

ETHNOGRAPHIC PROJECT REPORT

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DOG OWNERS
AND THE DOG BREEDS THEY CHOOSE:**

**A Comparison of Pomeranian
and Siberian Husky Owners**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was conducted to do an ethnography of a community of dog owners involved in showing their dogs at dogs shows and to compare two groups within that community – the owners of Pomeranian and Siberian Husky dogs -- to determine if their different choices of breeds is reflected in different lifestyles, activities, and personality characteristics. It was hypothesized that there would be differences, in part because people are drawn to different breeds based on their interests, activities, and personal traits.

The research was conducted by attending the Specialty Shows conducted by the Northern California Pomeranian Club in Vallejo, California April 19, 2003 and by the Northern California Siberian Husky Club in Novato, California April 26, 2003 and further interviewing two informants from each of these groups. The research findings confirmed the hypothesis in that there were distinct differences between the Pomeranian and Siberian Husky owners which paralleled the different characteristics of their dogs and which led the owners to choose these dogs. The Pom owners described their dogs as very social, friendly, companion dogs and were drawn to this breed for that reason. They also described themselves as very social people themselves, and they had a very relaxed, social atmosphere at their Specialty Show of dogs, and emphasized socializing at many informal events through the year. By contrast, the Sibe owners described their dogs as very independent dogs that had a will of their own and were hard to train, and they enjoyed the challenge of the breed as well as a dog that could fit into their more active lifestyle. The atmosphere at their Specialty Show was more tense and competitive, and the owners emphasized their independent activities with their dogs, such as using them as therapy dogs or taking them sledding or hiking. They were more aware of dog show politics, too.

PROJECT AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In conducting this research, I had the following primary goals. One was to do an ethnography of a community and provide an ethnographic description of a group of people within that community – in particular, dog owners involved in showing their dogs at dogs shows. The second was to compare two different groups within that community – in particular, the owners of Pomeranian and Siberian Husky dogs -- to determine if their different choices of breeds is reflected in different lifestyles, activities, and personality characteristics.

A working hypothesis guiding this research was that there would be differences, in part because people would be drawn to different breeds based on their interests, activities, and personal traits. For example, someone living on their own or in a city apartment might be more drawn to one of the smaller dog breeds, such as a Pomeranian, while someone with a large family living in a larger setting might be more drawn to one of the larger dog breeds, such as a Husky. Also, personality factors might come into play, leading one owner to be drawn to a small, friendly companionship dog like a Pomeranian and another to be drawn to the larger, more independent Siberian Husky. I was interested in both looking at whether such differences existed and whether the owners of these different types of dogs were aware of any differences that might exist among themselves and the owners of other breeds.

Then, if there were such differences, I was interested in exploring them in more depth to look at how such differences in lifestyle, activities, and personality were expressed among the owners of these different breeds.

One factor that led me to choose this topic is that I have already been doing informal research on the way owners of different types of breeds differ for a series of workshops and seminars based on a Web site and book project called Do You Look Like Your Dog, to be

published by Random House in 2004. In addition, I felt this research would provide a valuable contribution to academic scholarship and theory and would have practical value in addressing some issues of concern to those who own dogs as pets and/or show them.

More specifically, I felt that this research will contribute to the theory and research in the area of identity and community - a subject I explored in looking at how visual artists join communities and create their identity as an artist in my internship dissertation. In addition, it will contribute to the research and theory in the area of social interaction research in the field of personality typing in psychology.

Additionally, the research has practical value in that it contribute to a better understanding of the way in which people create different types of social groups in response to personal interests and personality factors. Further, it will help to promote more responsible dog ownership by making prospective dog owners more aware of the factors that lead people to choose different breeds that are compatible with their own lifestyle, interest, and personality characteristics.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Relationships of Identity and Community

When dog owners not only choose a breed of dog but become active in showing that dog, they are essentially joining a community, and many who do are very aware that they have done so, even referring to the world of showing dogs as a “subculture.” In turn, becoming a participant in this group involves a process of self-definition along with situating oneself in a community. The way one expresses oneself (e.g. in terms of personal interests, lifestyle, activities, and personality) very likely influences the breed of dog one chooses and then this choice affects what larger community of dog show participants one joins. Reciprocally, the influence of already active members of that community can contribute to joining the group and developing a self-identity based on that choice, such as when a person looking for a dog is guided in their choice by someone who is already involved in the dog show circuit and subsequently gets that same breed of dog and begins to show it.

This process of self-definition through one’s community has its roots in the symbolic interactionist perspective that developed from the blending of psychology and sociology in the early and mid 20th century to explore the links between the individual and society. A central tenet of this tradition, as stated by Charles Horton Cooley, one of the founders of this theoretical perspective is that the self can’t be seen as something separated from society, but was an “agent interpenetrated with the social world” (Carbaugh, 1996: 4). According to George Herbert Mead, another founder of this tradition, individuals continually fit themselves into their community, thereby creating both self and societal life. (Carbaugh, 1996: 5).

The research and theorizing deriving from this approach is particularly relevant to understand how dog owners make choices of dog breeds that define themselves and their community, since social interactionists explore how the self varies in different social scenes, and how different cultures and social characteristics, which would include lifestyle activities, shape the self. (Carbaugh, 1996:6-7). They also consider how the type of self being created affects the type of community joined (or vice versa) shapes the outcome – such as when a “playful self” participates in an activity as a hobby or vocation – a characterization that applies to opting to participate in dog shows -- whereas a more serious or career self takes central stage in an occupational context, such as for those dog owners who not only show but become dog breeders and trainers. (Carbaugh, 1996: 39). Then, as they become more and more active in and passionate about an activity, as Holland, Lachiacotte, Skinner, and Cain describe (1998: 49), that world can help shape the individual’s identity by providing them with “webs of meaning” (Geertz, 1973: 3-32).

Likewise, owners participating in dog shows can be drawn together by the ideals and principles that are at the foundation of these shows, which are organized by clubs that abide by American Kennel Club (AKC) guidelines. All clubs and the members participating in these shows have to abide by these guidelines, which are described at length in AKC by-laws and literature. So they are bound together by their commitment to these principles, as well as by actually going to the club-sponsored shows and showing their dogs. In a sense, their active participation might be considered a form of “codevelopment,” in which the individual engages in “improvisational responses” to social and cultural situations. This way the individual has the flexibility to work and rework his or her identity in a social landscape, thereby creating a “practiced identity”, using the figured world to provide a frame of meaning (Holland,

Lachiacotte, Skinner, and Cain, 1998: 271). For the dog show owner this occurs in the context of a fairly rigid system of AKC rules governing the procedures at any given dog show. Yet, even with this formal structure all must adhere too, there is still some negotiation of identity, such as when an individual tries to improve his or her dog's chances of winning, such as by getting to know the judge, a phenomena especially noted by the politically-minded Siberian Husky owners I interviewed.

The Psychology of Creating an Identity

The theory on the psychology of creating an identity is also particularly relevant, because of an interest in looking at the relationship between personality and individual choice of breeds. Then, once this choice has been made, various social dynamics come into play that bind the individual to the group and leads that person to want to contribute to and represent that group.

As Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams point out in *Social Identification*:

People's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others (whether members of the same group – *ingroup* - or of different groups – *outgroup*), is largely determined by the groups to which they feel they belong. (1988: 2-3).

This identification might be especially important for dog owners when they first start to show and gain encouragement from other owners of that breed so they feel like they belong. In fact, some of the interviewees in the Pomeranian group spoke of feeling like they had joined a family in becoming part of the network of Pom owners (to use the term they most commonly did to describe their dogs and the shows they exhibited in.). Then, once these newly showing dog owners join a club, they can claim that identity, as well as obtain more specific guidelines about how a member of an AKC club should behave, such as how exactly to present their dogs in a show and how to train their dog in the skills of obedience and agility to better satisfy the judges

who are using standard AKC criteria to make their judgments. But learning to act based on such group norms, rules, customs, and standards is more than just conforming to social identifiers.

Rather, in acting in accordance with group guidelines, the individual is also identifying with that group, while making those guidelines a part of him or herself. This process is not just a social connection, but a psychological binding, as well, according to Hogg and Abrams. As they state:

Belonging to a group (of whatever size and distribution) is largely a *psychological* state which is quite distinct from that of being a unique and separate individual, and...it confers *social identity*, or a shared/collective representation of who one is and how one should behave. (1988:3)

This bonding, in turn, supports the human drive to “impose order upon the potential chaos,” since social groups provide a means to order, structure, simplify, define and clarify the self. This concern with order is especially true for owners showing their dog, since the AKC sets forth very rigid, exacting guidelines of exactly what each club and member needs to do to comply with AKC standards. Such guidelines not only apply to the dogs they show in the ring, but the owners, too, and any deviation can be grounds for disqualifying an owner’s dog during a show as well as potentially suspending or excluding the owner from the group if the violation is serious enough or repeated (such as being vocally abusive to other dog owners or rudely challenging the ruling of a judge).

In return for submitting to such group discipline, however, the individual has positive gains for his or her self-concept supported by the group, which helps the individual feel better about himself, since group members tend to give their own group a relatively positive social identity compared to their evaluation of outgroup members. Then, this positive group evaluation reflects back on the individual, providing a greater sense of well-being and worth. For example, while some of the Pom owners I spoke to were quite critical of the owners of Siberian Huskies and other dogs – describing the Sibe owners as overly independent or the Afghan Hound owners

as often arrogant, much like their dogs, the Pom owners spoke of others in their own group very warmly. They saw themselves and other Pom owners as warm, friendly, social, happy people, just like their dogs – and perhaps even a reason they chose the dogs they did.

Still another frame for the psychology of creating an identity is the lens of role taking and socialization, as described by Karl E. Scheibe in his book *Self Studies: The Psychology of Self and Identity*. (1995). Drawing on George Herbert Mead's notion of "taking the role of the other," Scheibe points out how an individual incorporates the attitudes other individuals have towards him into his self-concept as they interact together (1995: 37), and he draws on "social role theory" to discuss how the individual learns to take on an expected role through socialization or enculturation into granted or achieved roles (Scheibe, 1995: 75). For the dog owner participating in a dog show this is reflected in the way he or she learns to exhibit a show dog and gains a feeling of personal fulfillment from the performance and appearance of that dog in the ring. To the extent that the dog does well, the individual can feel his or her success in breeding or training that dog, and the winning ribbons and photographs after a show helped to reaffirm the importance of taking on this role.

While much of the socialization or enculturation research has focused on how a child learns to play the parts required as an adult, this model is well suited for looking at the path any newcomer follows in participating in any group or community, such as the dog owner who is newly showing and is learning the ropes to become part of the dog show world. As Scheibe points out, special instruction is necessary for any individual to step into an attained or achieved role and thereby "gain special recognition, power, and responsibility in society" (1995: 76). Likewise, the dog owner needs such instruction, whether through formal instruction through AKC books or seminars, or through informal learning from other dog owners when he or she

starts going to dog shows either as an observer or as a participant first entering his or her dog. However the owner acquires this information, he or she learns what is required for his or her dog to become a champion and how to more successfully participate in these shows to increase the dog's – and by extension his own – chances of winning. While some owners continue to participate just for the fun of going to these shows and interacting with others in the community, such as some of the Pom owners who find the social connections of the Pom show world especially inviting, others emphasize the importance of winning, such as the Sibe owners, who are generally a more competitive and politically aware group, as they themselves note.

The Nature of Community

The other side of the identity and community equation is the nature of the community from which one takes identity. While dog show participants do participate in real world activities, many are part of a broader, nationally based network that unites them through an online connection. Though some writers have objected to a community model not located in a specific place, such as John F. Freie who claims these are a “counterfeit community,” since community members need to “actively participate and cooperate with others to create their own self-worth, a sense of caring about others, and a feeling for the spirit of connectedness (1998: 23), many people in the dog show world gain their sense of community both locally and globally. As such, they have parallels with the corporate business and media networks that create a global enterprise, brand, or programming today. People feel a sense of connection to that global community, but there are local cultural differences – hence the common corporate mantra to the troops of “Think globally but act locally.” Thus, beyond the three main characteristics commonly associated with community: face-to-face interactions, participating in activities

involving cooperation and commitment, and a grounded physical space where people can meet and interact one-on-one (Freie 1998: 24), many dog show participants think of themselves as part of a virtual dog show community, too, defined by participation in dog shows, whether one actually meets others in that community or not.

Within such communities, whether interactions are formal or informal, face-to-face or virtual, community members create links and bonds with others by participating together. Then, that participation contributes to group cohesion. Moreover, when participants take on different roles in the group, they feel an even greater sense of connectedness through group support for their role-taking or by taking on complementary roles that provide mutual support (Freie 1998: 25). For example, dog show participants might participate in a mixture of Specialty Shows for their breed, as well as enter their breed's division in an All Breeds shows. Some may also participate in obedience, agility, or tracking trials, whether they participate in the conforming shows, which are at the center of both Specialty and All Breeds shows. Then, too, some participate in other special activities with their dogs based on the type of breed they own, such as keeping their Pom dogs close to them whenever they go someplace, since these are small companionable dogs, or taking their Huskies to the mountains to go sledding, since these were originally bred to be sled dogs. Still others may use their dogs for community service, such as taking either Poms or Huskies to a hospital as therapy dogs to cheer up patients, since both types of dogs are very friendly and love being with people. And while some owners may simply come to occasional shows to exhibit their dogs and then leave after a few hours or spending the day or weekend at the show, still others become even more bonded by becoming officers and running local club activities. Thus, in these various ways, the owners might feel a bond with other group members through face-to-face real world participation, while they also express and celebrate

their unique style, based on their particular combination of choices in what they want to do with their dog. In so doing, they reinforce both identity and community simultaneously.

Many psychological and social benefits come from being part of such a community, whatever the type of group – whether dog show participants or others. Members gain a sense of group support for shared values, beliefs, and mores. They gain a feeling of rootedness from consciously identifying with and being part of a community. They also experience a “sense of trust, common purpose, common respect, and a sense of connection,” along with a “sense of caring for others,” whether or not they know them personally (Freie 1998: 29). In short, community offers a “web of relationships,” in which members have relationships with one another and the physical environment that defines the community and their relationships among each other. They feel a connectedness and solidarity with others that provides the “essence of community”. They share a common experience and participate with others to achieve agreed-upon goals (Freie 1998: 3-4), and it doesn’t matter whether they are spatially linked. They feel a sense of community across time and space with broader, not spatially anchored groups. Indeed, many use the power of the Internet to set up Web sites that feature their dogs and their accomplishments that contribute to linking these dispersed communities of dog owners together, while expressing their sense of identity through their pride in their dogs.

Community Based on Interests and Occupation

Theory and research on occupational communities are relevant to understand how dog owners who show their dogs join communities, too, particularly the work of the symbolic interactionists, because of their interest in the relationship between psychology, meaning, and social structure. Writing from this perspective, George Herbert Mead states that a career

incorporates concepts of identity, reference group, roles, and role expectations and that one builds an identity by looking to significant others as a reference group. One can do so either in the now or through anticipatory socialization -- identifying oneself with the group to which one aspires to belong in the future. (Salaman 1974: 14-15)

Such concepts can be especially applicable to some dog show participants, since they do more than participate as a hobby. Rather, they use their participation and the ribbons and certificates they win for their dogs to support their activity as breeders, who are breeding their dogs to sell to others as well as keep as family pets or for show themselves. Then, too, some may offer products or services for dogs and dog owners, ranging from books and magazines to ID tags and specialty clothing for dogs. So much like many entrepreneurs and artists who find their real identity in off-the-job friendships, dog show participants use their participation to express their identity, build relationships with other dog show participants, and in many cases support their activities in breeding dogs or providing other products and services to the show dog owners' community.

In effect, they are like the members of occupational communities described by Graeme Salaman in *Community and Occupation*, who build their lives around their work (1974: 19). As Salaman points out, such individuals "see themselves in terms of their occupational role: their self-image is centered on their occupational role" (Salaman 1974: 21). They see themselves as people with specific qualities, interests, and abilities due to that occupation, and have a reference group based on members of that occupational community, whether local or non-local. They often prefer to make friends with those in their occupation instead of outsiders. And they bring their work activities and interests into their everyday lives outside of work (1974: 21).

In turn, this strong occupational focus makes this activity a powerful source of self-image, based on the support and confirmation of certain significant others. As a result, the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions held about oneself can be strongly influenced by the degree of support, encouragement, recognition, and acceptance, obtained from others in that occupational group. (Salaman 1974: 21-22). Moreover, as Ronald M. Pavalko points out in *Sociology of Occupations and Professions*, people commonly use the occupations of other people to identify them” (1988: 4), and social scientists not only characterize a profession as having certain traits, such as acquiring specialized skills or competence, but as possessing distinctive values, norms, and beliefs, which contribute to the feeling of identity members of that group share, because they have a common identity and share similar norms and values which guides them in their behavior both at work and in other activities. Pavalko (1977:27)

These ideas about occupational identity, sense of community, and occupational socialization can be applied to dog show participants as well, particularly since winning championships for one or more of their dogs is like moving along a career trajectory, which they move along with their dogs. This trajectory consists of winning in various age grades of conformation competitions (such as puppy 6-9 months, puppy 9-12 months, adult dog, and veteran) and in various levels of skill in obedience trials (such as moving from a novice to open to utility to finally winning a UTC certificate). These wins, in turn, reflect on the owner’s skill and expertise in raising and showing his or her dogs, and the accumulation of wins provides a growing source of status and prestige among others in the group. In addition, to assist them in going through this socialization process, the show dog owners can look to mentors or more experienced group members for guidance, or they can get books and videos about their breed, as well as attend workshops or seminars or enroll in training programs with their dogs.

The influence of a reference group can be very important, too, in that individuals joining an occupational group look to others already in the field for acceptance and seek input from them to judge how they are doing as well and guide their behavior (Pavalko 1988: 89). In the dog show world, these signs of accomplishments are very clear, in the continual judging of the dogs at multiple events. The dog owner can enter the same dog or different dogs in many of these shows at the same event or in multiple shows that occur throughout the region, state, or nation – and many do.

All of these processes -- group identification, using group members as a reference group, engaging in anticipatory socialization, and finding group membership a source of self-enhancement and self-esteem -- likewise apply to show dog owners as they create their own trajectory through the dog show world using one or more dogs as a vehicle to propel them through this community. Even if their goal is personal fulfillment, they still engage in the same types of activities to advance their skills and reputation as those viewing dog show participation as a way to gain status and authority in selling dogs as a breeder or offering other product and support services. Thus, even if they obtain no money or seek none by showing their dogs, they are still on a career-like trajectory and are thereby influenced by the various factors associated with gaining an identity and forming a community through their occupational choice based on gaining increased skill and recognition in showing their dogs.

METHODS

In conducting my study, I went to two Specialty Dog Shows, the Northern California Pomeranian (Pom) Club in Vallejo, California on April 19, 2003 and the Northern California Siberian Husky (Sibe) Club in Novato, California on April 26. I selected these particular shows to attend by going to the American Kennel Club website and by searching for clubs that were holding events in Northern California. Then, I called the Event Secretary for further details, was advised these were events open to the public, and contacted the Club Chair or Club Secretary to introduce myself and make arrangements to attend. When I attended these events, I conducted a half-dozen informal interviews at each one to get a general background on the nature of dog shows and the participants. This information helped me in formulating the questions for the more in-depth interviews with my informants.

