Information Letter

University of Waterloo

2110 Burt Matthews Hall

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1

**Phone:** (519) 888-4567, ext. 33097

**Email:** taryn.graham@uwaterloo.ca; tdglover@uwaterloo.ca

Thank you for participating in a study conducted by Taryn Graham, M.A. Candidate and Troy D. Glover, Ph.D. from the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. This research project seeks to understand the social interactions that take place within a dog park environment. The specific goals of this research project are to:

1. Encourage participants to share stories about their personal dog park experiences;
2. Examine the role(s) their dogs play in fostering a sense of community;
3. Identify access to and outcomes of public open space used by dogs and their owners; and
4. Influence service and policy related to animal welfare in Quebec.

Based on the research findings, we aim to (1) offer guidance for future dog park planning and management with the intent to foster safe, humane community life; and (2) stress the need for owners to consider animal well-being when engaging in leisure experiences with their dogs. **Please note that by participating in this study, you are agreeing to participate in a *research* project aimed at collecting information about the social interactions you experienced through dog park use.**

To be eligible for the project, participants must:

1. Be aged 18 years or older;
2. Currently own a dog or have owned a dog within the past 5 years; and
3. Visit dog parks in the Greater Montreal area.

Participation is completely voluntary. There are two parts to this study. In Part A, you will be asked for specific demographic information about yourself and your dog. Examples include, but are not limited to: your date of birth, sex, race/ethnicity, as well as the age, sex, breed of your dog. In Part B, you will be encouraged to share both positive and negative stories about your experiences in dog parks. More specifically, you will be asked to discuss the types of friendships and relationships that either developed, failed to form, or broke up as a result of dog park use. For example, we suspect to come across positive stories that demonstrate emotional or social support from another dog park user, and/or the sharing of resources and information/referrals that allowed you to get ahead professionally or personally. We also expect to come across negative experiences within a dog park where a friendship or relationship failed to develop or broke up, and/or you felt a sense of peer pressure. You may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by not emailing us your responses. **By emailing us your responses, you are giving us consent to use any shared information or stories as data for our research project**. We may follow up to give you the opportunity to clarify, expand, or explain any information gathered. Following the collection of data, analysis of information, and development of initial findings, we will send you a copy of the draft paper to gather your feedback.

Since we expect to gain pertinent insights from dog park users, your stories will likely be used in reports, publications, or presentations of research findings. All information you provide is considered completely confidential and at no time will the identities of participants or dogs be revealed. **By emailing us your responses, you are giving us consent to use anonymous quotations in any reports, publications, or presentations that arise from this research project.** Data collected during this study will be retained indefinitely in a University of Waterloo password protected hard drive. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact us at (519) 888-4567, ext. 33097 or via email at taryn.graham@uwaterloo.ca or tdglover@uwaterloo.ca.

We would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567, ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

We thank you in advance for your valuable time and insightful contribution towards our research project.

Sincerely,

 

Taryn Graham, M.A. Candidate Troy D. Glover, Ph.D.

**PART A: Demographic Information**

**Instructions:** Please carefully read and fully complete the questions provided below. When responding to any of the data organized in tables, please mark an **X** beside the categorization that most accurately represents you. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male |  |
| Female | **X** |

**DOG OWNER**

1. Sex:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male |  |
| Female  |  |

1. Year you were born:
2. Race/Ethnicity :
3. Marital status:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Single |  |
| Married |  |
| Divorced |  |
| Widowed |  |
| In a relationship |  |

1. Employment status:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full-time employed  |  |
| Part-time employed |  |
| Self-employed  |  |
| Unemployed |  |
| Work at home (unpaid) |  |
| Student |  |
| Retired |  |
| Unable to work |  |

1. Education completed:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Never attended school  |  |
| Elementary school  |  |
| High school |  |
| Cegep  |  |
| Trade school |  |
| Undergraduate studies |  |
| Graduate studies |  |

1. Spoken language(s):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| English |  |
| French |  |

If other, please specify:

1. How many days per month do you visit a dog park?
2. How many minutes is your average dog park visit?
3. What suggestions do you have to improve dog parks in the Greater Montreal area?

**DOG**

1. Name:
2. Breed:
3. Age:
4. Sex:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male |  |
| Female  |  |

1. Is this your first dog?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes |  |
| No |  |

1. Is your dog spayed/neutered?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes |  |
| No  |  |

1. Are your dog’s vaccinations up to date?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes |  |
| No  |  |

1. Does your dog have any medical/health issues?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes |  |
| No  |  |

If yes, please specify:

1. Three qualities that best describe your dog’s personality:

a)

b)

c)

1. Energy level:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Low |  |
| Medium  |  |
| High |  |

1. My dog has exhibited the following behaviour(s) in a dog park (check all that apply):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aggression towards humans |  |
| Dominance or bullying towards other dogs |  |
| Reactive when provoked |  |
| Anxiety, fear, or insecurity |  |
| Resource guarding (territorial, possessive, and/or protective of humans, dogs, toys, food, and/or water bowl, etc.) |  |
| Fixation on a specific activity (retrieving a ball or Frisbee) |  |
| Excessive barking |  |
| Excessive sniffing |  |
| Jumping up |  |
| Humping |  |
| Herding |  |

If other, please specify:

1. Who is your dog more likely to approach at a dog park:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Humans |  |
| Dogs |  |
| Both, my dog has no preference. |  |
| Neither, my dog is independent. |  |

1. At a dog park, my dog responds to my commands:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Always |  |
| Very often  |  |
| Sometimes |  |
| Rarely |  |
| Never |  |

**PART B: Storytelling**

**Instructions:** Try to be as descriptive as possible as there is no word limit. Be sure to describe the role(s) your dog played in these social interactions. Please provide stories for both scenarios 1 **AND** 2.

**Share a story about:**

1. **a friendship or relationship you formed with another dog park user that demonstrates:**
2. emotional or social support;

**and/or**

1. the sharing of resources and information/referrals that allowed you to get ahead professionally or personally.
2. **a personal experience within a dog park where:**
3. a friendship or relationship with another dog park user failed to develop or broke up; **and/or**
4. you felt a sense of peer pressure from another dog park user or a group of dog park users.