# Greyhounds and Racing Industry Participants: A Look at the New South Wales Greyhound Racing Community

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**Abstract:** Subsequent to the exposure of live baiting and animal cruelty within the NSW greyhound racing industry in 2015, a public debate emerged about animal welfare, oppression and exploitation. It resulted in a community outcry, an inquiry into live baiting and animal welfare within the industry and a proposed ban of greyhound racing in the state of NSW. Whilst the proposed ban of greyhound racing was celebrated amongst animal activists, it was met with a mixture of sadness, shock and animosity from people from within the industry. Many of the people within the greyhound racing community felt stigmatised and discriminated against, arguing that the move was purely political. The exposure, the ban and, later, the withdrawal of the ban reflected a moral contestation, underpinned by the question of how humans relate to or should relate to animals. The debate largely ignored, however, the deeper ontological foundations for practice with and relationships to animals. Initiating an exploration of the ontological basis of human-animal relationships as it manifests within the greyhound racing community, I will in this article explore how members of this community use their relationships with both the humans and dogs involved in the sport as a means of constructing their social identity as a 'greyhound person'; a category that delineates particular routines, practices and values. Using fieldwork material collected as part of a two-year long study with the greyhound racing community (2015-2016), I investigate how people involved in the greyhound racing industry relate to the dogs, and what implications this way of relating has to how identities are constructed, the greyhound is treated, and how this treatment is rationalised.

**Keywords**: Dogs, greyhounds, greyhound person, greyhound racing, human-animal relationships, identity, New South Wales

## Introduction

Within the past few years, greyhound racing has moved from a relatively secluded space marked by the knowledge of a select few, to a space of highly publicised and controversial political contestation. The moral and political questioning of the industry intensified in 2015 when the animal protection organisation Animals Australia exposed how live baiting was occurring within the New South Wales (NSW) greyhound racing industry, and how the industry breaks with generally accepted norms of animal affinity characteristic of modern Australian society (McHugh; Markwell, Firth and Hing 596; McEwan and Skandakumar 54). The breach of ethical conduct towards animals was emphasised through the exposure of the frequent killing of unwanted racing greyhounds. Whilst not all members of the community engage in unethical practices, the exposure was a hit to the whole community, which had to respond to the horrific evidence of animal cruelty.

Several members of the greyhound racing community argued in line with the critiques put forth by those incensed by these exposed practices. Dogs and, specifically, greyhounds, they argued, should be treated with love and respect.[1] That some within this industry have been demonstrated as prioritising profit and neglecting consideration of dogs as sentient beings deserving of respect, whilst others argue this is their primary focus as greyhound people suggests that, rather the greyhound industry being viewed as one entity, the individuals that make up this social grouping should be viewed as belonging to various, and significantly separate, sub-groups within the industry. I argue that the notion of separate social groupings within the NSW greyhound industry presents animal welfare advocates with the opportunity to work with members of the racing community, establishing a means to create change from within rather than simply attacking and, subsequently, alienating those involved in the sport. By looking behind the general stereotypes of the greyhound industry and seeing it as a complex and heterogeneous community, a dialogue on how to protect the dogs through establishing more care-orientated and dog-focused practices within the industry may be facilitated.

In order to gain a better understanding of the community, it is important to consider how those who associate with the industry see themselves as part of the sport; that is, to

understand how their greyhound-related practice intersects with notions of identity and belonging. In this paper, I will explore how the relationships between dogs and humans, specifically greyhounds and humans, are used to create a significant aspect of a person's identity. The paper is based upon qualitative research carried out within the rural greyhound racing community in NSW from 2015-2016. Firstly, I will provide a brief overview of greyhound racing in NSW and the research project itself. I will then explore the research findings: the way in which people within the greyhound racing community use the dogs to construct their notions of self, how these ways of constructing the self relate not only to the dogs, but to distinct sub-groupings within the racing community and, finally, how this competitive industry context leads to navigations of engagement and detachment between human and dog.

