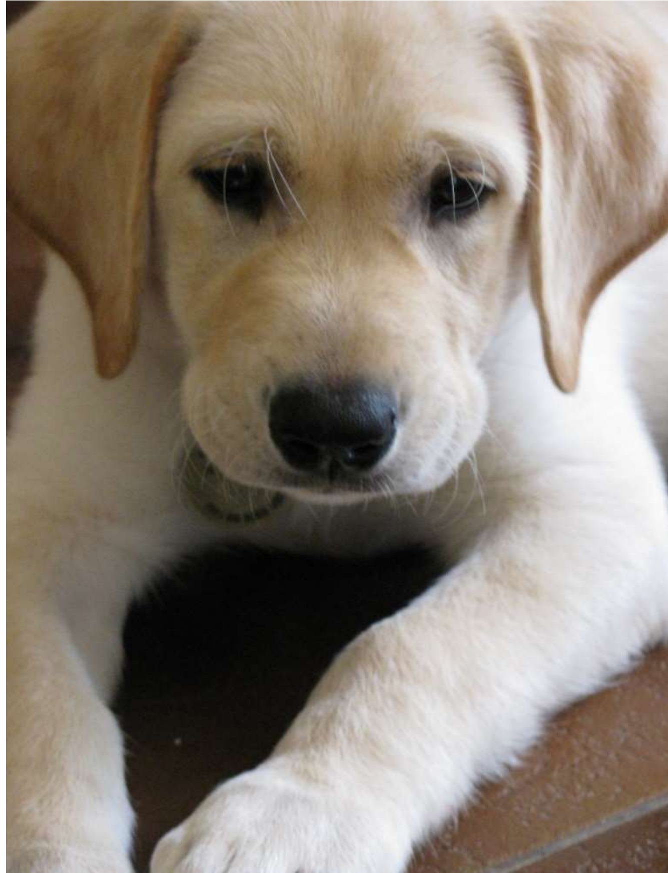
# Human-Animal Relations.
# Agency, Inter-dependence, and Emotion between Humans and Assistance Dogs.

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Discipline of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Adelaide

January 2017

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my four-legged associates.*

*In particular,*

*Ansum, Branston, Chloe, Dolly, Jarvis, Jim, Kali, Monty and Winnie.*

// Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my supervisors – Dr Susan Hemer, since my Honours year you have been my academic foothold. Your dedication, encouragement and steadfast understanding have matched your exceptional knowledge and capability. Thank you so very much. Dr Rod Lucas – your ability to understand me and help make sense of and contextualise my ideas has been nothing short of a saviour to me. Thank you so very much for your insights, expertise and support.

My thanks go to Guide Dogs Association SA&NT and Guide Dogs Services specifically. Not only did you open your doors to me, you allowed me to be a part of everything – all an anthropologist could ever hope or ask for. To the specific clients, staff, families and volunteers that participated, I am truly indebted to you – you know who you are. You were not only willing and encouraging from the start, you were so giving of your time, information and feelings. There would be no doctoral thesis without you.

Importantly, this thesis would never have been attempted without funding from the Australia Post-Graduate Award, and never completed without substantial support from Gran and Papa Orchard, Mum, and my dear friends John and Violet – thank you beyond measure.

To my colleagues at the University of Adelaide. Be it answers to my computer questions or a moment for escaping my existential angsts, I'm so grateful – especially to my fellow dog lover, Sharon. Without your humour, talents and eternal patience this would have been so much harder.

Last but by no means least, thanks to all my family, for egging me on from Cornwall to Adelaide, and all in between. Mum, Dad, Daniel, Aunty Cynthia and Ricky, without you there would be no fun or reason.

# Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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# Glossary of Terms

AA Dog……………………………………………………………………………………………………Autism Assistance dog.

ASD……………………………………………………………………………………………………Autism Spectrum Disorder.

BDU……………………………………………………………Business Development Unit (Marketing department).

GD School…………………………..............A Guide Dogs Services department throughout the country.

GD Services…………………………………………………………………………Guide Dog Services Department.

GD Association………………Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and the Northern Territory.

O&M……………………………………………………………………………………………Orientation and Mobility.

PaT……………………………………………………………………………………………………Pets as Therapy dog.

VI……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………Vision Impairment.

# Note to Reader

Due to the countless authors of forms, manuals, emails and other written material during the process of data collection there are numerous spelling and grammatical inconsistencies and errors. I have therefore not provided the term '[sic]' or changed the language to correct each error. Instead I have opted to cite verbatim.

There are also many pages cited from the organisation's website which have been published during each year of data collection – I have thus chosen to use the citation (GD Website 2010-2016) to incorporate all the years I gathered this specific data.

This research project was approved by the University of Adelaide Board of Ethics (Research number H-186-2009). I also conformed to the Australian Anthropological Code of Ethics, gained informed consent from all participants and maintained confidentiality of all informants' information and data collected. Pseudonyms for both humans and animals have therefore been used throughout this thesis.