I selected two informants from the people I informally interviewed to interview in more depth. I chose them since they had all been long-term participants in the dog shows for their breed and had long raised that breed and were knowledgeable about both the breed and dog shows. In addition, they were very articulate when I spoke with them initially at the two dog shows and they were receptive to talking to me. All of the informants were women, since women comprise most of the participants in dog shows generally and in these two clubs, particularly the Pom Club. The two informants from the Pom Show were both officers, since the officers at this club were very interested in this project and enthusiastic about talking to me at their Specialty Show, as well as sending over others to talk to me. However, the two informants from the Sibe Show were both non-officers, since it was not possible to talk to any of the Sibe Club officers because they were busy working at that show and I found the non-officer participants I spoke to very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the project. So all of the

informants met my original criteria of choosing as informants those who appear most interested in talking to me, as well as being active participants and knowledgeable about the breed and group activities.

I conducted participation observation at the Northern California Pomeranian Club show on April 19, 2003 from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. I initially went to the Chief Solano Kennel Club All Breeds Show that was held during the day at the Solano County Fairgrounds, where I mainly observed, took photographs, and spoke to a few attendees showing their dogs to get a general sense of a typical dog show. Then, as the All Breeds show was ending at about 6 p.m. with the final Best of Breed and Best of Show competitions, I began observing at the Pom Show where people were starting to gather for the show, which was officially set to begin at 7 p.m., a half-hour after the Best of Show competition concluded. Then, I observed, took more pictures, and had informal interviews with a half-dozen attendees, after the Club Chair spoke to me and then suggested others for me to talk to or sent people over to talk to me. I asked those I talked to whether I could call them later by phone for more in-depth phone interviews, and they gave me their numbers.

I conducted participant observation at the Northern California Siberian Husky Club show on April 26, 2003 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This was set up as an all-day event, that followed a Sweepstakes for prize money on Friday at the same location. As at the Pom Show, I mainly observed, took photographs, and conducted a half-dozen informal interviews with participants who were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about talking to me. In fact, as I was conducting interviews with one person, two others volunteered to talk to me, too. Again, I asked those I spoke to about calling them later for in-depth phone interviews and got their numbers.

I conducted the telephone interviews with my informants about 2 weeks after each of these shows. After obtaining an informed consent for conducting the interview, I used a semi-structured interview format, since I developed a questionnaire guide which I followed to guide the interview. However, when the interviewees brought up new issues or I wanted further clarification or explanation, I used additional probes to learn more. These interviews were designed to explore these main areas: 1) the types of dogs the owner had owned and for how long and the reasons for choosing that breed; 2) the types of activities the owner participated in with his or her dog; 3) the owner's participation in a community of other owners with that breed; and 4) the owners views about the lifestyle, personality, and other characteristics shared by owners of that and other breeds or types of dogs. Additionally, I asked for some basic demographic data on their age, occupation, and marital status. A copy of this interview guide is in Appendix A.

I also used geographic and photographic mapping techniques to further describe and illustrate the dog show settings where the Pomeranian and Siberian Husky Shows took place. I collected some newsletters, Web site pages, American Kennel Club by-laws, rules, and regulations, and other literature about dog shows and training dogs which was available at the shows. And finally, to provide a context for the study, I collected statistics on the ownership of different breeds of dogs, articles about the personality traits of owners of different breeds, and a sampling of books about the different breeds of dogs and the two breeds that were the focus of this study.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING AND CONTEXT

Introduction

The ethnographic setting and context for the research is the dog show world of American Kennel Club shows. All of the AKC-chartered clubs, including the Northern California Pomeranian and Siberian Husky Dog Clubs from which I drew my informants, are subject to the same AKC standards, which are specified in detail in the AKC by-laws and the various booklets and other documents provided by the AKC with rules and regulations. These cover everything, from what types of dogs can be entered, how they have to be registered, and what standards judges have to follow in judging them.

Accordingly, to provide a background for the research, I have included descriptions from my observations at the Chief Solano Club All Breeds Show, which included some of the participants who later showed at the Pom and Sibe Specialty Shows, and at these two specialty shows. These descriptions also illustrate how I got to know the people at these events and developed relationships with the four people who became my informants.

The Ethnographic Setting at the Chief Solano Club All Breeds Show

The Solano Club All Breeds Show, which I attended on April 19, 2003 at the Solano County Fairgrounds from 12:45 p.m. to 6 p.m. was held both outside and inside the Exposition Hall at the County Fairgrounds. About 1600 entrants participated, and besides the entrants, there were various AKC officials and spectators, generally family members, resulting in approximately 2500 attendees at the show.

The Setting

Like the two Specialty Shows I attended, the Solano Show was conducted under the American Kennel Club Rules and provided another way for entrants to acquire points for their dog. Some of the Pomeranian and Siberian Husky owners (hereafter called “Pom” and “Sibe” or “Husky” for short, which is how the Pom and Sibe owners refer to their breed) had entered their dogs in the Toy and Working Dog competitions at the All Breeds Show, although I didn’t meet any of them until I went to their respective Specialty Shows. Instead, at the All Breeds Show, I focused on getting a general overview of the setting of an AKC dog show.

The fairground setting provided for the show provided a folksy country atmosphere. The fairgrounds are located across the road from the Marine World Six Flags Amusement park, a huge complex featuring rides and a display of marine mammals. To get there, you pass by a mix of small suburban homes, open fields, and a Holiday Inn and Motel 6. After I arrived shortly after 12:30 p.m. and followed a small sign with an arrow to a narrow access road, I pulled up to a small wooden guard house where a teenage boy, about 17 or 18, in jeans and T-shirt, pointed me to the dog show. He explained that “The dog show is everywhere on the fairgrounds and you can park anywhere,” and so I did.

Inside, I found a vast open field parking lot filled up by a mix of SUVs, trailers, and ordinary passenger cars in a series of haphazard rows, which allowed enough space for driving from row to row. After I pulled up next to a trailer, where a man and woman had set up two folding chairs alongside a small pen for two yapping dogs, I headed towards the fairgrounds with my camera bag, tape recorder, tapes, and notebook and went in through the open entry under the Solano County Fairgrounds sign.

Inside, the show was set up like a small city, which is common for these large All Breeds Shows that attract hundreds of participants. Directly ahead two oval rings for judging were marked off by chains, which separated the contestants with dogs inside the ring from the spectators, though right now there weren't any competitions in these rings. To the left, across a narrow path were several more rings, and then the path led to a bazaar of concession stands to the left and in front of the large Exposition Hall. The stands featured a wide range of products for dogs and dog owners, such as bedding, health care products, dog treats and toys, leashes, collars, signs, postcards, and magnets with pictures of dogs, and a stand for getting different varieties of hot and frozen coffee. People milled around, most with one or two dogs on leashes. Beyond the concession stands before the rings used to judge the obedience trials, a dozen or so groups of people had set up small-picnic like gatherings, where they were serving lunch on small tables.

Immediately inside the Exposition Hall, there were some long tables where club representatives were seated in front of show catalogs and several dozen stacks of free literature on AKC procedures for running shows, guidelines for entering dogs, and booklets describing upcoming AKC shows in nearby locations. In the center of the hall were a half-dozen more chain-enclosed rings for showing dogs, and at the far end of the hall was a food concession with sandwiches, chips, and sodas. After I picked up two dozen different brochures, I went out of the Exposition Hall and turned left to explore the nearby overnight parking area. It was filled with row after row of large RVs with names like Hurricane and Chieftain. This was one of the two large parking areas, where most of the out-of-town entrants parked their vehicles for the \$55 overnight parking fee. They had such large vehicles, since they traveled and lived there while on the road with their dogs. The other parking area was located on the other side of the Exposition

Hall. At other dog shows, out-of-towners who come for the weekend are common, since these shows are part of a circuit which occur almost every weekend at various locations in each state – and a majority of the show participants – about 50-80% of them, according to several estimates I heard from attendees – go to at least several dozen of these shows each year, in part so they can work on accumulating more points towards a championship for their dog, and in part because they simply enjoy attending these shows. They find them fun and enjoy socializing with others, primarily those who also have the same breed, since most of the show events are organized by the breed or group of dog.

The maps on the following pages show the exterior of the Fairgrounds and the interior of the Exposition Hall. I also took several rolls of film of both areas, and these photos are included in the Appendix. I have additionally included the map of the grounds that was included in the Judging Program, although there were some changes in the location of the main judging event. It was held outdoors in the areas designated as Ring 7 and 8, rather than inside in Ring 1.

Fig. 1: Exterior of Fairgrounds

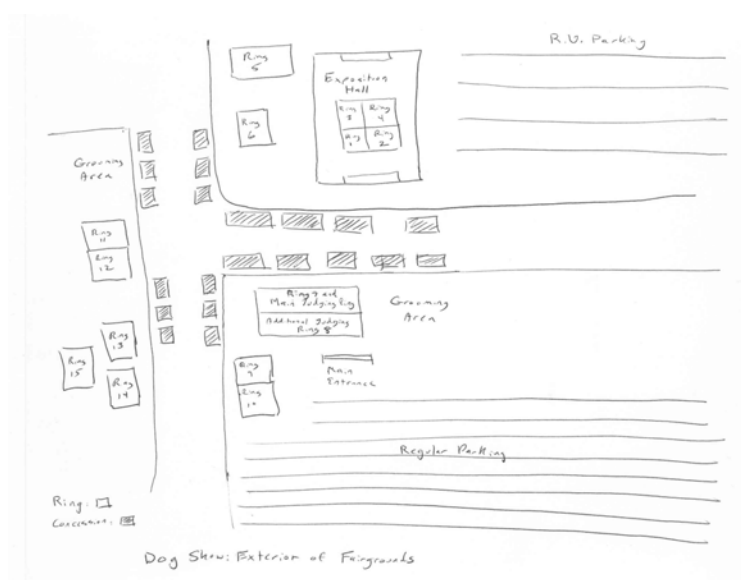


Fig. 2: Exterior of Fairgrounds: Official Program Map

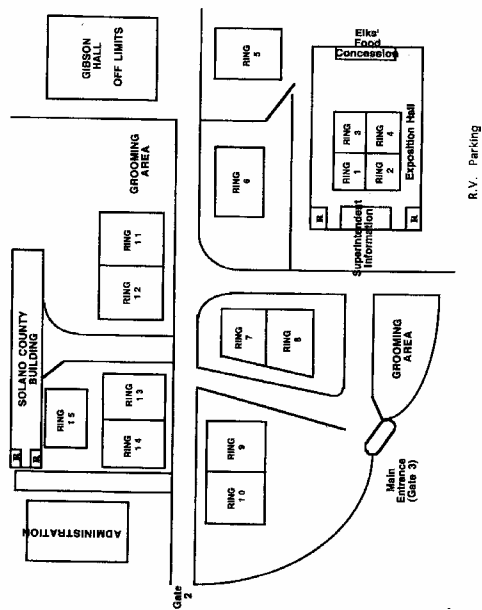
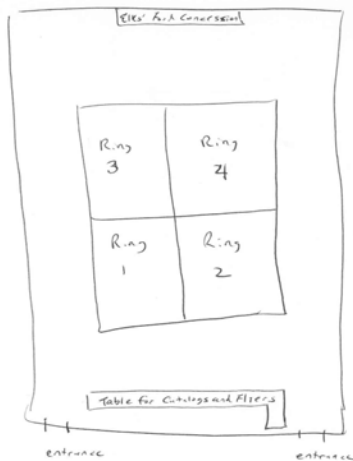


Fig. 3: Interior of Exposition Hall During Dog Show



Dog Show: Interior of Exposition Hall for Chief Solano Kennel Club Event

Structure of the Event

Like all AKC dog shows, the Solano County All Breeds show was highly structured according to a printed catalogue which included a schedule that marked the various phases, although the timing for the events was sometimes later than printed in the schedule. Additionally, as at AKC shows, the catalog included a listing of all of the exhibitors in every show, the names of the judges, and the names, addresses, and dogs entered by breed and date.

Like other all breed shows, there were simultaneous judgments for different breeds. In this case, the judging events were divided into activities at 15 different rings simultaneously, except for the judging for the Best of Group, Best of Show, and other final award winners which occurred only in the main ring in front of the Exposition Hall. At these concurrent events, attendees generally showed up only for the judging for their particular breed, if they were entered in the final events, or if they were a family member or friend of a particular entrant. Otherwise, people generally left the judging area with their dogs soon after their competition ended to return to their RVs or the informal picnic areas. While about 200 spectators sat around the main ring during the final awards (though their numbers diminished as the judging for each group concluded), about 3 dozen spectators observed at the other competitions. Within this framework, the major phases of the All Breeds Show were these:

- 8-8:30 a.m. Opening of show
- 8:30-3:00 p.m. Judging of Different Breeds in Rings 1-15
(Judging of Toy Dogs in Rings 1-4 in the Exposition Hall;
Judging of Obedience Trials in Rings 13-15;
Judging of the individual breeds in the other rings)
- 3:00-6:30 p.m. Judging of Best of Group and Best in Show
(Judging was according to the following order, each with its own
designated judge: 1) Terriers; 2) Non-Sporting Group;
3) Herding Group; 4) Hound Group; 5) Toy Group; 6) Working
Group; 7) Sporting Group; and finally Best Brace in Show
(2 dogs), Best Team in Show (4 dogs), and Best in Show.

Rules of the Event

The particular rules used for structuring and judging this event like the other events I attended were those of the American Kennel Club, which was founded in 1884. It is the governing body that licenses official AKC clubs, which sponsor events and give awards to entrants based on AKC rules. Winners seek to accumulate points for their dogs when they win in the Best of Breed, Best of Group, and Best of Show categories.

The AKC was founded as an independent, non-profit organization devoted to “the advancement and welfare of purebred dogs,” and it has become the principal registry of purebred dogs in the U.S., recording over 1 million dogs each year. The organization consists of over 500 independent clubs around the U.S., which are governed by club delegates. In addition, the AKC sanctions and licenses over 4500 clubs around the U.S., which hold events governed by its rules – over 15,000 competitions each year.

The specific rules governing these events are outlined in detail through AKC literature, such as distributed at the All Breeds show, and available through the AKC Web site. For example, as described in one booklet on the literature table: *Rules Applying to Dog Shows*, the following key rules governed both the All Breeds and the two Specialty shows I attended:

- A member show is a show at which championship points may be awarded, given by a club or association which is a member of the American Kennel Association.
- A specialty show is a show given by a club or association formed for the improvement of any one breed of pure-bred dogs, at which championship points may be awarded to said breed.

- All clubs or associations holding dog shows under the rules of The American Kennel Club...shall use the following colors for their prize ribbons or rosettes, in the regular classes of The American Kennel Club and the regular group classes.

There are also rules governing the classifications of dogs by group and breed, the age of dogs that can be entered, and the classification of dogs into a dozen categories, including: puppy, 12-18 month, novice, bred-by-exhibitor, American-bred, open, and winner classes, divided by the sex of the dog. Other rules govern obedience trials, qualifications for judges, and exclusions if a member of a judge's household is an entrant, professional handler, or show superintendent.

The rules additionally govern the selection of show superintendents and secretaries who run the event, and there are eligibility rules for dogs to compete, such as the requirement that dogs have to be individually registered in the AKC Stud Book or be part of an AKC-registered litter. All entered dogs also have to be entered in the name of the dog's owner and the owner has to submit the entry on the appropriate entry form with the required fee, and any entries by kennels can only come from registered AKC kennels. Additionally, rules govern the format and content of the show catalog, which is required at each show. The catalog must contain certain required information, including the exact location and dates of the show, show hours, list of all officers and members of the event, names and addresses of all judges, the superintendent and show secretary, names and addresses of all exhibitors, and information on all entered dogs.

Finally, at all AKC events, a series of rules govern the awarding of points to the winning dogs – the ultimate goal of the entrants. Dogs receive championship points for winning in various breed and sex categories, depending on the number of dogs entered in the competition, and they gain additional points for winning as the best of winners. Eventually, after participating

in a number of shows, if a dog wins 15 points, subject to certain qualifications (such as acquiring these points under two or more different judges), it becomes a Champion of Record

In short, an AKC competition – whether an All Breeds or a Specialty Show -- is a highly structured, rule-governed event, and certain locations are designated for officials involved in putting on the event. For instance, only the dog handlers and dogs are allowed in the ring along with the judge during a judging, and all the owners or the handlers showing the dog go through a series of specified procedures in showing their dogs. Generally they walk around in a circle, line up with their dogs, and take their dogs for a run around the ring. Then the judge picks the handlers with dogs for further consideration to step forward or remain in the ring, while the other handlers and their dogs leave the ring. After this, the judge may inspect each of the remaining dogs more closely or ask the handler to again walk or run around the ring with his or her dog.

After the judge winnows the field down to the winning dogs (generally three or four dogs), the judge gives out the appropriate ribbons. Often, an official AKC designated photographer will be called to take photographs of the winning dogs and owners, and no other photographer is allowed in the ring (as I discovered myself, when I stepped into the rings where the Dalmatians were being judged, soon after I arrived), although photographers are welcome to take photographs elsewhere at the show. Once the winners receive their ribbons and any photography is finished, everyone leaves the ring, after which the winners are congratulated by their families and other well-wishers. Soon after, the next group of handlers and dogs enter, until the competitions scheduled for that ring are over.

Dress and Proxemics

As common at these shows, the participants dressed in a wide range of clothing – from casual levis and jackets to suits and dresses, though the owners and handlers exhibiting the dogs tended to be more formally dressed. They were not only showing their dogs, but themselves, so many dressed for show. But otherwise, the choice of dress seemed to be a matter of individual preference, although the owners of some breeds, especially the Toy breeds, tended to dress up more, since they have smaller, more easy to handle dogs, while the owners of other breeds, such as the hounds, working, and sporting dogs, tended to be more casually dressed, since they have to handle more active dogs. The other major distinction in dress is that the judges tended to be more formally dressed than others to show their more formal role as show officials.

The primary spatial distinction was between what was inside the ring and outside, since only people exhibiting dogs and with other official roles were allowed in the ring, such as judges and at times the official photographer. In addition, there were certain designated areas for the officials, who were at the registration and literature tables, and the judges had certain places to stand in the ring during the judging events. Also, at the final judging of the winners in the main ring, a cordoned-off section was designated for the judges of all the competitions. This section was located outside of the ring to the left of the judges seated in the ring and any non-officials who happened to sit down there by mistake were quickly advised that this area was for judges only (as I was when I happened to sit down to change a roll of film).