## Greyhound racing — old ways and recent developments

Despite the existence of this distinct community in Australia dating back to European colonisation, little has been done in terms of social research and, as Atkinson and Young contend, this unique facet of the multiple interspecies relationships and ways of being that make up the Australian social landscape remain relatively underexplored in academic scholarship (336). In terms of existing research, investigations pertain to different racing contexts, such as Carr's exploration of the politics of racing and rescue in the UK and Atkinson and Young's research on greyhound racing and oppression in North America. In the Australian context, research has often been on a much broader scale; for instance, McEwan and Skandakumar's investigation of racing and the frameworks and policies surrounding the sport in Australia, and Markwell, Firth and Hing's thematic exploration of Australian greyhound racing. Finally, Madden provides a non-context specific discourse analysis of the greyhound throughout time. There is also observational research on greyhound racing within classic animal study texts that do not specify context such as DeMello (50) and Arluke and Sanders (12-14). There have been few hands-on, proximal methodologies that seek to work closely with those (dogs and humans) within the racing industry. Whilst my research builds on the above literature focused around greyhound racing as a sport in the general sense, it is also based within a particular time and

space – contemporary NSW greyhound racing. As Haraway argues, knowledge without context is unaccountable (576); therefore, I would like to anchor my arguments to the distinct place and community within which my research was carried out. My aim was to understand the human-animal relationship within the greyhound racing community and, more specifically, how greyhound owners, trainers and breeders who are self-proclaimed dog-lovers are able to detach from their animals and engage in practices such as premature euthanasia and the 'giving up' of dogs for adoption. I wanted to understand how it was that those who would frequently have their dogs prematurely euthanised, or give them away, also presented themselves as those most invested in the well-being not just of greyhounds, but of the overarching, more abstract, idea of *the greyhound,* as a breed, rather than as individual dogs.

A form of greyhound racing has been present in Australia since coursing events began to be held in the 1860s. These events used greyhounds who had been brought over with the First Fleet for their speed and ability to catch live game. By the early 20th century, Australia mimicked numerous other countries and embraced the sport of watching greyhounds chase after an artificial lure, what we today recognise as greyhound racing (McEwan and Skandakumar, 4-5). Today, the greyhound community is generally categorised as incorporating those who are involved in the sport through breeding, training and racing greyhounds.

The 2015 exposure of animal cruelty within the industry confronted those within and outside of greyhound racing with the sport's most crucial issue; unwanted dogs. Animals Australia showed how greyhound racers would frequently have dogs who were no longer useful for racing prematurely 'euthanised' (or killed via other methods).[2] There was a public outcry in response (Markwell, Firth and Hing 599), with public disapproval of the industry further strengthened shortly afterwards when Animals Australia revealed how some of these dogs are exported overseas, specifically to Macau, where they are subjected to ethically questionable conditions and treatment (Animals Australia). In response to the findings on the live baiting of greyhounds where trainers used small, relatively defenceless animals including rabbits, piglets and possums[3], and further prompted by the subsequent media report on greyhound exportation,

the NSW government launched a Special Commission of Inquiry to decide whether greyhound racing was still a viable sport within the State.

On the 7th of July 2016, the Special Commission of Inquiry released its report (McHugh). The report showcased widespread and systematic animal abuse within the industry. It should be noted, however, that the industry which the report was referring to was global and not, as several community members argued, based solely upon findings within Australia, much less the state of NSW. In response to the report, the NSW Premier Mike Baird announced that he would ban greyhound racing in the state (ABC News). The decision was fought by those within the greyhound racing community, who argued that the industry was changing and that the practices identified in the report were not representative of the community as a whole. In September 2016, their campaign resulted in the Premier's withdrawal of the ban and the community being awarded a 'second chance' to reform itself (Nicholls and Robertson; Markwell, Firth and Hing 607). The conflict between the greyhound racing community and the animal rights movement has not eased, however. The greyhound racing community claims that the reversal is a victory for the dogs. According to them, the dogs will now be allowed to continue doing what they love, that is, race. In contrast, the animal rights movement continues to argue that the wellbeing of the greyhounds is compromised. They attest that they will continue to oppose the industry and fight for the rights of animals.

## Constructing the social identity of the 'greyhound person'

The concept of 'community' is widely used, yet no clear definition of the term exists. In anthropology, community is commonly used to describe people who hold a commonality of interest, location and ecology, or social system and structure. Community embeds a sense of morality whereby a moral obligation derives from shared identity (Gold 2; McGinnis, House and Jordan 205-222) and a pattern of exchange (of gifts, services, duties and sacrifices) (Mauss). There is always some commonality underlying both the orientation and continuation of any one community (Rapport and Overing 61). Within this article, community will be defined as a group of humans and nonhumans (animals), the former who have shared experiences, practices,