# Abstract

In a society where sight and human autonomy hold high value, disabilities such as blindness and autism represent a disruption from the norm: a problem that needs resolving. Inevitably service provision becomes a part of the lives of those who experience these culturally defined debilities. The Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and Northern Territory is one such service provider and its policies and practices, staff, clients and dogs are the nucleus for my ethnographic research on the human-animal relationship.

This ethnographic research consists of participant observation conducted between December 2009 and March 2011 in the city of Adelaide. I conducted both structured and informal interviews and employed other qualitative research methods ('puppy-raising' for example) for reflexive data collection. This thesis seeks to advance the academic understanding of how people think about and make use of assistance dogs; how the relationships between humans and animals is understood; the senses are referred to, made use of, and valued in the context of disability and animal assistance; and finally, how people's everyday lives are facilitated by these animals.

It is a taken-for-granted understanding in both the academic literature and this fieldsite that animals can and do facilitate the lives of humans. As a result, in this setting there are three foci – human, animal, and the coming together of the two – all of which I argue transpires under the authority of the organisation and encapsulated by the concept of need. I therefore ethnographically analyse aspects of the human-animal relationship central to this setting – training, characterising, assessing, matching, bonding, and work – and go on to argue that a triad of inter-dependence is demonstrated through power, choice and emotion and is the driving factor of this cross-species relationship.

This setting sees dogs having careers and developing fluctuating bonds with various people. This propels a human-centric aim of providing assistance dogs for people with vision impairments, children and their families that experience autism, or to provide assistance at a companion level

as ‘pets as therapy’ dogs. I describe these unique and finite stages of dogs’ careers, highlighting the notion that agency is distributed across the working team.

The experiences of human and animal haptic[1] senses also inform the relationship in this setting, with orientation and mobility essential to training and other everyday conduct – especially regarding a client’s interactions, their personal potential, and their abilities as individuals in society. I therefore contend that senses are fundamental to the distribution of agency in the working team, as well as a client’s choices, the way they feel about their disability, and the way they conduct themselves.

When humans and animals are characterised and assessed, and matched and work with each other, there is an ongoing irresolvability or contradiction that comes to the fore between what are considered stable and what are considered fluid or mutable characteristics of humans and animals. For while individual human and animal behaviours are believed to exhibit the capacity for choice, ability, and consequent action, it is in reality, the *staff* who interpret and decipher these meaningful and distinguishing behaviours by virtue of explicit judgements, policies, and assessments. Staff attribute agency to the dogs and clients, and yet equally take it away when they do not perform in the manner congruent with ‘good’ service delivery. Ultimately, successful animal assistance is considered achieved when increased mobility, safety, and independence is attained. However, there are two key aspects of human-animal relations that are downplayed by the GD Services department. The first being, that the emotional facilitation experienced by clients and volunteers is disregarded by the staff in favour of the dogs acting as utilitarian tools; ultimately effecting client autonomy. The second is that while the GD Services staff (and organisation as a whole), retain much of the power and agency over each human-animal relationship that occurs here, their power over others is not explicitly taken into account or perceived to any large degree, regardless of its impact.

[1] The sense of touch in all its forms.

# Introduction

A long-term client of the Guide Dogs Association, I first met and interviewed John at his home and asked about his experiences of living with and relying on a guide dog:

> *When I look back on it I think I would have come [to The Guide Dogs Association] through a referral – because I had a car accident in '78 – so for rehabilitation I used the white cane and somehow the dog was more or less enforced on me … I was young, naïve and then it's a matter of people saying, "Oh you had better get a dog". I don't know if it came from the family or a bit of a mixture. People would go, "Oh, are you going to get a dog" and I seemed to have applied for a dog without knowing. [I was] still learning anyway – the whole blind business – so I got this dog on an expectation that it wasn't essential for me but people filled me full of false ideas of what the dog can do. Like it can cross roads and it's going to solve all your problems and I sort of didn't really think I had a problem to start with, so you're getting all these subliminal messages reinforced to you and then you end up with a dog and you know, it was a good thing for me.*
>
> *So, going from not knowing about what guide dogs can do, then getting false expectations, and after a couple of close calls I realised the dog can't cross roads. So quickly I learnt that he's not really that capable of that type of thing but generally everything else he lived up to [my] expectations. People think – even my mother – I had pulled her up the other day – she still thinks that if I say "bank" or "bus stop" the dog will take me and this is this hidden perception that a dog will solve all your problems. It's really quite subtle how it's done but it annoys the hell out of me. Because you are not treated as human beings to start with and then when you've got the dog you're completely out of the picture as far as, you know, to think for yourself or anything like that. Then there is lack of privacy with a dog. It's just like wearing a great big whopping sign, "I am blind" and people point … and comment about you. (Fieldnotes, 2010)*

John refers here to a theme that arises regularly in this setting and thesis – what it feels like to be vision impaired and the experience of others' perception of his disability. He talks about receiving services and the fact that there are positive and negative aspects to service provision.