Material Artifacts

As is common at these shows, there was also plenty of literature available – from catalogs and AKC brochures to announcements about other AKC events and information about related dog activities. For example, at the All Breeds Show, the literature included a catalog describing

which competitions were being judged where, along with information on the judges, entrants and dogs, while the program included a summary of this information, plus a map of the grounds. The catalog also included information about a second event with the same type of program, but with different judges, sponsored by the same local club. The scheduling of these two separate events on consecutive days was common for many AKC clubs, since it was a way a club could sponsor two shows back-to-back at the same location in order to cut down the costs of putting on the event and the costs for dog owners, many of whom traveled a long distance, to attend.

In addition, the literature included a variety of AKC literature on rules for all AKC sponsored dog shows, rules for registering and disciplining dogs, obedience show regulations, tracking test regulations, and rules governing dog show judges and stewards who assist judges. There were rules, too, for dealing with misconduct, such as arguments with officials or participants, bad language, and mistreatment of a dog. Still other literature include programs for upcoming AKC events in the area, booklets with advice on selecting “The Right Dog for You,” on caring for and traveling with dogs, and a flyer on the AKC’s new website with show and entry information for different levels of Web site membership. Plus there was official literature from the American Dog Owners Association, an organization promoting responsible dog ownership for pet owners, such as a membership flyer and brochures on “Selecting the Right Puppy,” “Training and Housebreaking Your Puppy,” “The Health and Care of Your Puppy,” and “Canine Travel Tips.”

Aside from this official literature, a few free magazines were also available. One was the *Dog News*, a biweekly publication distributed by one of the concessionaires selling a supermarket of dog supplies, which featured news and ads about all of the breeds. These publications helped to support the competition focus at these shows through their photographs of

show winners and ads from breeders who bred dogs from show champions. But other types of commercial or promotional literature, such as for dog products or service, was not available, and there was no place for anyone to distribute or promote anything not related to dog shows, as I discovered, when I asked at the All Breeds Show information table, if I could put out some flyers about the “Do You Look Like Your Dog” website. One of the women at the table immediately told me that I would need permission from an AKC official before putting out any literature, although I was able to personally give out flyers when I took photos of owners and their dogs.

Observing at the Event

I spent the day mainly observing, taking pictures, collecting literature, and becoming familiar with AKC procedures and rules. Mostly I took pictures along the main walkways with the concession stands and a few pictures of the dogs being shown in the rings. Then, as I walked around through the SUVs and trailers in the parking lot and took photographs, I had some occasional conversations with the people I met, and I began to get a sense of the way the dog owners of different breeds distinguish themselves and other dog owners, which helped to support my expectation that I would find major differences when I focused on comparing Pomeranian and Siberian Husky dog owners. For example one Pug owner, who used to own a much larger Grand Pyrenees dog when he was younger, noted these distinctions:

Some people show hunting dogs and get these kinds of dogs if they go hunting. But the toy dogs were bred to be lap dogs. Pugs want to be around you. Younger people may chose larger, active dogs, while older people may choose toy dogs, since they are easier to care for...If a dog is more expensive to care for, it might be obtained by someone in a better financial position...Like the poodle. It needs grooming. Usually, you have to have a professional do this, unless you do it yourself.”

He also thought the personality associations between the different breeds and their owners were to be expected and should be encouraged. After all, he stated: “It’s a disaster, if you get the wrong type of dog not suited to you.”

Then, after these informal conversations, I took some photographs of some of the exhibitors showing some of the smaller breeds, such as the Hairless and Powderpuff Chinese Crested Dogs, inside the Exposition Hall, and around 3:30, I went outside to the large main ring, where the judging for the Best of Group, Brace, Team, and Show events were going on. These were the culminating events of the show, and observers had gathered around the ring, and the stewards assisting the judge were positioned at a long table under a tent. About three dozen judges who had been judging at other events sat in two rows of chairs in a taped-off section for judges, while most of the other people were seated on their own folding chairs or were standing or seated on the grass to watch this final phase of the show.

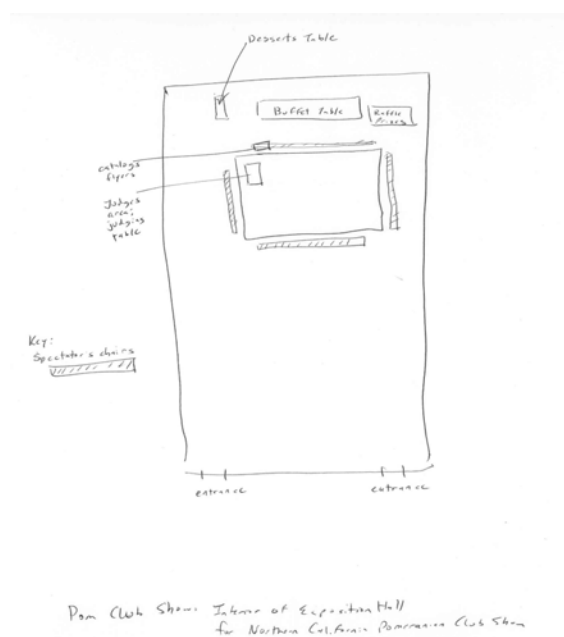
When I arrived, the judging for the Terrier Group had just concluded, and the judges were starting to evaluate the Non-Sporting Group, Brace and Team, after which they would judge the Herding, Hound, Toy, Working, and Sporting Groups, followed by the Best Brace and Team in the Show, concluding with the Best in Show. Each showing followed the same procedure. The group walked around the ring with their dogs, lined up, the judge looked at each dog closely, while the dog either stood on the ground or on the table if a smaller dog. Then, each person in turn ran around the ring with their dogs. Afterwards, the judge would call certain owners to come forward with their dogs, while the others left the ring, and eventually the judge ended up with up to three owners in the ring, who were then told to stand in front of the small markers on the ground for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place. After that, the judge gave each winner a ribbon or plate for winning, and the winner left the ring.

I continued observing here until about 6 p.m., when the judging for the Best Brace in Show was just beginning, since the Chair of the Northern Pomeranian Club had invited me to a buffet they were having shortly before their show began. Although the Pom Show itself couldn't begin, according to AKC bylaws, until 30 minutes after the judging for the Best of Show at the All Breeds competition, people were starting to gather and set up for the show, and I wanted to arrive early to introduce myself and start meeting some Pom owners.

The Ethnographic Setting at the Northern California Pomeranian Show

Just as the All Breeds show had been carefully structured into a series of phases, so was the Pom Show, which was held inside the Exposition Hall. From about 5 p.m. on, the Pom owners and their families were gradually gathering around the ring, many of them to groom their dogs to prepare for the judging. The arrangement of this show is illustrated in Figure 4.

Fig. 4: Interior of Exposition Hall at Pom Show



Soon after the buffet which started at 6:30 p.m., the show began at 7:00 p.m. and was structured into a series of phases in a single ring, concluded by a raffle after the Best of Breed was announced. More specifically, these events and the approximate times they occurred were these:

- 7:00-8:00 p.m. Sweepstakes Show for cash awards, featuring different types of dogs (divided into competitions of puppies of different ages and genders, followed by an award for the best in Sweepstakes and the best of the opposite sex in Sweepstakes)
- 8:00-10:00 p.m. Specialty Show based on AKC standards (divided into competitions of puppies of different age, genders, and type of breeding, with an award for the Best of Breed, Best of Winners, Best of Opposite Sex, and Best Puppy in Regular Class)
- 10:00-10:40 p.m. Raffle of Prizes

The Importance of the Informal Interviews

Once I arrived, I soon began my informal interviews, using what I had learned about the overall structure and rules at AKC events to help guide my interviews. I asked one of the men grooming his dog where I could find the Chair, who I had spoken to on the phone (I'll call her Mary), and he pointed to where she was standing towards the back, talking to some of the officials and stewards who would help with the judging. I noticed that the ring section, which had previously been divided into 4 smaller rings for the day's judging, was now set up as a single smaller ring towards the rear of Exposition Hall. Just beyond it was a table that was set up with covered dishes for the buffet, and to the right of that was another table with raffle gifts.

The Pom officials and other participants I met were immediately very receptive, which helped to make this first meeting go very smoothly and paved the way for my easily setting up the in-depth interviews with two informants. Mary, who was dressed in a simple white pantsuit, was very warm and friendly when I went over and introduced myself, though we had barely

spoken on the phone, and she said she would send some people over to talk to me. When I asked about taking photographs, she said that would be fine. I found a chair at the back of the hall and set up my equipment. Though I didn't immediately notice this, as I spoke to people, observed the show, and took photographs, I noticed that the great majority of the group (maybe 75%) was women, many of them older women of 40 and older. A number were fairly heavy-set, and while most were casually dressed, a few were dressed in fairly dressy fashions.

These informal interviews proved extremely helpful in giving me insights into the culture of the Pom owners, their reasons for choosing the breed, the kinds of activities they engaged in with their dog, and how they viewed Pom owners as similar and different compared to owners of other breeds. These were all questions that I planned to pursue in my more in-depth interviews, and these informal discussions helped me to better formulate the questions I wanted to ask.

For example, when I spoke to the Club Treasurer who later became one of my informants, (I'll call her Melinda), she emphasized the importance of companionship choosing a Pom for herself – a theme I heard from many Pom owners, in contrast to the other reasons a person might choose another breed of dog – such as being drawn to a sporting or working dog to engage in outdoors activities with that dog. As Melinda told me referring to herself and to other people who choose Poms:

I've been into Poms since I was a teen...I think it's because it's totally a companion dog. The sports dogs will retrieve. The hounds will flush things out. The terriers will go to the ground and burrow instinctively. The toy dogs just want to be your companion. That's their sole purpose. That's the quality they are bred for through miniaturization, and that makes them an very easy dog to fit into today's lifestyle. They are good for traveling, for metro areas.

Another club member -- I'll call her Ann – emphasized the sociality of Poms, along with their lovable, obedient nature. As she commented:

The Pom has an active obedient personality...They are great at being your best buddy and companion...The Pom is very social. You can keep 2 males and females together, or a male and female if the female is spayed. That's not the same with all breeds. Some breeds combined together might fight...They are also wonderful companions...They can go on walks with you.

These informal interviews were also helpful in pointing up some distinctions I might look for between Pom and Sibe owners, such as in the way they showed their dogs. For instance, when Melinda returned to talk some more shortly before the show began, she pointed out that almost all of the owners showed their own dogs, because of the close bond of the Poms with their owners, whereas some owners of the larger dogs use professional handlers, although I later learned at the Siberian Husky show that almost all of these owners showed the own dogs, too, but for different reasons -- because it was difficult to train a Siberian Husky, and even more so to have a Siberian Husky respond to anyone else.

Observing at the Pom Show and More Interviews

At 7:00 p.m. the show started. This first show was the Sweepstakes, which was set up much like the Specialty Show judging, except there were cash prizes. As the entrants lined up to go into the ring with their dogs, about 100 people were now assembled around the ring, most seated on folding chairs they had brought. Meanwhile, along the walls, many of the entrants were grooming their dogs, who were on small tables or in their lap.

As at the All Breeds Show, mostly I took photographs and returned from time to time to where I had left my equipment to talk further to Melinda and others. These continued conversations gave me a chance to test out some of the major themes I hoped to explore further in the interviews about the differences between the owners of different breeds. Melinda was especially aware of and articulate about these differences. In her view, there were distinctions

among different breeds and groups of dogs and their owners, and male-female differences as well. As she noted in a series of interviews over the next hour:

If you compare herding and hounds people, the herding people tend to be uptight; the hounds people tend to be laid back. [WHY?] Because herding dogs tend to be very disciplined and want to follow the rules, whereas hounds are more independent and less predictable dogs. People choose the dogs that are right for them, so you will find differences...

You'll find there are more and more women owners and handlers. With the sporting breeds, there are more men. With the working breeds, too. But with the hounds, the herding dogs, the smaller dogs there are mostly women. [WHY THE GROWING NUMBER OF WOMEN INVOLVED IN OWNING AND HANDLING DOGS?] Because women generally have more nurturing instincts. They tend to get more out of the dogs. They have more rapport with them.

She also suggested that that some differences “go by breed” and that certain personal and physical characteristics might lead to choosing a different breed. As she noted:

Different breeds have different attributes. Toy dogs don't run fast and can easily go someplace in a car, so you can be less able to own a toy. You can be handicapped, overweight. But with a sporting dog or hound, you usually have to be more physically active. Also, different dogs have different requirements. Someone can live in an apartment with many toys.

She further compared choosing a breed and joining a group organized around a particular breed as akin to choosing a family – a theme I very much wanted to explore further in the interviews. As she noted:

Many people get into choosing a particular breed by starting with one. (of that breed). Then they feel this is working or not...Many look into different breeds before they decide what to get. When someone comes to me, I tell them to visit people who have that breed...Choosing a breed a joining a group to show with is like being adopted into a family. If you enjoy the people in the breed, you will enjoy the breed, too. It becomes like a home away from home. That's different than for the pet people who don't show...The pet people don't have much connection with one another. It's more personal when you show. It's like going to visit your adopted family.

Melinda also distinguished between people with different types of dogs, noting how different characteristics of the dogs fit the people who chose them, too. Plus she noticed

differences in the way people dressed at the shows and differences in age groups and the choice of dog breeds, too. As she noted:

People like the dogs that have similarities with them. Terriers are tough, they fight, they are combative, and the people who choose them might have these characteristics too.... Then, take sport dogs, like Labs and Golden Retrievers. They like to be outside, and they are shown (by people) in sports clothing...The people at Pom events are usually dressier..And the people with Siberian Huskies have to do a lot of running, so they are “more athletic, outdoorsy....But the owners of Pom dogs, don’t need to run, and there are a lot of mature people. Sometimes you’ll find that a lot of people with larger dogs, choose toy dogs when they get older...There’s a fit between what people do and the type of dog they get. hat you feel comfortable with is a reflection of your lifestyle...There are so many kinds of people, so many kinds of dog. There is no right or wrong dog...Nothing is right or wrong. What appeals to the person is what’s important.

She also emphasized the sociable qualities of the Pom and how many people with Poms had more than one dog – a theme I later heard from participants at the Sibe show, except that they emphasized their dog’s need to be a part of a pack. As Melinda noted:

With a Pom dog, since it’s very sociable, you don’t have just one. It’s always good to have a companion. It’s good to have a buddy...My friend had one dog and her dog wouldn’t eat when she left. When she got a second Pom, there was no separation anxiety...She was rejuvenated by the younger dog... But you have to be careful in what dogs you pair with Poms. They can be mixed with little dogs. However, some big dogs that aren’t aware of their body space could be a problem because they will sit down or walk over them. Or they’ll walk on them. That’s why I won’t allow our boxer with him...The size difference is dangerous for little dogs.

Finally, she spoke about the Pom’s need for closeness. which attracted a certain type of owner.

A Pom wants to be right there with you. I can’t even go to the bath room by myself...It’s the geneticis. A golden retriever is a great obedience dog. When my family got one and my children took it to the school playground and threw the ball, the golden retriever would bring it right back. The dog circled it and sat in front of me with it and nipped at it like a bird. Then, when I got my first show Pom, it immediately started to heel at my side...You have to expect dogs to do certain things. They are subject to what they are programmed to do.

Such comments were extremely helpful. Not only did they support the major theories about personal characteristics, choice, and dog ownership, but they showed that people would be receptive to talking to me, as well as knowledgeable and articulate. Likewise, when I took photographs, I found everyone very receptive and eager to pose with their dogs. Meanwhile, as I continued to take photos and talk to people, I noticed that the Pom owners expressed their closeness and sociability with their dogs throughout the evening by continuing to groom them -- and they often bent down while the dogs were lined up during the show to freshen up their grooming, too.

Towards the end of the show, I told Mary, the Show Chair, that I needed to find a couple of additional informants to talk to for the project, and she suggested I should talk to another member I'll call Wendy, and subsequently Wendy became my second informant. Wendy came over to join me and Melinda, and though I didn't have time to talk to her in much depth at this meeting, her comments echoed similar themes about the differences between dog owners and their dogs and the sociability of Poms. As she noted:

Both my husband fell in love with Poms. We liked the look. They are smart, cuddly. They kiss up to you a lot. We wanted something that would do this, since the Afghans (the dog which she currently had but her husband didn't like) are very independent and catlike.

Finally, the show concluded with an informal raffle, where Mary read out the ticket numbers as a young boy drew them out of a bowl and people came up to claim their prize. The prizes featured a mix of donated items, from dog toys and treats to a small radio and TV tray table set.

The Ethnographic Setting at the Northern California Siberian Husky Show

The setting for the Northern California Siberian Husky Show (called the Sibe Show by Club members) was very different from the shorter and much more informal Pom Show. Though both shows followed the same AKC rules, the Sibe Show, held at the Marin Inn in Novato, California, couldn't have been more different – reflecting the basic premise I was exploring in the study – that there are major differences between the characteristics of dog owners and their communities based on the breeds they choose. Not only was it the event held as a two day Specialty Show, which include obedience trials and a formal banquet, in contrast to the four hour Sibe Show, but the people were very different. In contrast to the warm, friendly reception I had gotten from the officers at the Sibe Show, I found the Sibe officer I had expected to be my primary informant cool and distant, because she was working at the show, and had to remain focused on this task. She also made no effort to introduce me to any of the other officers at the show, in part because she was very busy, and she also felt I should simply observe quietly like just another spectator. As a result, I found other people to talk to among the participants who had come to show their dogs, and since they proved to be very articulate and knowledgeable, as well as long-time exhibitors, I did my informal interviewing with them and two of them became my informants for the follow-up interviews. Following is a description of this setting and my experience in making connections with the informants I chose for my study.

Observing at the Obedience Trials

In contrast to the Pom Show, which had no Obedience trials, since few Pom owners train their dogs in obedience because companionship is much more important, the Obedience Trials were an important event at the Sibe Show, though less so than the Conformance Show at the

center of most dog shows. In this case, many Sibe owners who show their dogs put them through obedience training because Sibes are quite difficult to train to obey, and this training is a way to keep control over their dog. But they enjoy the challenge, though in the mixed breed obedience trials, Sibes tend not to compete as well as many other breeds, such as the far more docile and obedience Golden Retrievers, Labradors, and Herding Dogs.

I arrived a few minutes before the 8 a.m. start of the Obedience Trials. It was about a 45 minute ride from my home in Oakland, California, across the Richmond Bay Bridge and to Novato. The Marin Inn is a ranch-style hotel with a large courtyard in the back, where the Sibe show was held. As at the Northern California Pomeranian (Pom) show the week before, I brought my tape recorder (though I didn't use it), camera, and a small notebook for taking notes.

As I drove towards the motel, a few blocks away, I saw a couple of people on bikes who were running their dogs, who ran beside them. I pulled into the small parking lot that paralleled the main building, got my equipment (recorder, camera, and notebook), and walked through the main lobby of the hotel, through the dining room, and into the courtyard. As I did, I saw a large ring about 30 yards away to my right, a long table to the left of this with raffle gifts, and immediately to my left a smaller ring that was set up for the Obedience Trials. I saw a few people standing near the raffle table and went over to them to ask where the person I thought would be my key informant (I'll call her Henrietta) was. Since we had had some fairly extensive phone conversations and I gotten some informative e-mails from her, including responses to my interview questions, I had thought she would be my initial contact, who would introduce me to other officers in the group. She had also given me some tips about what to say ("Don't talk to people while they are working. Don't talk to entrants before they go into the ring, because they are under a lot of tension then and have to stay focused.").