belief systems, values and goals. Identity, and the construction of the singular and social identity plays a primary role which must be examined when seeking to gain a better understanding of any human-animal relationship (Abell 168). As such, how the identity of those who take part in greyhound racing is imagined and created is considered a crucial factor in exploring the human-dog relationship of this context. During the research, however, it became clear that although the majority of those involved in the industry will refer to themselves as 'greyhound people', there are distinct differences in how an individual will enact this classification. Those who race for the sake of racing – that is, their involvement in the sport is not dependent on prize winnings but about participating – are particularly proud to refer to themselves as greyhound people and classify others with the same values as such. Despite taking part in the same sport, and, accordingly, frequently sharing a community with those whose focus is on the monetary aspect of the industry, greyhound people attest that they should not be classified as being the same as these individuals. While this section explores the social grouping referred to as 'greyhound people', the subsequent section will examine the difference between this faction and others.

Most members of the greyhound racing community know, or know of, one another and navigate their interactions and business dealings accordingly. These bonds and relationships can then be relied on when attempting to navigate social roles and identities within this community setting (Kottak 38-39), as well as the responsibilities and workload of a greyhound owner, trainer and/or breeder. It is multiple relationships such as these that provide the foundation upon which the community itself is built and functions. These bonds of reciprocity and exchange are largely shared between people of the same sub-grouping within this community setting, that is, greyhound people often form strong bonds and relationships with those they perceive as being fellow greyhound people. The defining characteristic of the greyhound person is manifested as a practical and personal engagement with the sport, as well as strong identification with and relationships to the greyhounds themselves. Indeed, studies such as Gueguen and Ciccotti's suggest that the close relationship of the community may be due to the presence of the dogs themselves, as the presence of dogs often facilitates greater engagement, sharing and altruism between humans (347). This argument should not, however, be taken to mean that greyhound racing in itself is inherently 'right'. Animals are an essential part of many human

leisure experiences that provide a variety of benefits to human participants; it is important, however, to remember that animals are beings with their own rights, including the right to find enjoyment in whichever activities they choose, rather than merely those that have been chosen for them (Young and Carr 1).[4]

In this study, I sought to create a deeper understanding of how individuals within the greyhound racing community of NSW relate to and perceive their animals and, more specifically, to examine whether racing greyhounds are imagined as distinct from other dogs – including other greyhounds – who are viewed as pets. The research sits within the epistemological tradition of phenomenology, which seeks to explore how meaning is created and how people apprehend the world. It is based on the notion that truth is a matter of perspective, and that individuals and their world are co-constituted (Haraway 220). In line with this, I sought through this project to understand how the notion of 'greyhounds' and 'pets' are socially constructed and experienced within the greyhound racing community and how this informs a particular practice and cultural logics. By utilising the framework of social constructivism, understandings of these notions were shaped by the premise that there is no single truth (Lock and Strong 8).

As well as spending extended amounts of time within the racing community, data was collected from 10 participants using semi-structured interviews. These interviews generally lasted from one to two hours. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for a natural flow of conversation and provided rich and in-depth data about how the study participants experience and perceive the animals they work and live with, as well as their connection to the community and other community members. Indeed, it was these social connections between community members that allowed for successful recruitment. Despite the distribution of research flyers at racing tracks, all participants interviewed were sourced through other participants encouraging their participation in the project.

Participants of the study articulated a strong affiliation with the greyhound racing community in particular and the social role they attained herein, namely that of a greyhound person. These participants explained how, unlike many of their other social roles, such as in

their career paths, the role of the greyhound person enabled them to establish an identity they feel a sense of pride in. Several participants specifically drew attention to the fact that they did not enjoy their 'day jobs', specifically those who worked in hands-on, labour intensive jobs, and, for these individuals, the greyhound racing community and the social role of the greyhound person offered a sense of achievement and accomplishment that they did not otherwise experience.

One means of understanding these roles is by applying Kottak's ascribed and achieved status argument (38). An ascribed status is one that is given to an individual: they often have no choice in the matter, such as age, race, or in this case, working class backgrounds with limited opportunities. An achieved status, on the other hand, is something an individual can create for themselves through talent or effort (Kottak 38). The greyhound racing community provides a context in which the greyhound person can gain an achieved status, a social identity that they are proud of. Utilising the social identity of the greyhound person, community members are able to escape from the larger spectrum of their social worlds; they find solace within the context of greyhound racing and attain a status and identity of their own creation (Kottak 38). By developing this achieved status, greyhound people are able to recreate their own narrative to include this aspect of themselves that they are happy with, as opposed to an ascribed status outside of the community that is beyond their control.