> *Bentley was dog number one. We went through the sporting phase of my life so Bentley was a hitchhiker. I ask, who was number two?*
>
> *Zeke. The one we don't talk about. Zeke the psychopath. He was a bit loopy. He got the sack after 12 months. Sometimes they just slip through the system and he was aggressive. He had whimpish behaviour but if you raised your voice to him and things like that he would drop to his stomach [and cower]… Zeke's aggressiveness*

> *became worse and worse where he was just attacking dogs, but in a way I couldn't predict it. Like normally there's a build-up – the tail goes or they go into a posture, but he would just flick his switch. It was quite frightening for me and everybody else. After 12 months of work together, he attacked another guide dog and that was it – he was decommissioned straight away.*
>
> *Number three was 'Luke the Duke'. I had him from start until death. He was a great little dog. Number four is Ruska who's outside at the moment. He's highly intelligent. He's ten now. So another one or two years and I will have to go through the process all over again. (Ibid.)*

While telling me about the various relationships he has developed with different dogs over the years, John refers to key features of the human-animal relationship in this setting – animal career, characterisation and assessment. As I interview John I assume people who use assistance animals bond with each dog they have and ask him: what about the bond between you and your dogs? Can you articulate it?

> *No doubt about it. Oh it's strong. Yeah, I'm protective over him as I would be with a child and I'm probably a bit tougher than most people. I wouldn't say hard on it – it's just consistent discipline. But the bond is strong. Initially it's a working relationship, but with me it's increasing bond. I guess you could say a love in a way, but it's also based on his working ability because he's a fantastic worker this dog – one of the best I've had. I mean they've all been good but they have their different specialities and things like that…as they get older that's when the bond I think is at its peak.*
>
> *As they get older they become more intuitive and I think that's just a closer relationship because he is with me all the time. If he's in a hotel room with me he's off duty it's like you've got a friend there, so it's play time, so you can have that 'you're not lonely' feeling because you are not by yourself. But if you're with the white cane it's great but you've got no excuse to go out anywhere. Why would you go around the block just for a walk? And I really enjoy the dog when they switch on, so I guess they [all] have their various levels of performance but when you're both working in unison, and you know he's switched on it's a fantastic feeling. (Ibid.)*

A number of other key points also stand out from this vignette. In Australian society, like many other 'developed' nations around the world, it is understood that a disability[2] such as blindness can be ameliorated by the use of an animal. Quite often the animal of choice is a dog,[3] specifically bred and trained for this role. People with what are understood as disabilities (such as blindness) can apply for an assistance dog from a number of associations, of which the Guide Dogs Association SA&NT[4] the key organisation in this thesis, was just one. As a result of pairing humans and dogs in this manner, people (staff, clients and volunteers) experience a series of dogs (and thus relationships) during their engagement with the organisation and accordingly this thesis will illustrate people's experiences of working and engaging with these dogs. I will describe how and in what ways these dogs vary in their capacities and personality – explaining the manner in which some fit the GD Association mode of success and how others do not. I will argue that the relationship between humans and animals in this setting is fluid and mutable based upon the practices, structures and training processes, as well as describe the manner in which human energy and organisational effort is spent on attempts to control, shape and direct that mutability. The result is human-animal relations that are triadic in form of inter-dependence between dog, client and organisation.

Another distinctive aspect of this thesis and of the vignette above, is that dogs here do not behave with simple 'single command equals action' behaviour, but instead oscillate between the need and expectation to perform autonomous acts, and also being trained and instructed to behave 'appropriately', thus indicating a complicated and fluctuating agency between human and animal. I refer to this concept as distributed agency. However, what also becomes clear in the story above, as will be argued in a number of areas throughout the following chapters, is that the *bond*

---

[2] This is a term that courts controversy in academic literature and is laden with social meaning and importance (Charmaz 2006; Dajani 2001), however, I do not have the scope to examine this discourse in the thesis. I thus refer to the concept and word 'disability' with an understanding for those who find it an inaccurate or offensive term, and use it cautiously.

[3] Miniature horses are been trained by The Guide Horse Foundation in North Carolina, USA for people with vision impairments.

[4] Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and Northern Territory – hereon in GD Association.

between human and dog in this setting is central to ‘successfully’ or ‘unsuccessfully’ raising, training, and working with an assistance animal. This bond changes over time: it can be good, and bad, and *always* impacts the said attempt to ameliorate disability. It is apparent from John’s story that the bonds between him and his various guide dogs have been different, and have changed over time.