However, after one of the people near the raffle table pointed out where Henrietta was talking with some of the judges at the obedience trial, Henrietta was too busy to talk to me. Though I went over to say a quick hello, thinking it would be rude not to introduce myself, Henrietta brusquely told me: “I’m sorry. I can’t talk to you now,” so I went over to the entrance to the small ring where the obedience trials were just beginning and I took out my camera, ready to take pictures.

Besides the handful of entrants for each trial – 1-2 entrants for the Novice B, Open A, Utility A, Utility B, and Veteran classes, and 5 for the Open B, as listed in the Show Catalog, there were only a couple of other observers besides myself. In the ring, two jumps had been set up – one was a flat broad jump; the other the high jump, which had several bars across it. After I observed for a few minutes, I began using the approach I adopted for the rest of the day of simply introducing myself as an anthropology student and asking questions about what was going on. And then if people proved receptive, I asked some of the other questions guiding my research – why did they choose the breed of dog they did and what kind of activities did they participate in with their dog.

For example, the first of the participants I questioned was Barbara (another pseudonym), and after I asked what was going on, explaining that I was here as an anthropology student doing a project on dogs and dog owners, and she helpfully explained what was happening. She explained that the owners would send their dogs through a series of trials, while the judge observed and scored each performance against a perfect score. The owner would give the dog commands to jump, halt, come, and go. As I watched, one of the dogs, jumped over a set of bars. Then, the dog went to a group of small metal-looking triangles on the ground and picked up one of them and brought it to the owner, after which one of the obedience trial assistants (I’ll

call her Judy) went into the ring and picked up all of the objects. Later, I learned what the dog was doing, when I saw Judy bring a container of objects to the owner about to begin a trial. The owner picked out one of these objects, rubbed it, put it back in the container, and Judy scattered them on the ground. Then, when the dog went to the group of objects, its task was to find by scent the object the owner had rubbed and bring that back to the owner.

Barbara also explained about the five exercises the dog would do in this first series of tests, which I later learned were the Utility A and B trials. These were: 1) the owner would walk with the dog and give commands the dog should follow; 2) the dog would have to find an object; 3) the dog would have to bring back a glove; 4) the dog would have to stand by itself, without moving, while the owner left; and 5) the dog would have to jump over the bars.

Barbara noted that there were four different classes, although they were doing them in the reverse order than listed in the catalog, because “the younger dogs are more likely to soil the ring.” These four classes were: 1) Novice (for dogs that were just “beginning” their training), divided into Novice A and B (with B for dogs who had already completed the Novice tests and were seeking to acquire more points); 2) Open (like “high school”), with Open A and B classes; 3) Utility A and B (like “college”), and 4) OTCH (an even higher level based on getting a certificate of achievement), though no dogs were competing in this test, and later I was advised that only 2 Siberian Huskies had ever achieved this level, because Siberian Huskies are especially difficult to train.

Barbara explained that the A classes are for a dog who “has not gotten a degree,” while the B classes were for a dog who “has gotten a degree but is still showing.” When I wondered why one or two of the Club officials were moving the bar, Barbara explained. “They move the bar, since the dogs are of different sizes. The height of the broad jump changes too.” Then she

explained that they measured the dog by its withers, and adjusted it accordingly. There would be even more changes at the all breeds show, since there would be lots of sizes, but here there weren't that many changes since these were all one breed.

Then, I began making notes as I observed the Open B class. First I observed a man I'll call Jack, whose wife later became one of my two informants. He was wearing a hat and outdoors jacket. First, I saw him direct his dog to jump over the high jump. Then, he directed the dog to come when called. Next came the figure 8, in which his dog was supposed to follow him as he walked in a figure out around three people. Following this, he had to perform a series of turns, as the judge directed him to turn right, then left. Finally, he directed his dog to jump over the broad jump. As he performed each process, the judge would call out "Exercise finished," and make a notation on her judging pad.

Next came a woman I'll call Katy, who later won the award for the best performance. She followed the same procedures as did Jack. First, she threw a bone and directed him to jump over the high jump. She asked her dog to come to her, did the figure 8, and then took him through a series of turns, threw the bone and asked him to retrieve it, and directed him to jump over the broad jump. Though these were the same exercises, it helped me to see the pattern to make notes on them again. Essentially, the process was like a ritual, with the judge taking notes to grade the dog's success in performing the ritual at the directions of the owner.

Then, when the owners left their dogs and walked out of the ring, Barbara explained what was happening. "The owners bring their dogs and ask them to sit for 3 minutes while they are gone. Then they will ask them to lie down for 5 minutes while they are can." Meanwhile, they were supposed to ignore any distractions and remain still. However, when one of the dogs

moved around restlessly, Barbara pointed out that would disqualify the dog. “That dog raised his butt. He zeroed out.”

Then, as I continued to talk to Barbara and Katy, their comments highlighted the differences between different breeds and how different attracted interest from different types of owners. They also underlined the theme I heard again and again from Husky owners – their independence and sometimes irascible but lovable nature – a quality that some ascribed to their owners, too. For example, here are some of their comments.

(Barbara) The Border Collies are very good. They need to be working and want to please. You have to be pretty soft with them, though. You can't yell at them. They want to do what you ask them. But Huskies couldn't care less...Obedience didn't interest them. They were bred to pull sleds, and it's difficult to get them to behave and follow orders, though you can get them to want to do something for you by showing them how they can benefit by doing so (such as if they'll get a nice treat of food in return for doing something.

(Katy) I chose a Husky when a friend had some puppies and offered me a puppy. I grew to love the dog...though it's difficult to raise a Husky. Many are abandoned because they are hard to handle. People can't train them as well as other dogs. That's why I took him to puppy class, because it was hard to get him to obey. However, you have to keep up this obedience training. They have to always be in training. [HOW?] You use treats and correction. And maybe sometimes some physical discipline. You have to give her a snack if she doesn't behave.

I also noticed that the Husky owners seemed to take a certain pride in their dog's ornery independent nature, and they seemed to enjoy the continual test of wills, as they sought to assert their own power as the leader of the pack. It was a theme I hoped to explore further in the interviews as a key difference between the Pomeranian and Siberian Husky owners – companionship and sociability on the one hand versus independence and power struggles on the other. For example, here are some examples of their comments reflecting this pride in their ornery independence and their battle to emerge as a leader their dog would respect.

(Katy) There's a difference between a dog's behavior inside and outside of the ring. Outside my dog behaves if she wants to. In the ring, she knows she's working. So it's easier to get her to behave during the shows.

(Barbara). I have 8 dogs and I gave them both group and individual lessons... I had to do something, because she (referring to the dog she was showing today) was smart enough to be able to humiliate me....I think it's nice to train in a group, since you can socialize them. However, individual lessons are good, too, since people who are serious do personal work...It takes the two approaches to train a Siberian.

(Katy) Siberians have a will of their own. They have the capacity to do really well. One Siberian did 200 (a perfect score in obedience), so they can do it. But they have the ability to say: "Not today." So people had to have certain qualities to be successful with a Husky... You need firmness. You need to be very . loving and very **firm**.

The Husky owners also described their reason for providing their dog with a companion very differently than the Siberian Husky owners, emphasizing the importance of being part of a pack rather than referring to the desire to be sociable. For instance, as Katy noted:

I have had both one dog and two. It's nice for the dog to have another dog to be with. They are pack animals. Only one sometimes can work, but they don't like to be alone. So that's why she comes to work with me everyday...I work in a small office so I can take her with me.

Then it was time for the Veterans to go into the ring. There were only two of them – one owned by Jack, who showed another dog before then, and another owner. When I asked what veterans were, Barbara explained: "Veterans are 9 or older. They are usually retired. The exercises are fairly easy. There's no jumping. They're the same as the novice exercises."

I wondered if the dogs were aware of when they won, and Katy explained, again alluding to the independence of Siberians. "The dogs know when they win and when they are screwing you." She noted that it was more difficult to get her dog to behave when she was training her. "She won't work as well outside, but she will once she gets in the ring. She knows it's a show."

When I asked if the Siberian Husky might be shown by a handler other than the owner, as with some large dogs, Katy said no, since Siberians don't respond well to strangers. "Siberians are not very interested in strangers. They are not like Golden Retrievers or Labradors."

Observing at the Conformation Show

Since it was about 10 a.m. and the Conformation Show had just begun, I left the Obedience Trials, which were continuing for another hour, to go to the main ring area, where the local officers and judges were just starting to show some of the dogs. I joined a group of spectators who were starting to gather and asked what was happening here. One woman – I'll call her Sally -- explained that they were judging the sweepstakes for the puppy dogs from 6-9 months, then from 9-12 months, and now they were up to the dogs from 12 to 18 months. After that, they would separately judge the bitches in these various classifications, and then judge the veterans. Later, when I looked in the catalog, I saw the different classifications of dogs being judged in detail. Besides the judgments for the different age groups for puppies and bitches, there were judgments for bred-by exhibitor dogs, American Dogs, Veteran Dogs, and sled dogs, followed by the same sequence of judgments for bitches, plus additional judgments for dogs that had already been judged champions.

Meanwhile, as I learned what was going on in the conformation ring, in the obedience ring, they were giving out the final awards, and I returned briefly to take a few pictures. Then, when I returned to the main ring, Sally answered my questions about the competitive points system. As she indicated, the dog with "the highest number of points wins," but for any dog to win it had to have enough points to qualify. "You need to have 170 out of 200 points to qualify." She also pointed out that the dogs were not competing with each other, but with the 200 score.

That's because the dogs needed to at least qualify to place. She pointed out that only 2 Siberians had achieved the high level OTCH level, because "it's not easily done."

Then, after observing and taking photographs for about an hour, I went over to the raffle table, where I saw a variety of items laid out on the table. Unlike the more haphazard collection of items in the Pomeranian raffle, these items were almost all related to the Siberian breed. There were a couple of books about Siberian Huskies, a few dog toys with the heads of Siberians, a blanket, and other items. Plus there were two raffles – one for the day's event and the other for the banquet to be held later that night. Two men and the Raffle Chair – I'll call her Sandi – were behind the table selling tickets. A plastic bag was next to each item, since this was a more structured and selective choice raffle, unlike the simpler "you get whatever item is up if your name is picked" raffle at the Pom event. The way the raffle worked, Sandi explained, is "You put a ticket in the bag for each item you want to take a chance on." So that's what I did to be more of a participant – I put a few tickets in the bags next to two stuffed toys I especially liked – a small stuffed Siberian Husky Dog and a stretch dog toy with the head of a Husky.

Then, after taking my chances at the raffle, I picked up a lunch, since it was around noon, and headed back to the main ring to take more photographs and notes. A few other photographers were also now there too, one roving around and two who had set up tripods. When a few people asked if I was a journalist, because they saw me taking photos and writing notes, I explained about being an anthropology student doing an anthropology project, and some became quite interested in learning more or answer questions to help with the project. Soon after that, it became very sunny and hot at the main ring, and a dozen or so people moved from there to a shady spot to the far right side of the ring, where they set up chairs under a tarp. I

joined the influx to this area, and that became a kind of home-base for the rest of the afternoon until the show ended around 4:30 p.m.

Doing Interviews at the Siberian Husky Show

Apart from taking photos from time to time, I now began to interview the people who were there about their experiences with Huskies and why they got them and I found people very receptive, as at the Pom Show. From time to time, people asked if I was a journalist, and I simply explained again that I was there as an anthropologist doing a student project.

Through these interviews, I gained additional insights about the structure of the AKC competitions, as well as further input for my central research question on the differences between the owners of the different types of dogs.

For example, when I spoke to one woman I'll call Carol, a breeder whose dogs were being shown by several owners, she echoed the same theme of Siberian independence in choosing this breed and described how she participated in active sports with them. As she stated:

I was drawn to them based on their personal traits. They are clowns. They're independent. They're very social with other dogs. They are very pack oriented. They see the owner as a partner. I take them sledding, showing, and carting. (which is a 3-wheeled contraption)...I also take gang racing and to the Sierra Nevada Dog Drives, and am the Race Secretary for this club.

She also provided more background on the structure of the AKC's point system.

I go to about three races a year and gain both national and international points for these races....The number of points a winning dog can achieve depends on the number of dogs entered in a show. You need a certain number of dogs so you have enough for the show to qualify for the 5 pt. Majors. At the specialties, you generally get more dogs of that breed than at the All Breeds shows. At the All Breeds show, you generally get 2 to 3 points. You need 3 points or higher for it to be considered a major show...A champion dog needed to win 15 points, with at least 6 of them acquired at major shows.

She explained about the importance of the Best in Show category, too.

All of the winners from each of the categories come together to select the Best of Show. The other owners get ribbons when they win, but only one person will get points for that show – the first place for each class. All of the first place winners then come back with the other 1st place winners to determine the winning dog.

She also distinguished between the shows that give points and those that give cash.

The shows either give points or cash, and the amount is determined by the number of entries. With the sled races you can win money. The purse is generally about \$3500. But there's no money at the AKC events.

I also found the importance of competition for the Siberian Husky owners when a woman sitting nearby – I'll call her Jose -- explained that people participated because of their love of competition, despite the very little money involved, noting that:

We don't do it for the money. The major reason (for competing) is the love of the breed...The Siberian is basically untrainable. Yet people still want to do the best they can....Some of us are very competitive...Besides going to dog shows is fun, a great way to meet new friends. We show against each other and drive to the dog show to get there. Then, win or lose, you go home after spending a great day."

Then, as the conversations and informal interviews continued, several people sitting nearby commented on their reasons for getting or liking a Siberian Husky – again pointing up their independent nature, such as expressed in the following comments:

I love their pizzazz and their independent streak.

They're very sweet, they're clowns.

It's a combination of things that led me to get a Husky. They're easy to care for. You don't have to primp and fluff them.

Though it's difficult to train Huskies to retrieve because of their independent streak, all breeds can learn to retrieve. They can play fetch when they want. So it's up to the owner to make them want to do something to get them to do it.

Several people also described their very active lifestyle with their dogs. For example, Katy took her dogs on trips into the Sierras with other Siberian owners. Some traveled fairly long distances on these trips – coming from Washington, Oregon, Arizona, as well as California.

The discussions at the show also showed the Sibe owners' awareness of and interest in dominance and power relationships in their dogs – an interest I later found reflected in their awareness of politics in the world of showing dogs. For example, one woman, I'll call Andrea, who came from North of Sacramento, had this to say:

The dogs are very aware of which one was the alpha male dog, and the female will seek to mate with this dominant dog if she can choose. The dogs know where they stand from when they are born in a litter...Say if two dogs are fighting. A stare from a dominant dog can break them up. This dominance order in dogs is just like with people, and it true of the other northern breeds, too, like the Akita and Malamute. Dogs are like people. They have a presence or not. A submissive dog won't rise...The dominance order can change when a new dog is introduced to a group, and there's a struggle for dominance. But once a dog is older, it doesn't need to do this (fight for dominance). The older dogs don't pick fights, though they might bluff sometimes, say by staring in a threatening way. The reason they don't have to fight is that the other dogs recognize their dominance, so a simple stare can be enough to get the other dog to back down.

Then, as I listened as the women sitting around me talked among themselves, the discussion turned to ways to better compete through using various breeding techniques and looking for the right qualities to make a good match – most notably having good proportions or being a proven past winner. For example, some of the women comments were:

If I bred my dog, I would expect 7 puppies and 6 of them to be show quality.

Good breedings really improve the breed.

I'm looking for a female with nice proportions to breed with my dog.

If I was going to mate my bitch, I would make sure he has a good frontal assembly.”

You should take a dog to the best stud or bitch that you can afford. Otherwise you are wasting your money.

The owners felt the dogs as well as themselves experienced the thrill of besting others in competition, too. For example, when I asked if the dogs' personality was changed as a result of being show dogs, one woman commented: “When they become show dogs, some dogs seem to

feel they are number 1. They benefit from the added attention. They become especially outgoing, friendly. They say: ‘look at me....I’m here and special.’

When I asked several members of the group around me why they were drawn to the breed, they stressed the appeal of the Husky’s independent, challenge to control, nature. Often they described getting a Husky in an unexpected way and then falling in love with the breed. For example, here are some of their comments.

(Andrea) I got my Husky unexpectedly, and ended up falling in love with it. I didn’t want one, when my sister brought me the first one. I previously had a German Shepherd. You need to like a dog that won’t kiss up to you. Huskies are very much their own dog. The history of the breed is they were bred to work on teams and with other dogs. They have a little different temperament than herding dogs. They are bred to work one-on-one. So it’s much more emotionally trying to own the Artic breeds. But I found many things I really liked about the breed. They are a total clown. They have a funny sense of humor and like how much turmoil they can create in the shortest time. They don’t follow the rules. They are the ‘original’ anarchists....They’re like cats. I have cats and I love cats...I like their independence. They take you on their terms....So eventually, I decided I didn’t want to keep my German Shepherd, because it was too dependent for me. I couldn’t take the continual need. They need you and your commitment more. Huskies aren’t like that. So I found a great home for the Shepherd....

I found the Husky better fit my own personality, since I’m a little self-centered. I didn’t want to work hard to have to provide it (the dedication and commitment). I like cats and independence in a dog. They can be there with you and have their own life, too.

However, I realize that a lot of people have trouble with that. A Siberian can be obedient when it wants, but many people want a dog which will look at its owner because it wants to do what the owner wants. Siberians are like teenagers.

(Sondra) My Dad has a horrible time with that (the Siberian’s independence). He thinks they should listen. It disturbs him that she doesn’t listen to me all the time.

(Sarah) My mother has trouble with that, too. “Why have a dog that doesn’t listen?” she says. “She might do things,” she worries. She’s afraid of my losing control. But I like the challenge myself.

I then went off to take some more pictures, and when I returned one of the women I’ll call Ellen wanted to talk to me – and subsequently Ellen proved so knowledgeable and eager to talk to me that she became one of my two Siberian owner informants. She and her husband had

earlier been in the obedience trials, so she knew about those events as well as the conformance shows. So I pulled my chair over to where she was seated and did a mini-interview with her.

Since Ellen became one of my informants and her comments led me to choose her, I'll describe her comments in some detail. We talked about some of the key topics that were central to the study – the types of dogs she owned, her reasons for choosing the breed, and the activities she engaged in with her dogs.

Ellen began by describing the types of dogs she owned. She now had four dogs, all of them related, and had owned Siberian Huskies since 1985, and other dogs since 1983. Why did she and her husband get a Husky? Because she explained:

We like their personality. I saw one in a pet store. I went to a breeder and got one Siberian. A year later I got the second. I started doing obedience training out of self-defense. My dog was quite hyper. But she liked the obedience training. So he calmed down, and I was able to show her in the obedience trials successfully. She got 2 CDXes just before she died.” Meanwhile, the other was working on her UD. (Utility Degree).