Participants often spoke of accomplishments they had made within the context of greyhound racing using these achieved status identities. For example, one greyhound trainer explained how he holds a vast amount of responsibility within the context of the greyhound racing community and that he is essential to the function of the community within his immediate geographical area:

> I run the registered trial track at [local suburb]. And I also drive the lure as well as being president of the club and manager of the track [...] I'm the only one licensed to drive the lure and if someone unlicensed drives it there's no insurance. And if I go [stop being involved in racing] then everyone around here, like I said there's 21 trainers in that one street, then they can't trial their dogs [without participant] you

> know. […] I'm [a community representative] on [an industry consultancy group]. It was put in place by the government, and yeah, that keeps me busy. I actually struggle you know, to get me dogs racing.

In this way, this participant has utilised his role within the greyhound racing industry, as well as his personal relationships with greyhounds (both individual and the abstract idea of *the greyhound*) and with the greyhound racing community, as a means of constructing himself as someone of importance. As well as responsibility, social prominence was often spoken of as an achievement that was enabled by greyhound racing and the subsequent navigation to the achieved status of that context.

Central to being a greyhound person is the notion of knowledge about greyhounds in particular and dogs more generally. Participants expressed pride in their excessive knowledge regarding training, racing and caring for the greyhound breed. This knowledge is not 'book knowledge' but rather a sense of embodied knowledge gained through interaction and engagement with the community and its dogs. To have this knowledge is thus an indication of, firstly, one's long-term association with and belonging to the greyhound community, and, secondly, one's status and identity as a greyhound person. Greyhound people are imagined by fellow greyhound people as having a wealth of knowledge concerning the greyhound breed. This kind of dog-related knowledge, and confidence in that knowledge, is commented on by Wiggett-Barnard and Steel in their study on guide dog handlers. The authors found that it is the ownership of, and therefore close relationship with, a guide dog that often brings about a renewed sense of confidence and sense of self within the handler (1019). Some of Wiggett-Barnard and Steel's participants felt that they had become more assertive and confident as a person because, as a dog handler, they were required to adapt in this way. Similarly, greyhound people expressed a sense of feeling authoritative in regard to knowledge about greyhounds, and subsequently, dogs in general. In this way, the greyhound person uses her or his association with greyhounds and with *the greyhound,* and the context of the community to construct this specialised knowledge, and, accordingly, a sense of their social identity and achieved status (Kottak 38).

The participants of the study created aspects of their identity through the context of racing; greyhound racing represents a space through which they have constructed a distinct social identity that exhibits their belonging to the greyhound racing community. Through physical spaces such as trial tracks and pet stores, as well as online platforms and groups, greyhound people interact, exchanging stories, tips, advice and news about the happenings within the community. During the race meetings themselves exchanges are made in the form of favours: catching someone's dog after the race in exchange for them reciprocating when it comes time for your dog to run, or carpooling to meetings that are far away in order to save fuel costs. As one community member explained;

> [i]t's lucky, greyhound people are really good, someone's always got a spare kennel that they can put a dog in for a couple of weeks… If something is going on, we sort of help each other out so, yeah it's good.

This context is a means of constructing their identity among others, not as a lone entity; it is social and relational as much as it forms part of an embodied sense of self. Through the practices of exchange and relationships of reciprocity, the community members are drawn together, subsequently constructing the very context of this social identity itself. The participants use the term 'greyhound people' referring to this social identity, whereby they make direct reference to people that they see holding a particular set of beliefs, manifested in their practical engagement with the greyhound racing industry and their relationships to greyhounds. These defining qualities thereby set the greyhound people apart from those within the wider greyhound racing community who do not have this kind of 'hands-on' experience and identification with the dogs.

## 'Greyhound people' versus 'money people who race greyhounds': the dogs as the difference

A distinct set of unwritten rules and values relating specifically to the relationship between individuals and their dogs create a sense of community. Through engagement with one another and the creation of patterns of social interactions and shared experiences, a sense of collectivity and shared history distinct from other sections of the Australian social landscape has transpired. People classified as belonging to the community typically hold the capacity for deep engagement

with racing dogs, as well as an ability to emotionally detach should the dogs prove unsuccessful on the racetrack. It is these community members who are categorised as fellow 'greyhound people'. They are described as being distinct from people who attend race meetings or are involved with the industry for the purposes of betting, drinking and money-making, as well as those who purchase shares in dogs but have little to no interaction with the animals themselves.