What also becomes apparent is a setting in which discipline, instruction, and control dominate and shape levels of personhood (either diminished or increased). Paradox abounds. Animals are both sentient and skilled, yet become utilitarian tools for a desired end. The GD Association characterise and assess and retain power, yet ultimately offer and enable desirable choice and options to clients. Clients fluctuate between developing ‘freedom’ due to their choices and being bound by rules and standards of the service provision, a fact which highlights the simultaneous nature of what constrains *and* creates human-animal relations in this setting.

To address these themes there are two key areas of literature which are relevant: disability, and human animal relations. In this introductory chapter I first discuss the anthropological literature pertaining to disability (specifically sensory loss) and highlight two juxtaposing theoretical frameworks pertinent to the discussion: phenomenology and Foucault’s post-structuralist surveyed body. My analysis will show that these tools of thought not only shape the way people in this setting consider and understand disability and their relationship with animals, they also provide a mirror for the ongoing contradictions and mutability that I describe as present in these relationships. I continue with an examination of the anthropological literature of human-animal relations, offering both key works which have shaped human-animal enquiry and current literature specific to dogs. I will examine the concept of choice for both human and animal, and,

provide an overview of the six chapters highlighting the importance of communication and autonomy in this setting.

## The Senses and Disability: Anthropological Perspective and Frames

It has been suggested that a society's sensorium and subsequent beliefs regarding the senses are as much culturally constructed as they are physical reactions. "Sensory perception is a cultural as well as a physical act: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are not only means of apprehending physical phenomena but are also avenues for the transmission of cultural values" (Herzfeld, 2007:431). The works of Stoller and Classen[5] are particular benchmarks in this realm of anthropological focus and shape the manner in which ethnography is both performed and written. These two theoretical offerings relate to my research two-fold. First, because I use descriptive written language to convey the sensory losses experienced by my informants to grasp an understanding of behaviours and beliefs in this setting. Second, because it is the understanding of the senses, in this specific setting, which premises the human-animal relationship. I will explore this further in Chapter Three.

Stoller conveys the importance for all anthropologists to awaken their senses and to be aware of their own sense perceptions whilst performing ethnography (Stoller 1989b:29). His extensive works regarding the senses demonstrate the tangible benefits a reader gains as a result of such descriptive ethnography (ibid., 1989a; Stoller 2010). This is important to consider in my thesis for I want the reader to gain an appreciation of the experience of my informants' sensory loss and the feelings of identity which result. Like Stoller, Classen also calls for a sensory approach to participant observation and monographs, encouraging the researcher to explore how people both individually and collectively make sense of their world in order to understand another's senses (1993a, 1993b, 1997a, 1997b). More broadly, Classen explores sensory models, codes and values, and elucidates amongst other issues the importance of understanding how cultures

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[5] With the work of Howes also in Chapter Three.

enumerate their senses. By exploring the sensory order of a culture, she argues, an anthropologist will gain an understanding of that culture's social order (ibid., 1997a, 1993a) and is thus a theoretical approach important to the discussion of the beliefs, behaviours, structures, and policies which drive and affect people and dogs in this setting. However, much of the academic work on senses assumes a stance of fully able human beings, which is not the case for many of those in my fieldsite.

As will be described to a further extent in Chapter One, my fieldsite was with humans and animals at the GD Association. Some people were engaged with the organisation as a result of experiencing sensory loss, while others had all their functioning senses. The above-mentioned literature was important to consider not only as an anthropologist attempting to be aware of her own sensory biases, and the need to appropriately describe another's senses, but also as an anthropologist who would be engaging with people who had explicit notions of their own, and other's senses. Jackson (1989) argued that what is done with the body (and therefore the senses) is the ground for what is then thought and said (ibid.:131). It is fair then to say that my own and my informant's experiences, interactions, and perceptions of the sensorium, of disability, and consequent relationships with assistance dogs, was grounded in both the realm of the organisation's structures and policies as well as the individual's personal experience and agency.

## Human Agency and Disability

> Much recent anthropology has shown that agency is fundamental to our human experience—we live in intentional (Shweder 1991), moral (Kleinman 1995) and meaningful worlds (Garro 2003; Good 1993; Kirmayer 1992; Mattingly & Garro 2000) in which we are agents, authoring experiences to the best of our abilities. (Hay 2010:260)

Drawing upon his own anthropological work, Hay comprehensively argues that human agency is linked to the ability to act and to experience, and defines it as "the intentional and motivated capacity to act that is often manifested in productivity – doing something of personal or social

value – in everyday life” (ibid.:260). This coincides with the concept of agency held by those in my fieldsite.

At the GD Association, it is this human experience and capacity for productivity which sees the concept of agency (the ability to act) and autonomy (self-governance over those actions) intrinsically linked to ability and mobility. As I will describe in the chapters of this thesis, it is the possession and experience of a full range of senses and the consequent ability to ‘do’ that implies the ‘having’ of agency. Therefore, when one’s full range of senses is compromised and someone is given the social status of sick or disabled, they are characterised as impaired.