Ellen also pointed up the importance of dominance and competition, themes I had already noted were especially important to Siberian Husky owners. As she commented:

My first dog Eliza was an alpha dog, and since then her son has taken over. Her son is very easy to please and very lovable. Now he has gotten his first UD degree (The Utility A), which is a big achievement. You have to do 2 complete classes without an error. It's a big feat. There are only a few UDes in the Siberian world.

Then, she described one of the most important activities she engaged in with her dogs – using them as a therapy dog, an activity supported by a couple of therapy dog organizations – the Delta Society and Therapy Dogs, Inc.. She found that the hospital staff liked having these dogs come to help cheer up their patients, and as a nurse, she liked using her dogs to continue this nursing role. As she explained:

I take the dogs to a nursing home in Sacramento. The dogs go with the patients. If the patient wants to just look at the dog, that's fine. They can also pet them, and more usually, the dog ends up on their bed...I take them to the pediatrics ward and to the oncology floor. My dog Mouse is especially sensitive. She is very astute. She know when someone is about to die. She gets as close as she can and stays with them.

I have a great interest in doing therapy work because I'm a nurse, and I know how dogs make people feel. I started a therapy program...at a center connected with a nursing hospice and...and the dogs were so effective because they are a sole source of unconditional love...I find this therapy work even more important than the shows. It's more fulfilling than the shows. I go once a week. Obedience is a good background for that. They will pay attention, go down when you instruct them...What makes a good therapy dog is they have to obey, express love, be socialized to love people.

Ellen found a letter she had gotten from a family member of a dying patient about their dog Mouse especially touching. As she described it:

One of the patients was dying and was sent home to die. The family asked me to bring Mouse over on the last day. In the letter, they said when she was in a coma and dying, she was lying there petting an imaginary dog and calling out Mouse's name. That's how much the dog got to her.

Unlike many Siberian owners, however, Ellen indicated that she did not go sledding with her dogs. But she entered them in obedience and confirmation trials in addition to her therapy work. She and her husband averaged 8-12 shows a year, though they were doing a little less now, since one of their dog finished his obedience championship, so they were entering fewer obedience trials. Mostly she and her husband entered the All Breed shows throughout California, especially in the Sacramento and LA areas.

Ellen than asked her husband Jack to come over to talk to me and he spoke about the dominance hierarchy in the group.

Grey is the Alpha male. We neutered him, since he used to fight with Blaze. He would whip him, and Blaze would back off. Then, Blaze got stronger. Timber (the dog he showed in the Open B and Utility B earlier at the show) is the oldest. His mother would bite his muzzle and teach him to kow tow to Timber...Now Blaze won't challenge him.

After I took some more photographs of the Bred-By-Breeder or Exhibitor Bitches and Sled Dogs, I spoke to another woman – I’ll call her Nina, who became my second informant. I first asked her a few questions about why there was a special category for Sled Dogs, since I thought all Huskies were Sled Dogs, and after she explained the distinction (“They are all sled dogs, but some have run so many miles in a race that they qualify for this class.”), she spoke a little about some of the main qualities that judges look for and thus breeders breed for in the class. After noting that color didn’t matter, though most Huskies were originally black and white, she pointed out the defining characteristics of the breed, pointing out that:

With a good judge, colors won’t make a difference. Huskies are judged on their movements and the proportions of their body. So the judges feel for their shoulder bone structure and to see that they have no excess weight. They are also looking for how good their muscle structure is.

Nina then spoke the major activities she and her husband engaged in with their dogs.

We take them sledding, carting, for a road walk on our bikes, and use hot walkers. [WHAT ARE THOSE?] They’re like a circular treadmill. The dog stands at the outside of the rim and walks around on it...As for the bike walk, we used to run around the park 2 ½ times. I was on a bike, and this was at a 3-block park near the house. When we were showing, we did this fairly often. If you have 2 or 3 dogs, you can just let them run, and they will chase each other.

Finally, since this was a central focus of my research, I asked Nina how she happened to get a Siberian Husky and why she chose to continue to raise and show this breed. Her comments reflected a common story about initial Siberian ownership – getting a dog unexpectedly and then falling in love with it. Particularly important was their gentleness and friendliness, apart from their independence. As Nina described it:

I now have 8 Siberians. I got my first one when a friend came with a new puppy, after I came home from the hospital with my child. The dog is great with a child. It’s a good outdoor dog, and very gentle with a child. It loved the toddler. Then I got one as a rescue dog. My second child, who was now walking, longed to have one, so we got one for her...Siberians are good with kids if you socialize them.

I was drawn into showing them in conformation and obedience trials, since a friend was showing two other breeds – Dalmatians and a Schnauzer – in conformation shows, so we went into that, and I have been showing them on and off since 1963.

What I like about Siberians is they are good with kids, not aggressive. They are also rugged enough to be a good dog to take hiking and camping. The downside is they love to run, they're a racing dog. If it is bored, it gets destructive. You need a secure yard. If you value your landscaping, you need a good kennel. They shed terribly about 2 times a year. And you should you get both of the same sex, unless they are neutered or spayed to avoid problems and puppies you don't want.

Then, it was back to the main ring to observe the latest judgments and take some more pictures – this time of the Stud Dog and Brood Bitches judgments, in which the dogs are shown with two of their offspring and are judged on the quality of their offspring. Next came the Best of Breed, which featured the AKC Champions of record in past competitions. As one observer explained, these were dogs who had acquired at least 15 points, 6 of them from 2 shows that were considered major shows.

When I returned from taking pictures, I heard the women swapping stories about how their dogs had misbehaved, another example of the way the Husky owners took pride in their dog's independent, feisty nature. For example, one told a story about her dog Carmen got loose when she opened her backdoor and the dog bounded out. Another described going to her car parked downtown when she opened the car door her dog jumped out. "When I opened it, it was like: 'I'll see you,'" she said. A third described how her dog got out of the yard. "She just saw an opening and ran. Then, when a friend drove by, I hailed her down, and we went to chase down my dog. We went a mile or two and I saw her."

By 3:30 p.m., the show was almost over and it was time for the Parade of Title Holders. These were dogs that had obtained previous titles, and as they walked by the judge announced their various titles. Last came the Best of Show, when the owners of dogs selected as the top

winner in previous competitions paraded through the ring and the top dogs garnered still more ribbons. After the judge announced the winners, the owners lined up in front of the appropriate place marker and then walked out of the ring with their dogs, collecting a ribbon as they left.

Once the show ended, there was an announcement about the raffle for the day, and people gathered around the raffle table to see if they had won anything. Sandi, the Raffle Chair called out the names of the winners, as one of her assistants drew out the tickets from each of the bags. Then, she held up the item, as the winner stepped forward to claim his or her prize.

Finally, shortly before 4 p.m., there was an announcement over the loud speaker system that people could line up for the photos of the winners with the judges. Soon people were lined up with their dogs ready to take their pictures. In contrast to the Pomeranian Show, where an official photographer was hired to take the pictures, one of the Siberian Club officers used her Polaroid to take the pictures.

And so the show ended. I decided to skip the banquet, since there would be a delay of about 2 ½ hours before the banquet began and almost everyone had either left or had gone to their rooms to get ready for the banquet. Also, I felt I had gotten the information I needed about the show and had made contact with a number of people who might become my informants. Thus, after taking a few last pictures of the grounds and people waiting to get their photographs taken, I packed up my camera and headed to the car. Overall, I felt it had been a very productive day, particularly since I found the people I met very receptive to my questions, which helped me to understand what was going on at the show. Also their responses had given me many insights about their reasons for getting their dogs, their activities with their dogs, and other factors that I wanted to learn about in my research, and I had a half-dozen phone numbers of people I could contact after the show.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

An Introduction to My Four Informants

The following findings are based on my in-depth follow-up interviews with my four informants – two women were Pomeranian owners and officers I met at the Northern California Pomeranian show, and two women were Siberian Husky owners and exhibitors I met at the Northern California Husky Show. These findings also draw on the observations I made at the two shows which informed these interviews and are described in the previous section on the Setting.

Just to introduce the four women and the pseudonyms I used for them in this study, the two Pomeranian owners are:

- Wendy, a married woman in her 50s, who teaches prepared childbirth and infant care classes for the local hospitals. Though she doesn't have a background as a nurse, she is certified through the International Childbirth Educator's Association. Her husband, also in his 50s, is an auto-parts salesman. Both have had some college, and they have three children, who Wendy is home schooling them. There are two boys, 9 and 11, and a girl, 14.
- Melinda, a married woman of 55, is retired from teaching and from doing research in the computer sciences for a major technology company. Her husband, 65, is a retired civil engineer. They both have had a graduate level education.

The two Siberian Husky owners are:

- Ellen, a married nurse in her late 60s, who is retired nurse and professor of nursing. Her husband, also over 65, is retired, too.

- Nina, a married women in her 60s, who used to work as a medical technologist, and obtained a B.A. plus some graduate school Her husband, also over 60, is retired as a deal of a college.

Thus, the informant as a group were married women in the 50s and older, who were fairly well-educated and involved in teaching, research, or the social service professions. They were all multiple dog owners, owning several dogs in their breed, and two owned other types of dogs or pets. All of them committed much time each week to participating in activities with their dogs, including showing them at dogs shows.

Major Findings

In my observations and in my interviews, I focused on three major areas of interest: 1) what types of dogs did they own and why did they choose the breed they did; 2) what kinds of activities did they participate in with their dog, including going to dog shows; and 3) how did they characterize the owners of their particular breed, and what was their perception of the owners of other types of dogs? I was particularly interested in noticing the differences that might exist between Pomeranian and Siberian Husky owners, and how they differed in their perceptions of any differences they observed. Following are my findings in each of these three areas.

Ownership and Choice of Breed

Generally, the interviewees happened to become involved with their particular breed by chance circumstances, and then they found they especially liked that type of dog. Commonly, they were introduced to the breed by someone else, such as a parent, relative, or friend, and

thereafter kept these dogs, sometimes even bred them, for a long time, showing their loyalty and commitment to a breed, once they had made a choice of their breed. Then, after those chose their breed and became involved in showing their dog, they had a sense of joining a family of others who shared a similar dedication to that breed. The following comments reflect these themes.

Among the Pom Owners

For example, Wendy got a Pomeranian about 3 ½ years ago as a compromise with her husband, since she had previously owned an Afghan and had once been enthusiastically involved in showing them. But when she got married, her husband didn't "much like Afghans", and he owned a Malamute, which died about 4 months after they got married, so for about 15 years they didn't have any dogs. Then, when they both had more time and decided to get a dog again that would be good with their children, they began looking around and eventually decided on a Pomeranian. As Wendy explained:

I had afghans before then....I got my first afghan when I was 15 and started showing. Then, I retired when I was 30 and had my family...So I'm just getting back into it again....I chose Afghans because I thought they were so beautiful. I found out about them when I was doing a report in school, and it took me about three years to convince my parents that I really wanted one before they bought one for me as a birthday present... I bought with the idea that I wanted to show it. So it started with that. My last afghan was the first black afghan to win an all breed best in show in California....I took him to Germany with a friend and she showed him there for a little over a year, and got his national championship on him. And he won multiple specialties...about five or six of those. And then he and I retired, because my husband didn't much like afghans. I had them when we started dating, and he wasn't real happy with them....I guess to him, they looked kind of fou-fou.

So...we decided it's time to get a dog, and we started looking around, and he had been raised that dogs live outside, and I had been raised with dogs that live inside. So we had been trying to come to a compromise, and somebody that came in to where he works had a little Pom one day. And he came home that evening and he said: "I've found the dog." He picked it because one of the breeds we both really liked were Chow Chows, but they're not a really good family dog I've

heard. They're just a real one person dog. They attach to one person and that's kind of it....And then we had three children...and the yard we have available to the dog is not really big. So he told me about the dog, and when I showed him a picture of what I thought it was, he said it looked like a miniature Chow Chow. In fact, a lot of people think they're like miniature Chow puppies...And so I bought my first one about three and a half years ago.

As Wendy explained a key reason for choosing this breed was because it had a flashy look, outgoing, confident attitude, yet it was also sweet and gentle and good with children. Plus she felt its coat would be easy to care for. As she explained:

I like the Aghan look, and the Pom look is kind of appealing to me, because it's kind of flashy...I liked their personalities, too, because they are a little dog, but they think they're a big dog. They have a real big dog attitude. They will take on a big dog, for example. They might start a fight with a big dog. They have no clue that they're real tiny and fragile. They act pretty tough. But they're really sweet. They're very affectionate. The coat care is pretty easy. Also, the fact that we had children was important. I felt they'd get along so well, since they're companion dogs and like to keep you company. They get along with all ages and adopt the whole family, not just one person, which is real important.

In Melinda's case, owning a Pom started when she was a teenager, because that was the breed her parents wanted her to get. And then she felt a special kinship with it, since she has a Polish and Lithuanian ancestry, and Pomeranian dogs originated in that area. Additionally, she found the same kind of qualities appealing as did Wendy, since she liked the Pom's fluffy and pretty look and felt it easy to take care of too. She also liked its sociability, it's happy, upbeat nature, and its good fit as a family dog. As she described her situation:

I've owned Poms since I was a teenager. In probably 1963 or thereabouts I purchased my first one. I chose it because my parents pointed it out...We wanted a family dog, and I was the instigator for that, and they said, 'Well, you can bring home any dog as long as it's a Pomeranian and for me that was okay, I didn't care. Four legs and a head and a tail was all that I needed...I don't know what attracted them to Pomeranians. We never went into that. Maybe it's because I come from a Polish/Lithuanian background. I'm not sure. But my parents basically decided for me.

And now I feel 100 percent instant simpatico with it. I feel like throughout my life that it was the right dog for me. It's fluffy and pretty and yet fairly easy to maintain. It's a fairly hearty dog and yet miniaturized. It's easy to go with you,

and they try very hard at being very good companions, so it has a temperament that has matched mine.

What about their temperament? Melinda continued her explanation.

It's a happy dog, they are good for a family. They are outwardly gregarious. In the 1920s and 1930s they were known as a single person's dog, tending to just like one person. But we expanded on that in our breeding program, though every now and then there is a throwback. Usually the tinier ones sometimes prefer one person to the whole family. But generally they are a happy little thing.

To a great extent, Melinda was able to obtain this more family oriented type of Pom because she was involved in breeding, and selected dogs that had these gregarious upbeat characteristics. Though most Pom owners buy their dogs and only are involved in breeding their dogs occasionally if at all, for Melinda this was an important part of her participation in the Pomeranian dog show world. As she explained:

(The way to get gregarious upbeat dogs) is in the selection process. In other words, over the generations, if you select for ones that are gregarious and are happy about life going to shows and meeting people...that's part of the selectivity process...I wanted to do breeding, since I was a teenager, and I backed into showing by my aunt and uncle being very active in the show world. They said you would not get respect unless you show, and so I tried it and found out that I enjoy showing as well....

In order to establish yourself and your reputation, you need a good show record, but you also further your reputation...with puppies that you place and finding good homes for them. I've never been motivated to sell...However, you do need to find and place them in good homes...It establishes your credibility as your show record. For example, my original mentor took me aside and (told me) why I might want to advertise...to reach out and establish your identity. In other words, it's a sharing, a way of communications before the Internet. And she was absolutely correct, because the first time I went to a national in New York at Westminster, people had heard of my breeding program and heard of me, even before I arrived on the scene. So yes, that was good sound advice.

Among the Sibe Owners

In Ellen's case, the initial contact with the breed occurred when she was finishing a graduate program to get a doctorate in 1983, and decided to get a dog from a breeder. About ten

years later, in 1993 or 1994, she and her husband got the four dogs they have now – a mother and her mate and two puppies.

Like the Pom owners, she fell in love with the breed, but besides finding them outgoing, friendly, and loveable. However, she was drawn to other qualities characteristic of this breed and not of Pomeranians – most notably their energy and independence. She also had a large plot of land around the house, giving the dogs plenty of room to run. Then, like Melinda, she got involved in breeding, too, though in a more limited way, making her two male dogs – the one she had initially and the adult male she has now -- available for a stud service. Here's how she described her reasons for choosing Siberians, becoming committed to the breed, and deciding to become a breeder.

We (she and her husband) currently have four dogs... This is our second group of Huskies... We got our first group when I just finished my doctoral program. We were in a pet store and we saw a Husky and fell in love with the Husky. But rather than buy a Husky in the pet store, we started looking around for breeders... We did some in-depth homework and I called and talked to this lady before the puppies were born. Then I went to see them right after they were born, and we have since become very good friends.

You want to look for honesty in a breeder to tell you about any medical, or genetic possibilities of things that could happen, like eye problems or hip problems... That's because when you have pure bred dogs, they are in-bred, so if one of them has a genetic cataract or certain eye disorder, it can be passed on to the offspring... So the breeder has to be careful about the history of the dog, and I was looking for a healthy dog and one with good temperament, and I thought her dogs were the best in both departments. So that's why I got my dogs from her... She lived in Orange County then, and we went there to get the dogs.

I guess what made me fall in love with these dogs is their temperament and their look in general, but mostly their temperament... They're very outgoing dogs. They're energetic and they're very loveable. They love people. And they're very interactive with people and other dogs.

(The independence of the breed) is not a problem... It attracts us because we know the temperament of the breed, so we deal with it, rather than try to fight it. We know they have a will of their own. It's been bred into them because they are working dogs, and they pull sleds. And a lot of times the mashers -- the people who run the sleds -- give the dogs their own head on the trail, and a lot of times the dogs saved their skin, because the dogs have instinctively gone through a blizzard, because that's what they were bred to do, and we realized that. We also

know that they were runners, and you can't let them run free, because they love to run so much. So they just run and then they get lost. Some of them can find their way back, but a lot of them can't, so we know that. And we've learned to live with those traits, and most other Huskies owners will tell you the same thing.

Ellen went on to describe how she and her husband adjusted to these traits of the Husky.

We have a lot of land around our house, so we have a lot of it fenced in, so they can run and that helps. We know they like to dig, so we watch them and try to keep their digging down to a minimum. But we've never tried to break their will. We've tried to gain their confidence and...work with them (to adapt to what they want), because you can't break a Husky's will and still have a Husky.

As for Nina, she got her first Siberians about 40 years ago, initially as a dog she rescued from a pound, after a friend came over with a Siberian, and she found it a very beautiful dog. She was also especially attracted to it because it was a strong dog that fit in well with their own active lifestyle, which included hiking and camping. Plus she liked its gentleness with children and its friendliness to other people and dogs. Then, about 10 years ago she was attracted to showing because some of her friends were doing this. As she met more and more people in the dog show world, she became hooked, and she began to breed an occasional litter of dogs every year or two. As Nina described her experience:

I have three Siberian Huskies, and my younger daughter has three, and my older daughter has two, and a close friend has one. We're all in different locations in the same Reno area. I got interested in Siberian Huskies in 1963. A friend came over with the Siberian and it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life. It was a black and white classic old time Siberian and a descendant of a champion. It was also an outdoor rugged dog which fit in with our lifestyle. We like to go camping, hiking and yet it was very gentle with children and it was not aggressive to other people or other dogs. I liked that. It wasn't a barker...I also liked the idea of a dog that had a bit of a coat, since...I like something you can run your fingers through the hair. It was a rugged dog that didn't need a lot of fussing over like a poodle or a collie. It was not aggressive, so I didn't have to worry about the temperament of (a more aggressive dog like) a German Shepard or a Doberman or a Rottweiler or a Pit Bull, and it was very good with children. That was important, because we had two very young children at the time.