During a conversation with one greyhound person, it was asserted that the defining quality was the relationship with the dogs. Greyhound people have deep relationships with their dogs, and treat them as partners, the interviewee stated; they race for the sake of racing and being a part of the community, not for money as such. 'Money people', on the other hand, view the dogs as a means to make money, and do not form bonds with their racing dogs. The following is an excerpt from an interview where this particular participant expressed his dislike of people who attend race meetings specifically for purposes of social drinking:

> They're not even greyhound people! You can't get blind drunk when you're at the dogs! They're at a bucks party. I couldn't tell you the amount of times I've been at the track thinking I wish they would shut the [profanity] up. Seriously.

This notion that there are distinct ways of delineating between what the racing community refers to as 'greyhound people' and 'money people' is supported by Carr's assertion that it is the betting activity involved in greyhound racing that largely leads to the objectification of the dogs (Carr 113). Carr argues that betting on dogs could be imagined as the foundation for greyhound racing itself, and not, as would typically be imagined, the actual sport of racing dogs. Similarly, in their thematic analysis of both greyhound and horse racing, Markwell, Firth and Hing demonstrate how the voices most heard from social media platforms on the subject of animal racing attest that it is the gambling practices, and not the race in itself, that leads to the commodification of the dogs and horses (602).

This suggests that, within their sport, greyhound people can be imagined as sustaining the sport for its true purpose; for people to objectify and use dogs for money making purposes. This separation between people who take part in dog racing to spend time with greyhounds, demonstrate a distinct skillset, and spend time among a community of like-minded individuals,

and ‘money people’ who take part in dog racing to bet and drink, without spending time with the dogs themselves is an important distinction that needs more in-depth investigation.

This desire of the greyhound people to differentiate themselves from these others can be imagined as a means to separate oneself from the negative aspects of a group’s identity (Abell 165), forming a new, social sub-group within the sport as a means of delineating between people who have ‘good relationships’ with the dogs, and those who have ‘bad’. The fact that the greyhound people of the community are so adamant that their enjoyment of the race is not about the money provides a means of hope for those concerned about the dogs themselves. Ikonen and Pehkonen examine how, in dog agility competitions, by letting love be the dominant ‘driving force’ behind this leisure activity, and, by having close bonds with the ‘pet community’, the sport has remained dog-centred, rather than transforming into the typical, capitalist-logic driven competitive arena accented by the commodification of dogs (1685). Drawing on this article, I believe that there is an opportunity currently present within the greyhound racing community to mobilise those who race for reasons beyond monetary gain to facilitate a transition into a more dog-centred sport. While this seems a significant request of greyhound people, it is important to remember their own assertions that, not only do they not take part in racing for the money, they also rarely make money. As one participant attested, ‘The best way to make one million dollars in greyhound racing is to start with two million’.

Whilst the remainder of this article focuses on the greyhound people of the community, the entangled lives of money people, greyhound people and greyhounds are clearly in need of further exploration. As Samdahl argues in regard to pet rescue, when it comes to human-animal relationships there are often multiple political and personal entanglements and conflicts occurring between the humans who take part in these animals’ lives (103). So it is with greyhound racing.

## Validating decisions: giving dogs away/putting dogs down while remaining a 'greyhound person' and 'dog lover'

For the greyhound person, racing greyhounds are what we would perceive as working dogs; they are animals with a distinct purpose for humans and this is the primary – often, the only – cause for engagement. Therefore, they are different from pet dogs, who are already imagined as being 'more' than simply a purpose. Greyhound people argue, however, that racing greyhounds are still respected as living beings in their own right. As one interviewee stated, 'Greyhounds are more than working dogs, they are athletes, they are sporting stars. They do not work, they compete'. Greyhound people believe they need to accommodate what they perceive to be the wants of their greyhounds so that these 'athletes' can compete to their full potential. As such, greyhound people view greyhounds as a symbol for their passion and identity – living proof of that owner, trainer or breeder's skills and ability. This way of constructing the greyhound is, however, problematic with regard to the dogs who do not prove successful on the racetrack. As Markwell, Firth and Hing argue, this still means the focus of value stems not from the greyhound's right to a life in themselves, but rather a financial return to their investors, or, in this case, a symbolic return to their owners and trainers (603).