In both the biomedical and phenomenological spheres of academic literature there are extensive examples of the impact disability has upon a person’s autonomy and agency. It is the literature pertaining to disability as a state-of-being which depicts a person’s mobility and productivity as jeopardised when lacking sensorial abilities – leaving them supposedly disavowed of agency. Hay refers to Scarry, who concisely describes anthropological thought on the matter, “sickness presents a fundamental challenge to agency and, thus, to one's value in the world. Serious sickness unmakes worlds” (ibid. See also Scarry, 1985). This is a notion also mirrored in this fieldsite setting.

As I will describe throughout this thesis it is believed that a sensory impairment such as vision impairment, autism, or hearing loss ‘unmakes worlds’ (to use Scarry’s idiom): it limits ability by means of reducing or limiting mobility. This limit upon ‘full’ or ‘normal’ mobility equates to a loss of agency and a belief that services need to be offered (sensory replacement training and tools) to ameliorate this state of being. Tools are thus provided, offering a perceived ‘fix’ to the issue of reduced mobility, productivity and agency.

However, the need to be measured, assessed, and qualified by the GD Association means this ‘regaining’ of ‘good’ mobility and agency is a contradiction in itself. Nearly everyone in this setting would suggest that agency and autonomy without doubt increase with the use of these mobility

tools being incorporated into one's daily life. Yet I argue the human-animal relationship is understood as a task-orientated, utilitarian meeting of human and animal, directed by a third party (the GD Association) which generally provides positive outcomes/goals for all involved. Yet when I observed aspects of the process occur, such as assessment, matching and signing of ownership agreements, feelings of resistance can follow, emotions can become submerged, with power retained by the organisation. While the service provision of aids and animal assistance improves human mobility, it is in the form of distributed agency.

I also argue that the animal assistance provided here is rooted in being culturally constructed as 'different' (labelled vision impaired, autistic, or disabled) and the desire to ameliorate this difference in order restore and improve agency and autonomy. This thesis will describe the concept of disability as both a social and individual phenomenon. Ginsburg & Rapp in *Disability Worlds,* describe the "social, activist, reflexive, experiential, narrative, and phenomenological dimensions" (2013:53) of disability and argue that historically, anthropological works focussing on this topic were "intellectually segregated, considered the province of those in medical and applied anthropology" (ibid.:54). They go on to say that disability is a

> profoundly relational category, shaped by social conditions that exclude full participation in society. What counts as an impairment in different sociocultural settings is highly variable. Recently, new approaches by disability scholars and activists show that disability is not simply lodged in the body, but created by the social and material conditions that "dis-able" the full participation of those considered atypical. Disability is thus recognized as the result of negative interactions between a person with an impairment and his or her social environment. … Increasingly, researchers are focusing on social, political, and narrative strategies that address the experience of disability within the production, reproduction, and transformation of broader forms of social inequality. (Ibid.)

Other recent anthropological works highlight and complement themes referred to throughout this thesis such as issues of mobility and accessibility, as well as identity, embodiment and body in space (Rattray 2013; Soldatic & Meekosha 2015). Exclusion and difference are also key areas of discussion in current literature, with the edited publication of *Madness, Disability and Social Exclusion: The Archaeology and Anthropology of 'Difference'* offering an interesting array of

ethnographic vignettes depicting this (Hubert 2013).[6] Present in current debates is the importance of social meanings and interactions relating to diagnosis and treatment highlighting the significance of institutions, practitioners, and classificatory structures upon those experiencing disability (Grinker & Cho 2013; Solomon et al. 2015).

Anthropological literature pertaining to disability more generally has offered some interesting and varied areas of discussion such as: Klotz (2003), who describes a history of anthropological disability studies and the role of the body in impairment; Hughes & Paterson bridge the concepts of embodiment and disembodiment through a phenomenological approach (1999); Jenkins & Angrosino (1998:3 and passim) argue disability as rooted in cultural contextual variables (1998); Ingstad & Whyte, who provide edited collections of cross-cultural examples of personhood in relation to disability (1997, 1995); there would be no discussion of disability without Goffman's stigma theory (1968); Lyon & Barbalet's "somatisation" theory (1994); and finally, Frank offers an important phenomenological example of a disabled person's body image (1986).

Subsequently, the contributions to the anthropology of impairment-disability and anthropological disability studies, as well as the practice of conducting ethnography and advocacy are being furthered – quite rightly – by those who have a biomedical impairment themselves (Eames & Eames 2001, 1994; 1998, 1999, 2008; Putnam 1997 for example). What can be fairly assumed then is that anthropological thought regarding disability is situated both in the body *and* the social – something which correlates with the concept of disability in my field setting. For it is the conceptualisation of the placement of the individual body (of those biomedically diagnosed as disabled) within the realm of structures and collective action which frames this thesis.