So we got our first Husky as a rescue dog the following year...She worked in wonderfully with our family.

A few years later I got interested in showing when some friends were doing that. It was a completely different dog, but it was kinda fun what she was doing with obedience and showing and conformation, so I started visiting shows to see what it was all about, and after seeing a couple of shows, we (she and her husband) started going through the show catalog and talking to people that had been exhibiting and asking a lot of questions. We were referred here and there and we hit it lucky and the rest is history. We had a dog from a very well-known breeder and a very respectable pedigree. So we were incredibly lucky for as ignorant as we were then. And we've been involved in the sport now for over 30 years, for nearly 40 years now.

However, she only became involved occasionally in breeding, just on a “a very small basis. Only a litter every year or two,” as she explained.

Summing Up About Ownership and Choice of Breed

Thus, while the Pom and Sibe owners both followed different paths to ownership of their dog in response to different circumstances, they were drawn to the dogs for different reasons because of the differences in the dog's personality and other characteristics and their own lifestyle and personal interests. Though both were attracted by the dog's physical beauty, they found this beauty in two very different dogs physically. Also, while they were both attracted to the outgoing personality and friendliness of the dogs, especially their gentleness with children, they found other different traits that attracted them. Whereas the Pom owners emphasized the sociability and companionship attractions of the Pom, the Sibe owners remarked on the appeal of the Siberian's willfulness and independence, its high energy, and its love of running.

Activities with Their Dogs

Given the different reasons for choosing their dogs, it is not surprising that their activities with their dogs would be different and that they would have different lifestyles. Also, in

becoming active participants in the dog show world, they joined a different culture, too, reflecting differences in interests and lifestyles. Moreover, just as they were drawn to dogs with different temperaments, so the Pom and Siberian Husky owners seemed to have different temperaments as well. While it is hard to draw any firm conclusions with only two informants in each group, the interviews helped to reinforce some general impressions I took away from the two specialty dog shows I observed about differences in Pom and Sibe culture.

In general, the Pomeranian owners tended to live in more urban environments and participate with them in more social and companionship activities, reflecting a major reason for being attracted to the breed. For example, they took their dogs with them when they went visiting, engaged in informal play with them, or spent time grooming them each day. By contrast, the Siberian owners tended to live in more suburban or rural areas, where they had more space to exercise their dogs, even if they kept them inside as house dogs. Also, they participated with their dogs in more physically active activities, such as hiking and camping and taking their dogs out to run. Then, too, the Siberian Husky owners had to spend more time training their dogs in obedience, because of their dog's independent willful nature, leading some to show their dogs in obedience trials. By contrast, the Pom owners found obedience training much easier, since the Pom's naturally wanted to please, although the focus in most Pom shows was on showing off the dogs and grooming them carefully for that purpose, rather than putting them through agility trials. But either type of dog could be used effectively as a therapy dog, because they were so friendly and gentle with other people, as two informants – one a Pom owner, the other a Sibe owner -- indicated

Following are some examples from the interviews which reflect these differences.

Among the Pom Owners

Wendy emphasized the many social activities she engaged in with her Pom, including participating in social events with other Pom owners. These were more play days than competitive events. Plus she used her Pom as a therapy dog, taking her to a nearby nursing facility to cheer up the patients. Besides only showing her dog in conformation events, she had begun training her dog in obedience, too. Here's some of her comments when asked what activities she participated in with her dog.

I show them and I'm getting into obedience trials. I'm training one of them in obedience. Also, my mother lives in a skilled nursing facility, so we do pet visits, too. Poms are great for that, because they just love people, and they love to be on your lap and be loved. And the older people that live there they thrive. I've had some amazing encounters when I have taken a Pom there....It's really moving.

We do have some Pom therapy dogs, but therapy dogs tend to be trained and certified. I haven't gone that route yet, because where I take them, they (the medical staff) don't care if they are certified or not. But we have lots of Pom therapy dogs across the country

Poms do really well in obedience, because they want to please you. I started my one boy, my very first Pom, and he does real good. He's enjoying it, because it's time with Mom, and he wants to make me happy. They're real cooperative. They have their stubborn streak, but they're real cooperative little guys.

When did their stubborn streak come out? Though Wendy noted this, this wasn't the same kind of continual willfulness that the Sibe owners found in the Huskies. It just occurred occasionally and seemed not to last very long, since mostly the Pom's liked to please and it was not so much to challenge authority as with the Siberian Huskies, who were often compared to teenagers by Sibe owners, but because the Pom was more interested in play, like a young child. As Wendy explained, laughing to downplay the seriousness of such incidents of stubbornness:

When does their stubborn streak appear?...A lot of times in the show ring, or when you need to get them to come in now, and they're not done playing. Things like that. It's really pretty harmless. They can be kind of headstrong when they want to be, but mostly they want to please.

Wendy also pointed out that she didn't take her Poms out for much physical exercise, such as hiking, because they were too fragile. Also, she didn't want to risk any damage to their coats from the elements. As she commented:

I don't take my dogs hiking because I show them. There's a lot out there, with these guys being so little that it's more hazardous for them. And their coats being what they are, it would probably take me over an hour to get all the burrs and things out when I got home.

Other Pom owners don't either with the show Pom with this kind of coat. Now there's a pet Pom that used to be bigger. They're about 10-12 pounds, and they don't have the same lush coat. They have the double coat, but it's not as intense. So they're a little easier to be a more all around kind of dog.

She also indicated that she would be unlikely to take her Poms to the beach, because of problems with the elements too, particularly the danger from sand getting into a Pom's coat.

No, I wouldn't go to the beach, and the reason is that as soon as you get home, you need to bathe the dog. The sand gets in their coat... so unless you're going down there for the specific reason of taking pictures, because the background can be really lovely, with a show Pom, you don't want anything to happen to the hair. And the sand gets in there. And if you don't wash it out real fast, it acts like sandpaper and can break off the foot coat. And if the dog was to roll in it, it could break off any of the coat.

However, Wendy did take her Pom into stores when she was shopping, which was not something that Sibe owners could usually do with their dogs, since Huskies were so much larger. Wendy reported that the sociable Poms loved seeing people on these occasions, too. As she noted:

They've gone into stores with me that will allow the dogs. And they enjoy it. They have fun, because people always have to come over and pet them.

Also, she emphasized the importance of grooming, which I had noticed was a frequent occurrence throughout the Pom Show.

Yes, grooming is very common. We go down to the skin and they have such a thick coat, it takes awhile to get there. And we just do a few hairs at a time, so every hair is perfect when we go into that ring.

The close bond that developed between the owners and their Poms also meant that usually the owners handled the Poms in the rings themselves, because it would be difficult for a Pom to bond and respond to another person. This reason was quite different than the Sibe owners gave for Sibe's being mostly handled by owners, too, since the owner could better control the Sibe and get it to behave because of the power relationship that had been established between owner and Sibe. As Wendy explained:

Most of this breed is owner handled. There are a few professional handlers in the breed, but for the most part the owners show their own dogs. That's not true in all the breeds....It's because of the personality of the dogs. A Pom is not the kind of dog that you can just hand off to a stranger to take them into the ring. They don't perform as well. They liked to be attached to their person.

Finally, Wendy described the social network of Pom owners who participated in the shows and in occasional social get-togethers just to have fun with their dogs. As she commented:

We mostly go to the All Breeds shows. I participate in at least a couple dozen a year both in California and in other states.

The people who own Pomeranian dogs are a real nice group of people. They're real friendly as a whole, outgoing, caring people. I think friendly and open would probably be the best way to describe them. There's probably 30 to 40 of us that of and on travel through the shows circuit. They come from all over....We actually only get to meet at our national specialties, the big event, once or twice a year. But we keep in touch and are always interested in what each other is doing.

The national specialty is held by what we call our parent club. the American Pomeranian Club. It's the one that all the smaller Pomeranian clubs belong to, and they hold their summer specialty in March, and currently they are holding it in Louisville, Kentucky. That one doesn't travel around the country, but they have a floating one that goes around in September. Last year it was in Louisiana. This year it's going to be up in Olympia, Washington. That one moves around so more people have a chance to exhibit.

Did Wendy consider belonging to the Pom group like being adopted into a family on picking that breed? Yes, she firmly agreed, commenting:

Yes, it is like a family. For this breed it is. It's a very warm friendly group of people. And you do feel like family. And I do think this is more true for Pom owners than for some of the other breeds.

Melinda, too, emphasized the companionship activities she engaged in with her Pom., describing how she share everyday activities with her dog, in addition to going to shows. She thought of her Pom as very much her buddy. As she noted:

I enjoy showing my dog and just sharing living type things with my Poms... We live together; we enjoy each other as co-family members. That is a comment that you will here a lot from Pom owners is that they are not my dog they are part of my family.

There are a fair number of people that do obedience with their Poms, however it takes to a certain kind of Pom to do that. You have to be careful whether their knees are going to be able to withstand the requirements of the degree... In the Utility degree, for example, they are jumping and what have you. It takes a sturdier, of the sturdier groups of Poms to do that.

There's the same problem with agility work, because you are talking about speed and jumping. You need to go with one of the larger Poms to help insure the knees... So only a small number of Pom owners do the obedience and agility kinds of events.

However, the positive part of having a Pom is they are such good travelers and they want to be with you, so wherever we go, they go... That's what I mean is that having a Pom is a constant buddy situation. They go under plane seats, for example, The nice part of traveling with a Pom is that it's easy to travel nationally or anyplace with them, because they just go with you right on board. There are soft packs that fit underneath the seat as long as they are in bags made especially for them. These look like an athletic bag, but they wiring in them that makes them more resilient.

At one time, Melinda used to take her Pom with her shopping and found the malls a great place to socialize with her dog. But now there were more restrictions that made it more difficult, although many people still found ways to take their Poms along with them, even if they had to sneak them through, as she explained:

Unfortunately regulations have gotten tighter these days. Shopping places used to be a great socialization place for dogs, but with malls that are inside big centers, there are a lot more restrictions.

As concerts or events, for anything that's outside it's usually fine to bring a Pom. And if there are restrictions, you will find people smuggling it into restaurants, say in a handbag. In other words, say it's hot outside or you know the dog likes being with you and is quiet. So as long as it is unobtrusive, it may work to take it with you. But you have to be sure to keep them in the shade and park in the shade or where you can see them if they are left in the car.

Melinda also spoke about the informal activities that the Pom owners who were members of the Northern California Pomeranian Club engaged in. They didn't always engage in competitions, but simply got together to have a fun play day. As she described it:

Outside of the show events, our Club does have play days, where people will meet in the park along Route 5 or whatever. We'll pick something that is common to the distances that we travel, such as meeting in Tracey, which was central for many group members. So for many years our Club did that. We met in a park with our Poms, so we could have our play days and have our meetings, while we had our Poms with us...It's really fun.

The Club is approximately 20 or 25 active members, though not all of those people are actually breeding their dogs each year.

We also try to make our Specialty Shows a social event...and the Specialty gets a very high percentage of attendance. That's the one time that we're all gathered in one place for the show in Northern California, and besides our club members, visitors come from Oregon and southern California for the Specialty. Then, when Southern California has their Specialty Show, we (referring to herself and her husband) will try very hard to get to that.

We also historically get a good percentage of our club together for play days, though in the most recent years, due to distance, we have found that holding meetings on the show site after the show gets the biggest attendance.

Finally, Melinda emphasized the close camaraderie that Pom owners felt both with their Poms and with other Pom owners. There was a sense of family closeness that created a strong sense of community, even when people were distant or had only met. Just owning a Pom was enough to feel that family-like connection. As Melina noted:

Owners of Pomeranians are usually extremely enamored with their Poms. They love them. They are very enthusiastic about them and do consider them family. I think that's the common thread...

I guess if I saw another person holding a Pom somewhere else, say if I went to Carmel and there was someone else holding a Pom, I would probably feel that it gives us some commonality. So you would feel more open to start a conversation. You feel there might be some sort of common thread there.

How have they avoided breaking their will while at the same time, getting them to behave and do what you want? Ellen continued her explanation, emphasizing the importance of obedience training to learn how to control their dog.

Our Huskies are housedogs and we've done a lot of obedience work with them. We started out with obedience for survival, but we got to like it. There's not a lot of Huskies doing obedience work. But we both feel we've gotten to the point where our dogs will not bolt or run from us when we're out with them, which some Huskies will. We've created a bond with them, so they'd rather be with us, and then run.

They like to run because they have a lot of energy and like to run. But our dogs know they're fed and pampered, so they aren't going to run for the sake of getting away. They just like to run. They're also hunters, so if they see like a deer or another animal, they'll run for that animal and their instinct takes over. They are descendants from wolves or from a wolf background, plus several other different animals.

Among the Sibe Owners

For Ellen, besides training and showing her dogs, the most important activity was pet therapy, and while she didn't do it herself, she described how many Sibe owners took their dogs sledding, even when they didn't actively participate in showing their dogs. She also wasn't active in the kind of informal network for socializing with other Sibe owners, as were the many Pom owners described by Wendy and Melinda. She and her husband lived too far away from the center of the Northern California Siberian Club's activities in the San Francisco Bay Area, though she had developed a personal friendship with the breeder of her dogs who lived in Southern California, and occasionally they visited each other and then would take their dogs with them on trips around the area, such as taking them on rides in the car. Here's how Ellen describes these activities.

She began by describing how she took her dogs for obedience training to help get them to behave and calm them down, and then began participating in obedience trials.

Yet, as she pointed out, it takes a special way to work with Siberians, because of their independent nature. It's necessary to work with that, rather than in opposition to it, a point that other Siberian owners had mentioned at the Sibe Show.

Our first Siberian was very head strong, and we wanted to get him more calmed down, so that we could have him in the house comfortably. So we went to obedience school with him, like any dog owner would do. Then, we got a second Siberian and we took him, too. Then, they both went on to get obedience titles, as did all four of our second group of Siberians. They all have one or two or more obedience titles.

We like the obedience work, but we found that some trainers were heavy handed in their handling methods, such as jerking and pinching ears, which do not work with a Siberian. It will just turn them off completely... The way to train a Siberian is first of all you have to get their attention and confidence, and most of them will work with positive reinforcement or positive words or food. So we use those types of training methods, not anything with a heavy hand...

They (the Siberians) are known to be...difficult to train because they have the basic personality of having a strong will and independence. A lot of people think that training a Siberian is too much work, so they don't show in more than one area, especially the people in the conformation shows. Usually those two areas (conformation and obedience trials) don't mix too much.

Yet, while she showed her dogs occasionally, she was most interested in using them as pet therapy dogs. One factor that led her to be less interested in showing is that her dogs didn't do well in the conformation shows because they didn't meet the standard due to medical problem. She also had difficulty in running with her dog as required in the obedience trials, due to not being in good physical shape herself, so in this case, she had her friend, the breeder, show the dog for her, though usually the Sibe owners show their own dogs, because it can be difficult to get a Sibe to respond to others. But since she had an ongoing friendship with her breeder and they took their dogs with them on occasional jaunts, the breeder and her dog had developed a bond, too. As she explained:

We've shown two of our dogs, but I don't consider myself a real show person. I prefer working in obedience and doing pet therapy with them also. I can see how they interact with other people.

We didn't show our first two dogs for too long. They both came from a good background, but both dogs had medical problems that I wasn't aware of till later. We showed the younger one for a short time, but he had a very wide back area between his back legs, so he was not going to go anywhere, so we just showed the two of them in obedience. Our second group, the male was very nice show quality and the mother is a champion. Both the mother and the father are champions, so the breeder showed the dog for me.

A lot of breeders show the dogs themselves. But these dogs move very fast. You have to be in very good physical shape. My legs, my knees have some problems, so I never attempted to run around the ring with the Huskies.

In obedience, the dogs don't have to be show quality. In fact...most of the dogs are neutered or spayed to take away that hormone, so they are more obedient. And in conformation a dog can't be neutered or spayed, since in conformation, the objective is to have a champion that is breedable. (The conformation) is to increase the breed.

So pet therapy is the major activity I do with the dogs.

Ellen explained how she had gotten interested in this activity and found the help the dogs provided continually inspiring.

I became interested in doing pet therapy, because I worked in a hospice and was teaching, and when I visited families, whenever there was a dog in the family, I would pay particular attention to how the dog fit into the family, and especially fit with the ill person. So when I retired for the second or third time, I decided I wanted to set up a pet therapy program in the hospice, so I did this with one of the people in the staff members who helped.

We started out with about 15 or 16 dogs and we went to the nursing home. We've also visited the hospice patients at home. Then, I moved down to a hospital in Northern California, where they had a very active hospital program, and I've been there about 2-1/2 years now. I've really gotten a lot out of it, and all the patients really get a lot of benefit from interacting with the dogs.

In one case, this lady was dying of breast cancer, and before Christmas, I brought our dog Tiny to see her. I put her up on the bed. I had already seen the woman quite a few times before, and she was semi-conscious and she was petting Tiny. She would wake up a little bit and then drift off again, and I just stayed with her for I guess about two hours, and the family was coming in and out of her room. She was a young woman, so the family was taking it pretty hard. They took her home just before Christmas, and she died before New Year's, and...then I got the letter from the patient's brother stating that the patient was petting the dog after the dog left in her sleep. She was probably semi-comatose and was still petting the dog, he had a lot of praise for us to come in and do this.

Tiny has a particular ability to tell when somebody is dying and some other dogs have that perception, too. So they will get near the patient and snuggle up to them and stay there with them. In this case, she did not want to get down off the bed with this women. In fact, she has alerted me several times to the fact

that the patient was probably not going to live too much longer. It's gratifying to see then be of some help. Other patients have said that by having the dogs here, I don't need as much pain medication. And one of the other nurses told me: "When the dogs are there...the patient's buzzers don't go off so frequently."

Ellen found this connection with the patients made possible by using her dogs as therapy dogs especially gratifying. As she commented:

Especially on the cancer and oncology floor, you get to know the patients, because they come in every couple of weeks if they are getting treatment or if they have complications arising. So you get to know quite a few of these patients...I've been doing this for around nine years now.

She also described visiting with her friend the breeder and how she occasionally harnessed up her dogs, but didn't take them sledding because of distance and cost factors, as well as the condition of their dogs. But other Siberian owners followed a different path, as she noted, since many of them were not involved in the shows at all, but rather considered themselves "sled people," who took their dogs out sledding. She also noted that she wasn't too active any longer in the show world herself. As she explained:

Several times, but not recently, we have put the dogs in harness and had fun that way. I visit my friend the breeder a lot. She lives in Southern California and she comes up here and the dogs interact in the backyard. We take them out in the car and take them for rides, stuff like that.

When we were doing conformation, we used to go about once a month. Recently we haven't gone that often. The Siberian Specialty was the first time in quite a while.