Constructing racing greyhounds as athletes in this way is also problematic in that the attribution of a single status can sometimes work to restrict the animal, removing her capacity to move beyond this single construction. As explored in Arluke's research, animals used in research laboratories are constructed in various ways, depending on the role of the human. In this way, animals are viewed by different humans within this context as data, equipment and as dying nursing-home patients (Arluke 100). Similarly, Taylor and Presser argue that those who hunt for recreational purposes will often reduce the dimensions of that particular animal, thereby allowing the eventuality of animal death to become simply a 'matter of fact' (484). How animals are constructed in life by those who play a role in that life's continuation is an important factor to take into account when looking at the breaking of the animal-human bond. In this section I explore the way in which greyhound people navigate their emotions when deciding which dogs to keep as pets, which dogs to give away, and which dogs to 'euthanise'.

It is common throughout the Western world to hear and see people refer to their dogs as their friends or a member of the family (Herzog 78). The human-canine bond brings not only great mutual benefits, but also several disadvantages for many individual dogs (Arluke 18; Taylor 96). Constructions of canines are often implicitly hypocritical and anthropocentric in nature. This is demonstrated by the fact that, whilst our own personal dogs are often thought of as loved ones, many more are euthanised due to abandonment and shelter overcrowding (Arluke and Sanders 92-94), often after enduring lives of neglect, mistreatment and abuse (Arluke 18; Taylor 96). It is, however, this first form of human-dog relationship, that is, the beloved family member, that is thought of when greyhound racing is placed within the context of Western human-animal relationships. To avoid viewing themselves as among this second grouping of dog relationships, greyhound people utilise notions of anthropomorphism and reciprocity, and engagement and detachment in order to justify the giving away and euthanasia of the dogs deemed not to be useful for racing purposes.

The multispecies community of NSW greyhound racing seems to be constituted along lines of gift-giving (Mauss) and interspecies reciprocity; this interspecies kinship is however imagined as between humans and 'the greyhound' as a breed, or rather, the abstract 'idea' of the greyhound itself. Individual (unsuccessful) dogs are therefore *sacrificed* in order to allow the greyhound person to retain their identity. Of course, this sacrifice is not perceived as such, but is rather simply regarded as, 'just the way things are.' The loss is, however, significant to the human party, thereby reinforcing to the greyhound people that they do care for the animals. As one participant explained, 'putting them down' is something greyhound people will mourn:

> Biscuit,[5] um, it was very sad because he'd hurt himself and [partner] was just bringing him back [to racing condition], and he took to [trial track] and it had been raining. And he was so fast, as he's come out the boxes and hit the corner he's torn his back muscle. Really badly. Well we kept him off [that leg] and [partner] fixed it up and then the other one went and in those days we just had too many dogs. [...] And that was very sad, both [partner] and I both cried. [...] It was terrible. It's terrible when you've got to put them

> down but it's something that has, but [partner]'s okay with it, he will do it, but he really doesn't like doing it, but he's stronger.

The excerpt above illustrates a case of a greyhound being put down because they were no longer able to race; outside of the context of racing, this dog would be considered healthy. In order to retain their identity as a greyhound person, those who race must retain enough room in their kennels for dogs who are racing. This inevitably means that not all of those who can no longer race can be kept. The paradox is that in order to continue working with greyhounds, greyhound trainers and owners involved in the sport must put down or give away their retired racing dogs, to make room for those who can continue to race and, subsequently, substantiate the role of the greyhound racing person. One way of viewing this is that the greyhound person sacrifices individual greyhounds in order to retain their ties to the abstract idea of *the greyhound* and the identity of the greyhound person; that is, the greyhound is sacrificed for the social life of the greyhound person. This implies similarities to Govindrajan's ethnographic work in India's Central Himalayas with people who live with and sacrifice goats. Govindrajan argues that the ritual sacrifice of goats in this region's villages are actually demonstrative of a kind of interspecies kinship and that this kinship itself is constituted through everyday human-animal engagement and care. Govindrajan's participants argued that the sacrifice is significant because the goats are like their children. The rationalisation of giving away or having euthanised healthy greyhounds by greyhound people seems to be created along these same lines. Whilst Govindrajan looks at ritual sacrifice and, accordingly, speaks to a different social process to what I explore here, her arguments can help to examine how it is sentiment towards the animal being sacrificed that allows the sacrificer to construct the loss as a sacrifice. The risk of physical harm to the greyhound places their owners, trainers and breeders at risk of emotional harm through facing loss, even if this loss is due to a decision by the greyhound person themselves. This leads to a reiteration of Narayanan's essential question; can any animal be sacralised without simultaneously being objectified (340)?