What is interesting to note is that there are two juxtaposing branches of anthropological thought (phenomenology and Foucault's post-structuralist human body) which are routinely present in the literature of disability studies and are what I believe to be a good basis for my anthropological

[6] See also Açıksöz (2012), Daley & Weisner (2003) for further anthropological investigations of this nature.

analysis of human-animal relations. Phenomenology is important to consider here for the fact that it focusses upon the experiential aspect of disability – a perpetual outlook of people in this setting. Phenomenology is a theory and approach which highlights the study of consciousness and the lived experience (Merleau-Ponty 1962:passim). The primary foci of this theoretical perspective is upon the individual body (the conscious subject), embodiment (the fusion of body and mind in one being), a person's "Natural Attitude" (Diedrich 2001), our taken-for-granted understanding of the world as well as personal perceptions and experiences (Csordas 1994; Jackson, M 1996; Merleau-Ponty 1962 see also). The first-person experience of being disabled, vision impaired, having autism, or a child with ASD, was something clients often referred to. Phenomenology posits consciousness as the root of perception and by perceiving we are therefore experiencing, thus linking our bodies, our minds, the world and its social structures – a Heideggerian condition of "being in the world" (Dreyfus 1991:passim). How then, does having or working with an assistance dog impact, shape, or facilitate an individual's understanding of the (everyday) world, and a person's embodiment of it? This thesis will explore such personal experiences and perceptions of relationships with assistance animals.

Foucault's consideration of the body is also an appropriate theory to keep in mind because it encapsulates how bodies are surveyed, disciplined, normalised, and controlled within this society. Unlike phenomenology however, Foucault's post-structuralist approach to the human body focuses more closely on the notion of persons, bodies, and experiences as culturally and discursively structured, created in interaction, as situated and symbolic beings. In relation to disability specifically, Foucault argues that the body is external to itself. It is, he argues, a created product of historic and thus political discourse – a creation and driver of power and knowledge and thus a way of experiencing a culture's understanding of abnormality and disability (Foucault 1977; see also Fox 1997:44-45; Marchetti 2003). He thus considers disability as socially constructed. Rather than an experiential/embodied understanding of the body, a Foucauldian post-structuralist account focuses on the constructions and classifications of that body within its society, something which drives the procedures and practices of those at the GD Association. Disability thus becomes rooted not in the experiencing body, but the socially categorised body

and the collective perceptions of ability that organise perceptions of disability (McDermott & Varenne 1995; Scully 2005:59; Tremain 2005).

What can therefore be taken from the above conceptual frames is that both ways of thinking about the disabled body are appropriate to consider here because they provide an opportunity for understanding individuals' sense of self (while experiencing a sensory loss) within the bounds of a structured service delivery. The specific and fundamental issue however is that the GD Association considers sensory loss as a disability, rather than a socially prescribed notion, and believe it is an issue which should be rehabilitated – achieved by providing aids, replacements, and training to people with the expectation that mobility will create human independence and agency. What eventuates is that the GD Association delivers a 'tool' (for example, a dog or a cane) which is designed and developed to offer more agency to the individual. As a result of structures and behaviours the organisation therefore holds a level of power and knowledge over people and dogs. Agency for those with a sensory loss or sensitivity thus becomes distributed three-fold. Full autonomy for clients and volunteers extends mostly to the point of choosing of service providers, or resisting services.

## Human-Animal Relations, Anthropomorphism and Agency

### *Human-Animal Relations*

This thesis draws upon a second key body of literature which is human-animal relations. Throughout history and cross culturally many a page has been devoted to the matter of *why* we choose to have interactions with and ownership of animals. As sociologist Irvine explains in *If You Tame Me. Understanding Our Connection with Animals* (2008:18-22), much of the discourse driving this literature can be placed within one of four standpoints: we have animals in our lives in order to replace or supplement human to human relations (what Irvine calls the Deficiency argument); we engage animals in our day-to-day because it is economically viable to do so (the Affluence argument); we humans make space for animals in our lives because it reiterates human's power over nature (what Irvine defines as the Dominance argument); and finally that evolution or 'nature' has resulted in humans and animals wanting and needing to be familiar to

each other (the Biophilia hypothesis) (Irvine 2008:21-32). Irvine convincingly argues, as a fifth standpoint, that any "one-factor explanation" (ibid.:7) of our reason to bond with animals is destined *not* to succeed largely due to the now countless social constructions and cultural meanings humans attribute to animals (ibid.).