Most people that have had Huskies for a while know each other in California and all over the country, especially if you belong to the Siberian Husky Club. We don't belong to the local (Northern California) club, because it's too far to go for meetings in the Bay Area, so we don't belong to that one but we do support their events by going occasionally. The National Organization also has local Siberian Husky clubs in different areas that put on shows once a year...

I would say maybe there are a thousand, two thousand people interested in Huskies? I don't know exactly, but it's up there. There's a lot of people interested in Huskies. There are a lot of people you won't see at the shows, because they are sled people and they have sled dogs. For instance in Alaska and a lot of the Northern States, they'll have kennels for sled dogs.

Ellen explained the difference between the Siberians she had and the sled dogs.

The sled dogs are usually bred more for running. Their coat is not thick, although it does get real thick in the winter especially in Alaska, and they don't seem as pretty as the show dogs, which is a mistake, because some people breed the conformation dogs to the point, where they don't even good sled dogs and they are not that healthy to me. It's an ongoing discussion about what is the best conformation for a Siberian Husky. I think it's some where's in the middle...The judge decides...The Siberian Husky Club of America decides on the standard and they publish that, but it's open to interpretation by each judge.

A lot of show people will try to do both (showing and sledding) which is good, but some mainly breed their dogs for confirmation. Some of the dogs that look very good when they're a year old, but by the time they're five or six, they look very old. They develop too quickly. I'd rather see them develop slowly so that when they reach five or six they are just coming into their prime. If the dog develops slower, they'll probably live longer and be healthier in general. So that's what my breeder has done, so develop more slowly, and so they're usually three or four years old before a judge looks at them...

We have put our dogs in harness a couple of times. But...we weren't really in a position to go into sledding, because when we lived in the Bay Area, the distance was too far, and when we moved up here (North of Sacramento) two of our two dogs were old and ill, so we never did go into sledding, although there is somebody who lives fairly close to us who does sledding. Another reason we didn't take our dogs sledding is that it is expensive, because you have to have the equipment and the upkeep of all the dogs, and you have to have a real kennel setup. But we don't have a kennel setup. We have a large yard and a porch, but our dogs aren't confined to kennels. You have to be able to train the dogs together.

In Nina's case, she participated in a mix of activities with her dog. Though she occasionally went to shows, much like Ellen, showing wasn't her main interest, because she was more involved in family matters. At one time, she and a friend used to go to many of the shows together, driving the long distances necessary to attend, but now that she was older, she found the trip too taxing. As she described it:

I'm not showing that much now...This past Siberian Show was the first show I had been in a year. I changed jobs, and there were other things going on in my life. It's never been the all-consuming passion anyway....There are too many family and other things going on.

As I get a little older, I have also gotten a little road weary. It's not much fun to get up at three in the morning and drive for a couple of hours or get off of work at 5:30, pack the car up and drive for half the night. A friend and I used to get off work together at 5 o'clock at night, meet at each other's house and then

drive a couple of hundred miles to a show. We did that when we were much younger. I'm not so eager to do that anymore. It's too hard to get ready in the rest room of the show, show the dogs, then find a motel to crash for the next 12 hours, get up, and do it all over again, and drive home.

But for those who were active in the shows, it was a very competitive world. In contrast to the emphasis on the informal socializing and networking that went on at the Pom shows, she stressed the importance of competition and winning for those who were show regulars. While participating in the show was an equalizer for people from all walks of life, the status that came with winning was an important motivator. As she commented:

It's another life (for those who are regularly showing). The shows are a kind of equalizer. It doesn't matter if you're a housewife or an M.D. or a business executive or some kind of a computer whiz or a computer teacher or whatever ... Though there are people around the country who have incredible amounts of money to spend on animals and put a dog out. They hire the best handlers and recognized handlers in the country, and there are some political judges who are influenced by seeing people in the ring who do very well...It's important to many people...It's a nice ego trip to say my dog is American, Canadian, field trial champion, or something like that.

She also spent time breeding dogs, and spoke a little about this experience, emphasizing how it was important for her to place dogs with responsible, knowledgeable people who would care for the dog properly. Otherwise she would turn them down. As she explained:

Sometimes you get a call or e-mail from somebody and their main question is "I want a female dog to breed to my friend's male dog, so how much will you charge me for an unspayed female puppy...And then they flame you when you write back. I wrote back somebody not too long ago and told them that I wouldn't even consider selling them a puppy if that was their most important consideration. And I got a flaming email back...That's somebody I wouldn't even consider selling a dog to...I also have had people who want to get a Siberian and they want to cross it with their half-bred bull dog, because they want to keep the wolf characteristics, but they want the dog to be a little smaller, because they say they might get a better price if the dog was a little smaller...Well, sorry, I'm not going to do that. I'd rather see my puppies go to somebody who's going to cherish them and love them for their individuality than sell to someone who won't do that.

There are also a lot of breeders who won't sell the dog to somebody unless they show x number of times per year, and then require that if the owner breeds it, they have to give the breeder back two puppies. I'd rather sell a puppy and have it

loved to death and never have it see the inside of a show ring, even though it's a better dog than a lot of ones you see in the show ring. and that's been my philosophy for 40 years. So I don't have a big a name as a lot of breeders, because we haven't finished as many dogs. But I know that there's some of our breeding sitting around in somebody's backyard, but they're a cherished family member, and it's a better dog than some of the ones being bred and shown at shows.

Though she didn't show very much, she had developed long enduring friendship with the people she met at these shows, and she loved going to see and talk to people who shared her interest in Siberians. As she noted:

That's one of the main appeals to me of showing -- the people I meet. They have become friends. I have friends all over the country that we've (referring to herself and her husband) met through showing. We've had some wonderful experiences. It's just feels really great. When you do win, it feels really great, it's a real ego boost. But actually what's most important is the people, getting to see people and talk to people that have a mutual interest, mutual goals and have mutual feelings. That's fun.

She pointed up some of the dog related activities that brought people in the breed together that were typically active and outdoors-type events, such as sledding and carting. People engaged in a variety of combination of activities – ranging from those who mainly liked the fun outdoors events to those who were very competitive and focused on showing, to those who mixed the two. As she described it.

Besides showing, Siberian Husky owners usually get together for dog related things. In our breed there's sledding. The Northern California group has a sledding day and a cart day, and the group gets together and they picnic or potluck together. The obedience club I belong to they have an awards party and a summertime picnic, and they do a variety of fun things and stuff.

The obedience clubs has all kinds of dogs, everything from mutts to purebreds. It's both obedience and agility...and they have a variety of activities. It's a looser structure club.

There are some people who are just doing obedience for the fun of doing obedience or to have a better behaved dog. Some of them take classes and they go through a couple series of classes, and they just want to get the dog so it's a better family member. Others go into competition and are competing for the obedience title and the agility title. And some are also involved in show conformation. And some have no desire whatsoever to get involved with show conformation because they feel it's so political. So it's a mix of people with different interests.

In Nina's case, she occasionally went sledding and carting, too, but otherwise, her family activities and interest in gardening kept her busy. As she commented:

I've gone up sledding a couple of times...when the group goes up in the mountains to do that if that is a weekend that's free...But my job or other responsibilities keep me from getting away to do something like that as much as I might like. But it's fun. It's a lot of fun.

I'm also a gardener. I have flower gardens and dogs and four grandchildren. That's enough.

I don't usually take my dogs shopping, because pets can't go in stores, and Siberians are a little big to tuck into a purse and take into a store. Though a couple of times, if I go to Petsmart, I'll take the dog along. He enjoys that as much as I do. He looks at the birds and the fish, and picks out a chew toy or something like that. So that's a good socialization for that too. I think Home Depot also allows dogs to go in....So, sometimes when I have a young dog, to get it used to being out and around things, I'll take it with us.

Summing Up About Activities with Their Dogs

In sum, the Pom and Sibe owners participated in a different mix of activities with their dogs, given their different interests and lifestyles and the different characteristics of their dogs. The Pom owners participated in more social and companion activities, like just taking them along as they did everyday activities, while the Sibe owners participated in more outdoors and sporting activities, like sledding, carting, and running their dogs. Also, the Pom owners tended to engage in more social networking with a large group of other owners, whereas the Sibe owners tended to engage in more one-on-one visiting with other Sibe owners or in special activities they did on their own, such as taking their dog to a hospital to be a therapy dog. Another difference is that the show atmosphere was generally more informal and social for the Pom owners, whereas it was a more competitive atmosphere for the Sibe owners who were actively showing their dogs.

Differences and Perceptions of Differences Between the Owners of Different Breeds

I also found major differences between the Pomeranian and Siberian Husky owners and in the way they characterized themselves and their dogs. They also differ in the way they perceived and characterized the owners of other types of breeds and groups.

In general, the Pom owners saw both themselves and their dogs as very social and friendly, interested in companionship and interaction with others. This friendly sociability was a quality which drew them to the Pom, and they reflected this quality, too. Perhaps due to this strong social awareness, the two informants I spoke with were also more aware of differences between the personality characteristics of the owners of different types of dogs or referred to the way these owners are commonly perceived by others.

By contrast, the Sibe owners saw their dogs as especially independent and aware of their status in a hierarchy, since they had been bred as pack dogs, and the Sibe owners themselves seemed to be especially independent as a group, too. They tended to be much more individualistic in the combination of activities they participated with their dogs. And perhaps because of this independent, individualistic streak in themselves as well as their dogs, the two informants I spoke to indicated they weren't aware of or didn't want to characterize people belonging to a group. Rather, they preferred to see all of the dog owners they knew as individuals and if they didn't know anyone from a particular breed or group of dogs, they didn't feel they could address the question. Unlike the Pom informants, they didn't want to judge or characterize anyone based on any common conceptions that might be held by others.

More specifically, here some comments from the Pom and Sibe owners showing these differences in views about the different breeds and their owners.

Among the Pom Owners

According to Wendy:

I think of the owners of Pomeranian dogs as a real nice group of people. They're real friendly as a whole, outgoing, caring people. I think friendly and open would probably be the best way to describe them. It's a very, warm friendly group of people, and you feel like family.

While Wendy didn't know any Siberian Husky owners, she was quite willing to characterize the owners of different types of breeds and speculate about what the Sibe owners might be like based on the personal qualities of their dogs. For example, some of her comments when I asked what associations she had with different breeds or types of dogs were:

(Sporting Dogs) They are outgoing...very busy. I would just kind of picture them with people who are involved in sports themselves...the more social sports types of activities.

(Non-Sporting Dogs). That's such a varied group.

(What about a few breeds that stand out for you?)

(Poodles) These are people I picture as more independent, not necessarily family people, just a couple or a single person.

(Dalmations). They're outgoing. I would connect them to families with lots of children. And going places a lot as families.

(Bichon Frises). I don't know too much about them. So I don't really know...The professionals' description of the breed is that they are very outgoing, sweet, happy dogs that want to make you happy. So I would guess that they would attract the same kind of person.

(Lhasu Apso) I knew one owner. They are companion dogs; they want to make you happy. I would think they would attract the same, similar kind of person that a Pom would. You know, more outgoing and concerned with attention to detail because of their coat care

(Herding Group) Again, I would put them with a family oriented people, people that like to do things outdoors, so I would associate them with the camping, hiking, outdoorsy kind of person. And they're good for a family, because they do train easily. They're a working breed. They have jobs to do, they train very well. They're very big in obedience and agility, things like that.

(Hounds) The people I knew the best were involved with the sight hounds. The hounds are split into two groups within a group – those that hunt by sight and the scent hounds that hunt with their noses. The sight hound people, like the Afghan owners, are very snooty, very independent people, even kind of self-centered, though I hate to say that. Kind of like the dog. The scent hound people are different. All I ever knew was a woman who owned beagles, and she was just

delightful. So I would say these hounds people are probably not as aloof. They are a little more down to earth.

(Working Dogs) I would say family, outgoing, outdoorsy kind of people.

Melinda, too, similarly emphasized the warm, friendly qualities of the Pom owners and distinguished between the owners of other types of dogs, much in the same way that Wendy did. She also described the Pom showing atmosphere as much more relaxed compared to other groups, a quality I noticed in comparison to the Sibe Show I visited, where the officials were extremely focused and rule conscious. She made the comparison with the atmosphere at a Poodle Specialty Show and then described how there were differences in the atmosphere at different Specialty Shows generally. As she commented:

It's interesting there will be different social auras with different breeds. Our breed, Poms, are very sociable among themselves. As I was watching Poodle judging the other day, I saw that the owners and handlers conducted themselves very differently than in our Pom ring. They were more involved in getting that dog to look exactly right...It is such an art form to present a poodle.

If you attend the national banquets of the different specialties, each of the nationals have their own banquets and awards nights for their national specialty, and the nature of these events range from informal to formal situation. It varies from breed to breed.

In her view, the informal social quality of the Pom events reflected the sociability of the breed, in contrast to the more formal structure of the Siberian event. As she observed after being asked to compare the difference between Pom and Sibe owners and their events:

People that like independent dogs are going to be independent people, and Poms want to be right with you....They want to be there and they want to be close to you, even going into the bathroom with you. And I would agree that some Siberian Husky people seem to be tense and kind of prickly kinds of personalities. I roomed with a veterinarian at a canine health and genetics seminar that had a Sibe and I would describe her the same way.

The Poms are also good inside dogs and they don't cope well with being alone for long periods of time? Some animals can cope with that. Some animals can cope with a solitary life. Or are you going to be available several times during the day, it may be better to have two. With Poms, many people own two and they are a good match for mature people, because if you have any physical limitations, Poms can be taken care of fairly easily, where a large dog may need to be specially

trained...And some Pom owners that mature into our breed. People of all ages like Poms, but generally speaking we also get people that have shown other breeds but don't want to run around the ring anymore and so the Poms work well for them.

Though the stereotype of the breed is that men will not like them, because men tend to say "Oh those yappy little dogs", that stereotype isn't always true. Often men purchase the dogs for the women in their life, but then they become the most attached to it. It is something that is not expected with the image.

And it's true that there may seem to be more sense of a tight community than at the Siberian Husky, such as you describe, because of the sociability of our breed. And it's a quality that we strive to get as a Specialty. We want to make our specialties also a social event. And we try to make everyone feel very welcome, too. I make a point of it. I recognize everybody from our area, and if there is a new face, I will walk up and introduce myself. I feel that if they are traveling from another area, it is the social, correct thing to do, since we're the host of the area event.

Melinda also noted that this sociable quality drew people together wherever they were.

Owners of Pomeranians are usually extremely enamored with their Poms. They love them. They are very enthusiastic about them and consider them family. And they would feel a sense of connection or commonality with other Pom owners. For example, if I saw another person holding a Pom somewhere else, say if I went to Carmel, I would probably feel that it gives us some commonality, so you feel more open to start a conversation. You feel some sort of common thread there.

Then, when I listed other types of dogs, she generally reported different associations with the owners, such as in the following examples.

(Sporting Dog). I would expect them to be outdoors type and casual dressers because of their lifestyle...also competitive in outdoor sports. There would also be a higher percentage of males than what we will find in our Poms then in our toy breed.

(Non-Sporting Dogs) This is a catch-all category, since people first started showing sporting dogs. Then, the other dogs were first put in this category, and now if we don't know where to put a dog in what other category, it's labeled in a non-sporting category. So it's really varied, because you have your Bulldogs in there, you have your Poodles, you have your Chows, you'll have your Lhaso Apsos, so it is probably the most varied of people in that group, because it has the most varied of dogs.

(Bulldogs) At the shows, they are very enthusiastic of each other. They really root each other on, and they enjoy non-competitive events like the freestyle dance with their dogs and dress costumes with their dogs. And so they very much socialize more than they're interest in competition.

(Poodle Owners) The poodle owners are very demanding, such as in going into a ring. They'll take over your personal space. Also, it's very often a handler orientated breed, which means it's going to require more money to participate than for owner handlers, so money-wise, you would assume there is a high socio-economic bracket for poodle owners.

(Llaso Apso) These are a little more independent people.. I stayed with one of the very active people showing dogs in this group, too. Probably, and this is again a general stereotype, these owners are somebody that is culturally aware or from a varied culture background.

(Bishon Frise) Oh, are they cute! And they're prissy! So I would think of the owners as people who are aware of how their home looks and aware of what is accepted and looks good.

(Dalmatians) Oh, there's a lot of differences and sub-sets of the breed at the national level. On the one hand, they are coach dogs, and so you have people who like their horse and coach background. And then there are people who are more whimsical and don't have a lot of wealth.

(Terriers) People are just like the terriers. The terriers spar in the ring. They feel they're supposed to have their own territory and they're very snappy about it, and their owners are the same way. Exactly. Because they admire that quality. It's also a fairly upper crust group...It's like with like the poodle, which is traditionally where you have serious competitors. In other words, if you're going to be in the upper echelon of competition, you're going to have a terrier or a sporting dog. And it's going to take money. For instance, Bill Cosby's terrier competes in these competitions.

(Herding Dogs) This is another breed that is versatile. They can compete in the confirmation but also do herding trials. They are also excellent in obedience. Some of your herding dogs are also used for guard dogs and police work. So I think of the versatility of people here. There are different types of herding dogs, and I would say there are different people that go with it. For example, there are our herders that are like Shetland sheepdogs and collies, whose purpose is to bring in the sheep and they use their voices and what have you to do that. Then there are the herding dogs that are also guard dog that are guardians of the sheep, such as the German Shepherds. So these different types of herding dogs have different temperaments and they will appeal to different types of owners. For example, the more sociable and well-rounded dogs will do better when they are brought into the family life and the owners would probably be a little more sociable. On the other hand, I would expect the guard dogs to do well in rural situations, where you don't mix people with them, so the people with these dogs are going to be more standoffish and don't want to be messed with.

(Hounds) Here you have your scent hounds versus your sight hounds. The I associate aloofness and independence with your sight hounds. Sometimes they are regal categories, too. By contrast, the coonhounds and beagles are your down-to-earth type people, such as the southern Appalachia type of huntsmen -- the good ol' boys.

(Working Dogs) It associate them and the people who own them with the work ethic. In other words, a true working dog that has its instincts going might not be a

family dog and should be worked. People have to understand that or else it is not a mix. For example, the true boxers came from a working background, but they are an all-American family dog as well. Or if you have a high-gear Malinois or Belgian Shepherd, they're better worked. You have to understand their high gear personality and work 'em. Then, they're good dogs. Otherwise, you could be into trouble, so your personality better match.

(Toy Dogs) They're part of the family, ornamental, you could say good for nothing except for companionship.

Among the Sibe Owners

Whereas the two Pom informants provided these detailed perceptions of the different types of breeds and their owners, the Sibe informants did not. They provided detailed descriptions of their own dogs personalities, emphasizing their independent, willful, energetic, feisty nature, but resisted characterizing the owners of Sibes or others dogs as a group. They preferred to see the people they knew with these different dogs as individuals, so in a sense their own independent, individualistic nature led them to want to see other owners as individuals, too, rather than as part of a group.