This sacrifice itself, however, also needs rationalisation by the sacrificer. As Govindrajan's participants argued that their goats are willing to die for family to appease the

gods, so greyhound people construct ideas about the human-dog bond they share with their racing greyhound based around reciprocity. A key factor within this relationship and means of rationalising one that is broken is the use of anthropomorphism as a blame-shifting device.

Anthropomorphism is commonly known as the attribution of human thoughts and feelings to nonhuman animals (Candea 252). During my time among the greyhound racing community, it became evident that greyhound people were anthropomorphising their dogs; however, rather than imbuing the greyhounds with human characteristics to create greater empathy, the greyhound people were using this anthropomorphism as a blame-shifting device. This method would be utilised after it became clear that a greyhound was not doing well on the racetrack. The greyhound person would construct their relationship to the dog as a sort of social contract characterised by reciprocity. Humans provide care, housing/shelter, food, training and engagement to the greyhounds, receiving in return anticipation/hope, routine, validation (doing something important with life), ability to construct identity as 'greyhound person', access to and engagement with the greyhound racing community and other associated benefits. This relationship can be imagined as a cycle that is reproduced as long as the reciprocal agreement is upheld. When it is not, that is, when the greyhound fails to win, or do well, in races, she is characterised as 'lazy', with several interviewees quoting the phrase; 'he can't be bothered winning for me' (Groizard 73). It is important to note here that this anthropomorphism only goes so far as to facilitate the aforementioned blame-shift. The dogs are imbued with human characteristics to the point of constructing race loss as their fault. If these dogs were truly thought of as humans however, they would not be viewed as dispensable as a result of this.

Another simultaneous cycle is that of engagement and detachment between human and animal. This cycle is constantly in flux between stages. Candea argues that when attempting to create anthropological knowledge, engagement and detachment should not be viewed as opposites (243). Similarly, the human-dog relationship of the greyhound racing community demonstrates that rather than composing two sides of a dichotomy, engagement and detachment can be viewed as a cyclic process within the mindset of the greyhound person. The cycles of engagement and detachment would be constant, both for the different dogs the greyhound

person interacts with, and with past dogs as they are remembered. This ability to shift in mindset was demonstrated by an interviewee when they explained her relation's love of greyhounds and the racing context: '[h]e loves the dogs. He always had loved the dogs, but not if they don't run fast. Because you know he gets a bit upset then'.

This quote demonstrates how a successful reciprocal relationship leads to a human-animal relationship that is engaged. In contrast, when the dogs are unable to uphold their end of this social contract (not running fast), the mindset of the greyhound person can become detached ('he gets a bit upset then'). Similarly, during another interview a participant became emotional when speaking about dogs he no longer had. He revealed to me that when he had agreed to do the interview, he had not imagined speaking about past dogs would bring about such a reaction. This participant may have believed he had come to a stage of complete and final detachment from these particular dogs. Nonetheless, speaking and thinking of them made him emotional. This participant is still engaged with the memory he has constructed of these dogs; he had simply been in the phase of detachment while not thinking of them. It can be imagined that the structures and context the human and dog relationship is within facilitate this cyclic thought process.

As such, so long as the reciprocal relationship remains successful, the cycle can be imagined as being 'engaged'. It is when one side of the relationship is faltering and one partner (the dog) fails to contribute to the exchange (failing in races, barking or displaying 'non-cooperative' behaviour), the relationship can move to a phase of 'detached'. Contributing to this need for detachment from those greyhounds who are perceived as being 'unsuccessful' is that their 'failure' in itself demonstrates a failure on the part of the human, that is, an unsuccessful greyhound can denote an unsuccessful breeder or trainer. Once the human comes to imagine this individual as a suggestion of lack of skill or dedication, detachment becomes even more likely.

As the world is constantly reconstructing itself, neither of these phases can be viewed as 'final'. A greyhound may lose a few races, allowing the relationship to move into the phase of detachment, then win a few, moving the relationship back into a phase of engagement. While

imagined as 'the racing greyhound', the dog has no means of contributing to the reciprocal relationship other than by proving successful as a racing animal. The longer the human-animal relationship remains detached, the more likely it is that the trainer/owner will choose to permanently separate from this greyhound, either by giving him/her away, or having the dog prematurely euthanised. Even after the dog no longer physically remains with this human, this cycle and associated phases continue, depending on how the dog is constructed as a memory at any one time. How these memories are constructed can also be dependent on the conditions under which the dog passed away. The dog who dies from an accident may be remembered as a victim while one who was prematurely euthanised may be remembered less often and only for how he acted in life, not how the death came about. In this way it could be argued that the death or permanent separation of human and dog is one means of crossing the emotional boundary.