One classic ethnographic offering is by Willis, *Man and Beast* (1974), which provides an insight on three "autonomous and structurally dissimilar" African cultures (ibid.:114), specifically the Nuer of the Sudan and their oxen, the Lele of Zaire and their pangolins and the Fipa of Tanzania and their pythons. Each culture, we are told, represents a unique set of human-animal relations yet ultimately depict the "distinctive peculiarity" (ibid.:128) of all animals: they are both "close to man and strange to him, both akin to him and unalterably not-man" (ibid.). This correlates to the beliefs held by people at the GD Association that assistance dogs have certain intrinsic capacities which foster a strong bond between human and animal, and in turn, enable facilitation and increased autonomy. All the while, these canines are concurrently seen as non-human animal beings, suitable for being trained and moulded in order to fit with systems and people. This is a contradiction which will be referred to throughout this thesis.

*Humanity and Animality* by Ingold is a key work to consider in relation to this thesis, and to human-animal relations. Ingold considers the various scientific theories and social debates involved in articulating, classifying, and distinguishing humanity and animality, and discusses why and how we consider what being human is, as well as what a human being is. He argues that the essence of inquiry has changed over the years from "[w]hat makes us humans of a particular kind?, [to what] makes humans different from animals?" (Ingold 1994b:19). He also argues that this change in questioning "completely alters the terms of inquiry" (*ibid*.), resulting in a humanity where humans (due to our language, thought, and reason) are not just different, but reign supreme, with animals as inherently inferior.

Ingold argues that humanity "no longer appears as a species of animality... [but instead] lifts its possessors onto an altogether higher level of existence than that of the 'mere animal''' (ibid.:15).

This, he argues, results in a humanity hinged upon the state or condition of being human as opposed to simply being a member of the animal species and is all in the name of our desire to reach a better understanding of ourselves (ibid.). Elemental to Ingold's animal/human and social/scientific dichotomies are the concepts of language and classification, as well as the intrinsically human hankering for inquiry.[7]

*Anthropomorphism*

Anthropomorphism is a key term linking humans and animals. The Oxford English Dictionary defines anthropomorphism simply as the "attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to a god, animal, or object" (Soanes & Stevenson 2004:56), Milton also describes it as "an analytical concept [used] … by anthropologists and psychologists to describe how people understand or represent non-human animals (Milton 2005: 255). As an analytical concept, Milton argues anthropomorphism is often applied in three main ways: a way to describe how some animals are represented; how some people act towards human animals; and how non-hman animals are explicitly understood (ibid.: 256-257). Yet when academically researching and discussing animals and their relationship with humans and vice versa, it becomes a dramatically more complex issue with a quagmire of arguments. Thinking about animals thinking remains a theoretical issue of scientific objectivity and academic fallacy, of animal intelligence and selfhood, and of human morality and superiority. For comprehensive discussions on the topic see DeMello (2012:357-365), Milton (2005), Crist (1999), Serpell (2003), Sanders (1993), Morris et al. (2012), Datson & Mitman's edited work (2005), Rajecki et al. (1999), and Fisher (1996).

It is also important to note that the theoretical construct of anthropomorphism has lead to a concept and body of work entitled egomorphism; as Milton argues the *understanding* rather than the *representation* of non-human animals (2005: 255-271). Milton argues for egomophism as an alternative model of thinking about non-human animals, citing anthropomorphism as a misleading concept due to it being a "product only of the analyst's assumptions" (ibid.:260). She agrees with and cites Alger and Alger, that "'[a]nthropomorphism is best understood as a distancing concept intended to obscure the real inter-

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[7] See also Mullin (1999).

subjectivity that exists between human and non-human animals' (1999:203)." (ibid.: 266). She proposes as others have also (see for example, Candea (2010), Gray (2014), and Hurn (2008a, 2012)) that egomorphism is a more appropriate theory to understand animals due to its base in perception (Milton 2002, 2005). Egomorphism "implies that I understand my cat, or a humpback whale, or my human friends, on the basis of my perceptions that they are 'like me' rather than 'human-like'" (ibid., 2005: 261). She quotes Midgley, "'[t]he barrier does not fall between us and the dog. It falls between you and me' (1983:130)" (ibid.). However, for the purposes of this thesis I will refer only to anthropomorphism because indeed, it is the attribution of human emotions to non-human animals which is how dogs are represented and codified (as either capable or not) by the people in this fieldsite.

Why then, is anthropomorphism important with regard to the GD Association and to this thesis? The answer is, that although the people of the organisation do not articulate or perhaps perceive their actions and beliefs as anthropomorphic, they are all reliant upon the interpretations of dogs' physical actions and the anthropomorphic language[8] which follows. These explicit understandings and attitudes toward dogs are the only means possible for a human-animal relationship to occur in this setting, and by nature of its definition alone, is thus anthropomorphic. I will pay particular attention to this in Chapter Four where assessment of animal characteristics is discussed.

Therefore, as the habitual practice is for people at the GD Association to interpret animal behaviours as representations of animal thought, cognition, motivation, or emotional and other mental states, for those of us who choose to conduct anthropological and other socially-based research of animals and humans, anthropomorphism is a body of work which dogs – pun intended

[8] Expressly in regard to the dog's individuality, problem solving abilities, consciousness or mindedness, and emotions see Crist (1999: passim).