For example, Ellen characterized Sibe owners as having some of the similar characteristics as their dogs, notably being independent, but then she stressed the variety of people who owned Huskies, and she had only very general associations or none with the other breeds. She even emphasized looking at people's individual qualities, stating that: "I don't look specifically at what person has what dog. I look at the dog and the person together I guess." More specifically, in distinguishing between the different breeds and characteristics of the owners, Ellen commented:

(About Siberian Huskies) I don't know if there is a specific personality. I guess maybe they have a similar personality to Husky: independent, although they are usually pretty open-minded. They usually love the Husky or you don't. And usually they're outgoing; I don't know what else to say about them....In terms of education, we have people with degrees all the way, the whole gamut, from high

school all the way up to doctors... And for most people, this is more of a hobby than of a job. They have all kinds of jobs as far as I know.

(Pomeranians) The only association I have is a Hospice patient I had that had a Pomeranian. She wasn't a fussy person, which I guess when you have a Pomeranian you think of a fussy person, neat as a pin, who pampers the dogs... but this person wasn't, so I don't know if it's characteristic, but that's what I might think of when I think of Pomeranian. They take an awful lot of grooming.

(Hounds) Hounds are usually outdoorsy people. We have a lot of hounds in obedience. I guess they get along good with the working dogs, such as Huskies. I like that, the hound group. They are also outgoing.

(Herding Dogs) Same thing. We've had a lot of herding dogs in obedience. The herding dogs are known to get top obedience dogs. The hounds and the working dogs really have to work for it. I guess we've had a lot of interaction with both, and I think people that own dogs that do anything with them have that outgoing, competitive nature of wanting to work with their dogs and improve their skills and that type of thing.

(Terriers) I don't have too much associations with the terriers. Terriers are sometimes terrors. But if they're trained, they are really nice dogs. There are a few in obedience and I watch them at the dog shows and they seem like very nice dogs, but I don't have any real interaction with them.

(Personality of Owners and Dogs Generally) I think (any association) depends more on what you're doing with the dog. If you're sledding, you're outdoors. If you're doing obedience, you're outdoors a lot, so I think it's more of what you're doing with the dog, and maybe the people that own the working group are more extroverted. I don't know. Maybe the ones that own the smaller dogs are more introverted, I don't know. ...

(Sporting Dogs) They're definitely active people and active dogs, or you'd probably wouldn't own one. As far as working outside, a lot of people that handle the sporting group are hunters and things like that and, again, I guess I never looked at what type of personality the person was. I looked at how the specific person interacted with the dog. You find good and bad in every group. I don't know if there's a specific personality, although people say you tend to look like your dog after a while.

(Bulldogs) People who own bulldogs are usually people who love that breed and again I don't know of any specific personality, but I think my nephew owns a bulldog and he got it because it was very gentle and he has small children. Bulldogs are so ugly they're cute. They're quite the character; they have personality plus.

(Dalmatians) They're very stubborn dogs; they are hard to train, but again I've seen people really work well with them. They're nice dogs, very friendly, but they are hard to work with.

(Toy Dogs) They are not my favorite dog. I'd rather have a bigger dog and that's why I have a Husky, but we do have several in the pet therapy program and they're wonderful. One is a 3-1/2 pounds Chihuahua, but he has the heart of a lion... I always look at the way the two interact. I would not go out and buy a

Chihuahua for me, but I really enjoyed meeting this little Chihuahua and I'm sure the patients would too.

(Working Dogs) A lot of these people are more outdoor people, active people; they actually do things with their dogs. Some of the other dogs have a tendency to be housedogs or yard dogs. The working group tend to be more active with their dogs.

Ellen also emphasized the way the temperament of different dogs cut across different breeds, so different types of people might own different breeds, too. As she stated:

When somebody who has a disability goes to the center in Santa Rosa to be matched up with a dog, they don't match the breed. They match the temperament of the dog with the need of the person and the temperament of the person. Several people I've known have gone up there looking for a specific breed of dog and coming back with another one, because they were matched up with the dog in relation to their temperament and activity level.

Similarly, Nina found it difficult to make general associations for people with different breeds, preferring to see people as individuals. She emphasized the individuality of the people she knew who owned Siberians, and rather than making generalizations about other breeds, recalled individuals she knew who owned that breed. For example, here are her comments about the owners of different breeds and groups of dogs.

(Siberians) I have no idea. I don't know. People who have had Siberians that I know are so different and some are kind of easy going and some are pretty intense. Some people seem to be looking at it just for the glory and some do it for the love of the dog. (As to whether people who own Huskies share the same qualities of independence) I really wouldn't know. I know sometime I can be very stubborn about certain things, but I don't know if that's a generalization or not. I wouldn't try to draw a correlation. Seems to be quite a diverse group of people as far as I know. I can't think of anything. We have everything from blue-collar workers to Ivy League people, scientists to laborers showing dogs... (As to participating in club activities), it's completely different for every individual. It's more of an individual decision if they like to do that or if they don't. Some people like working in groups, some people would rather be loners, not get involved in the personality. Sometimes people that are really involved in dogs cause they have had more difficulty with relationships with people so they kinda, that's their friend. They have a few friends through dogs, but the dog is their main companion. I don't know you can't really generalize there.

(Pomeranians) I haven't known a Pom owner in years. The only Pom I ever knew was many many years ago. The vet was showing a Pom for an elderly wealthy lady. I just remember the dog won a lot. The lady was very happy when the dog won, but she wasn't there at the shows, she just wanted the dog out there. I never even met her. The handler I had at that time showed the Pom and a Siberian, his own breed, and a couple of others over the years. I wouldn't be able to draw any generalizations....

(Hounds) I had a neighbor back in Massachusetts that had hounds, but they were just a couple of kids, so I don't know. I don't have any associations with them, no.

(Herding Dogs) I knew a few. Sheltie people and Border Collie people...The Border collie people I've known from obedience. And Border Collies are really intense and a couple of those people were pretty intense. That's a very limited sample.

(Terriers) The only person I know that has a terrier is my hairdresser and she's not involved in showing, so I don't know.

(Sporting Dogs) Not really. I had a traveling companion that I used to show a lot with. We used to leave our husbands at home with the children and we used to take off together about once a month, she had a sporting dog, but I can't make any generalizations there.

(Working Dogs) Other than Siberians I've never really gotten involved in any other breeds.

(Golden Retrievers) They are kind of an outdoors dog. Good family dog. A little more practical as far as training than a Siberian. The ones I met are from really nice families and all-around good dogs.

(Bulldog) Gee, the only person I ever knew who had a bulldog was a friend of my mother's when I was a teenager and that was the sweetest dog. It was so ugly it was beautiful. It was very sweet and the owner was very sweet too.

(Dalmatians) I've known some people who've had them. In fact, there was somebody who had a Dalmatian that got us interested in showing in the first place.

The Role of Politics

But while Nina had little to say about the differences between different people and their dogs, she was particularly aware of the politics of the dog show world – a subject which Ellen didn't bring up, since she and her husband were fairly distant from the center of organized club activities and she was mostly interested in using her dogs for pet therapy. This was less of a concern for the Pom owners, too, because of their more relaxed, social atmosphere. As Nina pointed out, the politics could get very intense, as the owners sought to improve their chances

and used various methods to influence the judges, such as advertising. As she commented, explaining why her husband was no longer active in showing:

(My husband) got burned out with the politics the first year or two we were involved in it. He likes to take them backpacking and cross country skiing and cuddle and stuff like that and pet them. They adore him. But he didn't take losing gracefully when there was politics in the ring....We were relatively unknown. We were getting ignored a lot in the ring, but when we won, we won big. But a lot of times it was "well, we don't recognize you and your dog is a different color than everything else in the ring. Go to the end of the line." He just felt after we've been to a couple of shows and the pro handler got put up here and he had this type of dog and then the other pro handler in the next class had the exact opposite type of dog, they won. They were putting up all the pro handlers and he didn't want to play this game. He doesn't do it.

You'll run into judges that are very non-political and go "Okay, this is the breed standard and I'm going to judge the way I interpret the breed standards." But you do run into judges every now and you'll see them put up a friend or they know that that particular handler is going to be picking the judging panel at a show a year from now because they're active in their club, and so they'll put that handler up for that show, and then lo and behold they are judging in that particular show...You kind of wonder. What's happening?...It's just part of the game.

But you can get a little bit picky under who you show under. So for certain judges, I just decided there's no point in me ever showing under this person again, because they're political or they don't like this type of dog. You know in advance, because that's published in the AKC. You know months in advance, and you have the right (to drop out), if they have to change judges, because Judge XYZ was supposed to judge at this show and had a heart attack three weeks before or they broke their leg and they aren't going to be able to perform their judgeship. A notice is sent out and you have the right to withdraw your entry and get your money back under those circumstances....Of course, a lot of times if you've already gotten to the show and it's only happened a day or two before and...they didn't have time to get the announcements out, you're already there. So you think. "Well, I've already spent a tank and a half of gas to get here, I'll go ahead and show and take my chances." But there are people who say, "I know this judge doesn't like my dogs or won't put me up, so I might as well pull my entry and get my \$20 back."

Nina also pointed out how the official photograph might play into politics too, since some people sent them to the judge, and that might help sway the judge's vote in one's favor in the future. As she noted:

Some people use them in advertising. It's also a nice memento if you've won, and it's also courtesy to send one to the judge, and maybe the judge will remember

you the next time they see you in the ring...Also, the big breeders that are really out there trying to get a lot of stud fees or trying to sell the next litter of puppies at a premium will take those ads out on a regular basis.

Summing Up Differences and Perceptions of Differences Between the Owners of Different Breeds

In sum, there were some differences among the owners of different breeds in their personality characteristics related to their types of dogs and in the way the owners of different types of dogs perceived them, though based on only four interviews and observations at two shows this needs to be explored further. In distinguishing the characteristics of owners of their own breed, they confirmed the results of my own observations and interviews at the Pom and Sibe Specialty Shows that the Pom owners tended to be very social, warm, friendly people like their dogs, while the Sibe owners tended to be fairly independent, and individualistic. Additionally, while the two Pom informants readily characterized the people of different types of dogs from their own observation or what they heard about them, the two Sibe informants preferred to see people as individuals. Plus one Sibe informant was particularly aware of the politics within the organizational and show world, while the other was not involved in, and the Pom informants stressed the warm, social nature of the Pom club members, and seemed less aware of or interested in the politics of showing.

Such differences are even reflected in the reasons the Pom and Sibe owners give for owning more than one dog. Although many owners do own a single dog, they all owned multiple dogs of their breed, and sometimes other dog breeds or pets. A key reason was that their dogs wanted to be with other dogs or would feel lonely. However, while the two Pom owners emphasized the need of their dog for sociability, because this was a very social, friendly

dog, the two Siberian owners emphasized the need of their dog to be part of a pack, since these were bred as pack dogs for pulling sleds.

Thus, both in describing their dogs and the owners of their breed, the responses of the few Pom and Sibe owners I spoke to seemed to reflect a major theme that appeared in my research of the Pom owners being more social and more socially aware, whereas the Sibe owners were more independent and individualistic. While the Pom owners tended to have a clear awareness of the owners of other types of dogs and thought of owners as very much like their dogs, the Sibe owners were less aware, didn't know others with other breeds well enough to make a judgment, and tended to see the owners as individuals.

However, such generalizations only apply to the Sibe and Pom owners active in the show world, since those with show dogs are much more informed about the breed of dog they choose to get and much more committed to that particular breed. All of the informants and a number of the dog show participants I spoke with distinguished between those who participated in dog shows and those who just owned pets for themselves and their families. Pet people may not make their choices about what dog to get so deliberately; they may be more likely to get whatever dog they do due to chance circumstances, such as picking up a cute puppy at a pet store or at the local ASPCA. So the differences between the owners of different types of breeds may not apply to them – a subject that might be explored in future research.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, this research has shown some clear differences between the owners of Pomeranian and Siberian Husky show dog owners and the communities they form. Many of these owners think of themselves as a subculture, and some view their group as an adoptive family, based on a shared commitment to the breed. While such differences may not hold for pet owners, who may not make the same conscious, committed choice of a breed, the owners of show dogs make a long-term commitment to raising, showing, and even breeding a particular breed, even when they own other pets and/or show another breed of dogs. But generally, from my informal interviews at two Specialty Shows put on by the Northern California Pomeranian Club and by the Northern California Siberian Husky Club and from my interviews with two informants from each group, the commitment to the breed runs long and deep.

More specifically, the major findings from my research are these:

1) The informants and other interviewees reported different ways they got their first dog of the breed. Often, this occurred due to chance circumstances – a friend brought over a puppy; their parents wanted them to get a particular type of dog; they had a friend who was already involved in showing their dog. But then, once they got that dog, they fell in love with it, learned more about the breed, and made a conscious and informed choice to commit themselves to that breed. Additionally, once they decided to show their dog, they learned about the rules of the show world, and as they went to more shows and got to know more people, they began to feel a sense of community connection.

2) While both Pom and Sibe owners went through a similar introductory process, their reasons for being attracted to the breed and the community of owners of that breed were quite

different. While the Pom owners found the sociability and companionship of the Pom most appealing, the Sibe owners liked the independence and energy of the breed.

3) The qualities that attracted the owners to the different breeds of dogs are also the qualities that characterize the two groups of owners. Whereas the Pom owners, who emphasized the sociable, friendly, companionship qualities of their dogs, tended to be very social, friendly people themselves, the Sibe owners, who emphasized the independence and pack nature of their dogs, tended to be fairly independent people themselves, and also very aware of the politics of the show world.

4) Though the owners got their dogs for various reasons, they subsequently made a conscious and informed commitment to that breed, and they became very informed about it and the rules of the show world.

5) The owners of Pomeranians and Siberian Huskies differed greatly in their reasons for choosing their dog, in their activities with their dogs, in their lifestyles, and in their personal characteristics. To a great extent their initial choice was shaped by their differences in lifestyles and personal characteristics. For instance, the Pom owners indicated that they wanted a small, companion dog for themselves or their family, while the Sibe owners indicated that they wanted a larger, active, energetic dog to fit into an active lifestyle. Then, they pursued different types of activities with their dogs.

6) Beyond choosing a particular breed, the Pom and Sibe owners also became involved in a community of other owners of their breed, and these communities are characterized by cultural differences, expressed through different lifestyles, activities, and personality characteristics of the Pom and Sibe owners.

7) The Pom and Sibe people engaged in different types of activities with their dogs, which is a reason for choosing them. While the Pom owners commonly took their dogs with them on everyday activities, from visiting to driving around to shopping, the Sibe owners commonly didn't take their dogs along on these days-to-day activities, in part because their dogs are too big and it would be disruptive (such as taking their dog into a store with them). By contrast, the Sibe owners often participated with their dogs in outdoors activities, such as hiking, camping, or sledding, whereas Pom owners generally avoided such active outdoors activities, out of concern the activity would hurt the Pom's coat (such as if it got sand from the beach in its coat) or might be dangerous (some wild animal might eat their Pom).

8) These differences in the qualities of the dog and people are reflected in differences in the dog shows put on by these clubs. While the Pom show was characterized by a more informal, relaxed, laid-back atmosphere, in which socializing was as important as the competition itself, the Sibe show had a more formal, tense, competitive atmosphere, in which the officers and many other participants were focused on the competition, and following the rules and procedures were much more important.

9) The Pom owners who show their dogs tended to form more of a close social community than the more dispersed and more competitive Sibe owners.

10) Both the Pom and Sibe owners characterized the owners of their own breed of dogs differently, and the characteristics they emphasized are ones that outsiders might use to characterize them, too. For instance, the Pom informants described themselves as warm, friendly people with warm, friendly, happy dogs, who made great companions and were eager to please. By contrast, the Sibe informants described Sibe owners as typically independent, individualistic

people, with similarly independent dogs, who had a will of their own and were hard to train and control.

11) Besides assigning characteristics to their own breed, many dog owners made an association between the types of dogs people own and the characteristics of those owners. This awareness is particularly pronounced for the Pom owners, who tend to be very social and interested in social relationships. Both the interviewees at the Pom show and my two informants were quick to assign distinctive qualities to the owners of different breeds or groups of dogs. By contrast, the independent, individualistic Sibe owners were not only less aware of these differences, they were more interested in emphasizing the individuality of dog owners, and in many cases were resistant to lumping people together as a group. While they made some suggestions about what types of people might like what types of dogs (such as noting that sporting dogs tended to attract a sporty group of owners), mostly they preferred to think of choices about dogs as a personal matter. They thought it was more related to one's own temperament, rather than there being an association between different breeds and different types of owners – though that doesn't mean there wasn't such an association, just that they were unaware of it or didn't think there was.

Discussion

While these findings were made based on only two days of observations at two dog shows and with a small number of informants and informal interviews, they do provide support for the original hypothesis that 1) there would be differences between dog owners based on the types of dogs they choose and 2) these differences would be reflected in differences in the communities of owners choosing different types of breeds.

These results suggest that further research in this area would be valuable to show the differences between the owners of other breeds and types of dogs. Such research might be useful in several ways. It might contribute to helping prospective dog owners better decide the right breed and show community for them, by have a greater understanding of the different breeds and the characteristics associated with each breed. Such knowledge, in turn, would contribute to more informed, responsible dog ownership through a better match between the owner and the dog he or she decides to get.

Also, such research might be useful in helping people better understand themselves, based on the type of dog they find the most appealing to them. There are already many different personality systems that are based on people selecting different categories, such as colors, preferred ways of dealing with conflict, or preferred modes of perception, to learn about themselves. Similarly, a system might be developed based on people providing preferences about which types of dogs they like the most or feel they are the most like.

In short, as these findings show, the differences between the owners of different types of dogs and the community of different types of dog owners appear to be very real, and an awareness of such differences can contribute to prospective dog owners making better, more informed choices and to increased self-understanding, through knowing what type of dog one prefers or is most like.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR DOG RESEARCH PROJECT

Following are the initial questions I will be using to guide the interviews:

- What kinds of dogs and how many do you own yourself or have in your household?
- How long have you owned these type of dogs?
- How long have you owned any dogs?
- How did you decide on owning this particular breed?
- How did you decide to become a dog owner generally?
- What factors did you take into consideration in making your choice?
(ie: lifestyle, personality, recommendations by others, etc.)
- Have you owned other breeds before? Which ones? If you own a different breed now, why have you chosen this breed rather than a previous one?
- In general, what factors do you think people consider in deciding what is the right breed for them or their family? What factors do you think they should consider?
- What kinds of activities do you participate in with your dog?
- What kinds of activities do you participate in with other dog owners? With other dog owners of your breed?
- How did you become interested in showing your dog (or dogs)?
- What is the community of dog owners of your breed like? Can you describe this community and what you do as a part of this community?

- How would you characterize the average or typical owner of your breed of dog? (ie: lifestyle, personality, other characteristics).
 - What kind of differences are there between pet owners and those who participate in dog shows?
 - What about differences between those who are active club members and those who show but aren't active participants?
- When I mention this different breed of dogs, how do you think the average or typical owners of this breed of dog might differ from owners of your breed? (ie: activities with their dogs, interest in showing their dogs, lifestyle, personality, other characteristics). Why do you think there might be these differences?
- Any other questions or topics I should ask about?