The emotional boundary is constructed as part of a defence mechanism that allows for easier detachment. The boundary sits between what I have referred to as the 'racing spectrum' and the 'pet spectrum'. In terms of what these spectrums mean, being within the pet spectrum enables the dog to be imagined as someone providing companionship, humorous antics, love, etc. While these are relational qualities that can be offered by most dogs, the emotional boundary separates the racing greyhound from the pet spectrum. Any traits beyond those associated with a 'racer' – for example, a particularly loving or humorous disposition, devotion, aesthetic qualities, etc. – do not factor as contribution to the reciprocal relationship. As such, aside from human-animal separation or death, the only means for the racing greyhound to cross the boundary is for the reciprocal relationship to remain engaged for a long period of time. Several participants stated that they feel as though they 'owe' something to successful dogs, i.e., allowing them to enter the pet spectrum. As one participant explained, due to the fact that his dog had been so successful financially, he 'owed' it to this greyhound to allow him to become a pet:

> [...] this guy that's racing now, that we've got racing now, he'll become our pet when he's finished. He's just that sort of dog he is. [...] he's just that, yeah that sort of nature?

> Yeah. And he's been really sort of good for us financially so you sort of, yeah you owe them something. Yeah so he'll become a pet. Yeah, eventually.

Once the pet spectrum is entered, a new reciprocal relationship is established, this time one that is in no way influenced by financial gain. The relationship is comprised of companionship, love, and allowing the individual to construct themselves as a dog, or greyhound 'lover'. These greyhounds share relationships of deep engagement with their humans. Often greyhound people will use these specific dogs as examples when describing how the greyhound racing community loves 'their greyhounds'.

The argument presented here, that those who race greyhounds 'love their dogs', could be positively utilised in order to shift greyhound racing from a hardened space of rigid rules of detachment to a space of love and care. As Ikonen and Pehkonen contend, competitive, animal-based sports that could easily be completely profit-driven can maintain their animal-focus through acceptance and indeed, esteem of love as a driving force. If greyhound racing is not to be banned in Australia, it needs to demonstrate this love and care of the individual dogs, and not merely the idea that the greyhound, as a breed, comes first. In this endeavour, more research is needed to explore the acceptability of love as opposed to profit and to explore the relationships between the two primary groups in Australia who claim to love the dogs; greyhound racing and greyhound rescue.[6]

## Conclusion

Greyhounds, both physically and symbolically, provide the foundations upon which the community and notion of a 'greyhound person' are created. Through the ambivalence of their status, the relationship between greyhound and greyhound person is constantly shifting in a state of flux, that is, until there is either complete physical (if not emotional) separation between human and nonhuman animal, or, the greyhound crosses the emotional boundary into the pet spectrum, and so, begins anew the human-dog relationship.

The emotional defence mechanisms required of playing out the role of the greyhound person requires particular spatial and emotional set ups in order to prevent emotional attachment leading to stress upon separation. This has obvious implications for the wellbeing and life quality of the dogs. Examining the roles played out by the greyhound and constructed identities of humans within the context of the racing community can bring us closer to understanding not only this particular facet of the human-animal relationship itself, but how we can better understand the underlying cultural logic of the greyhound industry, in order to bring about better understanding, appropriate reforms, and perhaps reconciliation, between the greyhound people and the animal advocates of NSW.

## Notes

[1] This sentiment was frequently expressed by greyhound racing participants during my time among the community.

[2] Whilst use of anthropocentric and blame-alleviating language within the field of animal studies is questioned, the research, and therefore this article, follows anthropological practice in that the language used mirrors that of the community that is studied in order to gain an emic viewpoint, and subsequently, a more in-depth understanding of community practices.

[3] Live baiting is the practice of using smaller animals, most commonly rabbits, to make the dogs 'keen' or eager to kill and therefore chase the lure during a race. This practice is also referred to as 'blooding' and involves encouraging the greyhound to kill the animal so as to get a taste for blood.

[4] This argument is further developed in Jannette Young and Neil Carr's *Domestic Animals, Humans, and Leisure: Rights, Welfare, and Wellbeing*. For the sake of continuity in this article, it is not expanded upon here.

[5] All names, including those of nonhuman animals, have been changed to protect participant identity.

[6] This is the focus of my current PhD research project.

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