities due to negative stereotypes attributed to particular breeds.

In our study, Nadia routinely walks a pack of between 8-10 dogs. She reflected that the number of dogs may be a 'nuisance' and/or 'intimidating' to some walkers. She also said that she walked a variety of dog breeds and had first-hand experience of their stigmatisation. Interestingly, Nadia's experiences helped her reflect quite critically on how she chooses and interacts with the spaces in which she walks, even in spite of her own knowledge of each dogs' personality and temperament:

[...] not everyone is a dog person. I walk one dog, a German shepherd called Leo ... he is huge! But he is the biggest wuss you could ever imagine. But if you have an image of a German shepherd, as a guard dog, he is it. So to many non-dog people he looks like the kind of beast who is nasty, will bite ... I am aware that to some people dogs are scary. So I walk with these people in mind too. I generally walk at the same places because I know those places. [Name of place] in particular is great because it's pretty much always quiet.

Jane shared Nadia's awareness and concerns about other people being scared of her dog. She said that Copper's size can be an issue; especially for non-dog owners and children. She reflected upon how the perceptions of other people influence when and where she walks with Copper:

When there are non-dog-owners, especially with children, they're incredibly frightened, because his mouth opens - because he's panting - and he's got very sharp teeth. His sharp teeth, because he's tall, are at the height of some of these children as they go past ... So what I do is, I kind of grab him, just put him on the lead, and just walk carefully past. Or I say something like "Please don't worry".

Similarly, while Buddy (Jack Russell terrier) is a small dog, Marie remained conscious of other people's reactions to him:

Sometimes I have had to apologise for no reason, like even when Buddy hasn't done anything wrong. Just sometimes you get children who are scared of dogs and they would run away and have a little cry, even though he hasn't gone anywhere near them. You just say "sorry". I suppose it is just another etiquette thing really.

Here we see an interesting aspect of the human-animal relationship unfolding. Sanders (1990) argued that the ways companion animals behave with other people and animals has a strong influence on our own self-definition. He notes that humans 'expect' their companion animals to behave in certain socially accepted ways and that when they do not, humans take responsibility for them. He refers to this as the use of 'excusing tactics' and argues that dogs do more than serve as props of human social identity, rather they provide the foundation for building reciprocal social relations.

Discussion

This paper has shed further light on the complex nexus of spatial relations between humans and animals. It has done so by focusing on dog walking; an activity that has not received a great deal of academic attention outside of studies on health and wellbeing (Christian et al., 2013; Degeling & Rock, 2013; Johnson, Beck & McCune, 2011; Reeves, Rafferty, Miller & Lyon-Callo, 2011). The data reveal that humans walk their dogs in large part because they feel a deep-rooted emotional bond with them and hold a strong sense of obligation to ensure they stay fit and healthy. Perhaps more interestingly, humans also walk their dogs because they believe their dogs have fun and are able to be more 'dog-like' while out on a walk. These understandings were often articulated through relationships to and positioning within the places and people experienced on the walk.

Through utilising new walking studies and animal geographies as our theoretical framework we argue that walking *with* dogs represents a potentially important cultural space for making sense of human-animal relations. In so doing we have provided further evidence that current conceptualisations of walking tend to be romantic; that is, they privilege more spectacular accounts of walking, largely ignoring forms that are more routine and mundane. We have argued how despite the routine and mundane nature of walking, when accompanied by a dog, it becomes increasingly complex and contested. In particular, we have examined how human commitment to account for and react to animal agency can complicate this otherwise relatively straightforward activity.

We have positioned our findings within wider debates of animal agency and human domination, and advocate the view that humans ought to 'listen to' their animals to ensure an ethical praxis of co-belonging, or 'interspecies etiquette' (Warkentin, 2010), is developed and sustained through walking practices and broader leisure activities. This notion of 'listening to' animals is perhaps the greatest challenge facing animal geographies and other related fields. Moran (2015) has pointed out that studies in animal geographies have thus far tended to focus on the encounters between humans and animals, rather than generating a greater understanding of their lives as animals beyond these encounters. Johnston (2008) has criticised the animal geographies sub-field on the basis that it still struggles to attend to the 'beastly' nature of animals in their own right. Indeed, as Dashper (2016) suggests, it *may* be possible to develop human-animal relationships that recognise the subjectivity of the animal partner. The intention of this paper was to raise further issues for debate rather than resolve them. This paper has not attempted to penetrate dog consciousness; a paper of this kind cannot hope to attend properly to the animal within the nonhuman (Johnston, 2008). Rather, through

centralising the voices of humans, we have suggested some of the ways in which dogs get caught up in the 'categorical and practical orderings of people' (Brooks, 2006, p.21). In so doing we have activated dogs as a subject, a subject of passion, a subject producing passions, a subject of questions and a subject producing questions (adapted from Despret, 2004, p.131).

Moving forward, we advocate the need for more innovative methods that are better able to capture the 'beastly' nature of animals (Johnston, 2008); that is methods which acknowledge the agency of animals through allowing them to act without human interference. Over the past few years, a broad range of scholars have been emphasising the importance of methodological innovation and diversification, with a particular emphasis being placed on methods that enable researchers to 'be' or 'see' with mobile research subjects (Fincham, McGuinness & Murray 2010; Merriman, 2013) such as dogs. Methodological innovation and diversification are often positioned as a necessary result of the epistemological shifts ushered in with the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller & Urry 2006), with the result that researchers are frequently looking for new ways to 'capture, track, simulate, mimic, parallel and "go along with" the kinds of moving systems and experiences that seem to characterise the contemporary world' (Büscher, Urry & Witchger 2011, p.7). In particular, we note the potential value and contribution of mobile and visual methodologies, such as 'dog-cams' and GPS for furthering our understanding of the lifeworld(s) of dogs beyond their relationships with human companions. Such methodological innovations are justified by emphasising the 'failures' of conventional methods such as interviews, which are static and fixed in time. We are sympathetic to these criticisms, but support the view of Merriman (2013, p.168) who warns that 'The push to promote innovative "mobile methods" is in danger of encouraging researchers to abandon methods labelled "conventional" ... rather than rethinking and reworking these methods, or expanding and diversifying their repertoire of approaches.' For example, a conventional interview (as adopted here) could easily become a walking interview, which puts the researcher in a more naturally occurring setting for observing and capturing human and dog relations in the context of their everyday mobilities (e.g. Warren, 2016).

We advocate that future studies need to focus more attention on interspecies *intra-actions*; a relationship characterised as a two-way, reciprocal relation of 'becoming together' (Haraway, 2008, p.208). We have demonstrated this through exploring how an important part of dog walking is about humans enhancing a dog's (and also their own) quality of life. Understanding how humans attempt to fulfil the needs and wants of their dogs (i.e. 'listening to') is vital and, at present, is missing from animal geographies literature. Recognising dogs as 'individual personalities with the ability to act independently may open up possibilities for interspecies communication and collaboration in which the human partner cedes authority to the nonhuman, at least temporarily' (Dashper, 2016, p.13). In other words, whilst the respondents did demonstrate a commitment to their dog's enjoyment and wellbeing, this was inevitably framed within a discourse of *allowing* their dogs to behave in certain ways. For example, those dogs that walked off-lead were *allowed* to do so by their human companion.

We acknowledge the limitations of drawing solely upon human interpretations, but we have sought to conceptualise human-animal relations as being conditioned less by paternalistic control and more by values of companionship, communication and mutual understanding. In this study, it was while out on the walk that many respondents felt their relationship with their animal was most strongly enacted outside the confines of the domestic setting. This sense of humans ceding authority and providing the freedom and space for their dogs to enact their 'dog-ness' was important to the respondents, but has rarely featured in animal geographies literature. Whilst in many ways the walk may reflect the historical social order of human domination and animal submission, this paper demonstrates how, due to the human *want* for their dogs to have fun, rather than there being a one-way flow of power, the walk is where humans and dogs *negotiate* power within their relationship.

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