– the more important discussion of animal intelligence and capacity. As Fisher argues in the introduction to the edited book Readings in Animal Cognition,

> the charge of anthropomorphism oversimplifies a complex issue – animal consciousness – and tries to inhibit consideration of positions that ought to be evaluated in a more open-minded and empirical manner. (1996:3)

Anthropomorphism thus raises questions in regard to animal agency, a fundamental aspect of human animal relations in this setting. I therefore will now go on to discuss animal agency in the literature and how it relates to my data collection.

*Animal Agency*

> Agency is problematic. It depends on the animal in question, it depends on the circumstances, it depends on how agency itself is framed […and it creates…] questions about how we understand the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. (McFarland & Hediger 2009a:16)

Anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, cognitive science, comparative psychology, ethology, and zoology are all regular contributors to the debates about animal agency.[9] Often non-human agency becomes synonymous with other academic discussions of animal consciousness, awareness, intelligence, personhood, individuality, rationality, reasoning, memory, intention, choice, motivation, language, action, and (as will be described) communication. Ultimately these discussions lead to one of two debates: that of similarities between humans and animals, or differences between humans and animals. This links back to Ingold's argument regarding human-

[9] Two interesting and famous contributions are Pepperberg's grey parrot Alex (2009) and von Frisch's bees (von Frisch 1950, 1967). See also: Nyyssönen & Salmi (2013) for the impact and limits human presence has upon certain aspects of animal agency; Pearson (2013) for the uneven sharing of agency between humans and animals; Morris et al., (2012) for familiarity as the cause for animal agency; Hill (2011) for an interesting example of animals as ontological subjects in myth and ritual; Harrowitz (2009) for a discussion regarding intentional action and social cognitive capacities; McFarland & Hediger (2009a) for an interdisciplinary explanation of animal agency; and Steward (2009) who argues animals are not purely governed by instinct.

animal relations and anthropomorphism illustrating the power humans have over animals and the ongoing desire to learn about ourselves as humans from looking at animals.

The important thing to highlight is that no one dominant debate or understanding regarding animal agency is necessary to encapsulate here. Instead, what is needed, is simply an acceptance that certain groups and societies believe animals do have consciousness and thoughts and emotions, and that they act as a result of those thoughts and emotions. Some academics refer to this as animal agency, while my informants at the GD Association refer to a dog's thoughts, feelings, emotions and desires. Zoologist and cognitive ethology pioneer Griffin (2013), expands upon this commonly-held belief[10] arguing that communication is evidence of animals' conscious thinking and that this communication provides "objective verifiable data on animal feelings and thoughts" (2013:165 and passim). This argument correlates to the beliefs of those at the GD Association, for it is their understanding of communication which they consider the indicator of a dog's emotion. As will be described in Chapter Five, the human-animal bond is entrenched in communication: good communication sees successful bond, relationships, movements and mobility occur, and conversely, bad communication between human and animal sees a poor working relationship develop. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis I define animal agency as the capacity to think, consider, and feel; resulting in the ability to act towards a goal via communication of thought, emotion and desire.

What is interesting in this setting is that animal agency is a mutable state, one which is premised upon cross-species, inter-corporeal knowledge and communication – a contrasting slippage between bodily expression and belief in mind if you will. This is observed in the concept of animal career as will be described in Chapter Two, as well as at other distinct times such as: when engaging the senses; during Class training;[11] when bonding; and is at its most prominent when

[10] As well as his first publication, Animal Minds (1992)

[11] When client and dog are newly matched and trained together.

the human-animal 'team'[12] is working (as will be illustrated in chapters three, four, five, and six respectively). This thesis will therefore describe canine agency in this setting as actions perceived, observed, understood and articulated by humans. This understanding incorporates the unquestioned belief that dogs non-verbally communicate their thoughts, emotions, and intentions through their behaviours in space. These dogs depict their individuality, likes, dislikes, and capacities through their ability to transmit meaning. This is exemplified in the capacity to problem-solve when working, what Pearson, in his paper *Dogs, History, Agency* (2013) refers to as "thwarting activities" (ibid.:134). Problem solving here is an example of the widely-held belief that animals are independent thinkers, that they are sentient beings with what I refer to as agency: having the ability to recognise difference, perceiving it and then processing the information to find a tangible solution.

As I will establish throughout this thesis, humans in this setting of GD Association hold an absolute belief that animals are autonomous agents because they have the capacity of discernment. Take for example a working guide dog, in harness, guiding their training instructor or vision impaired handler along a well-trodden path. The human-animal team then encounter an unexpected obstacle in the form of roadworks that consequently blocks the pavement. It is believed that the dog is capable (and indeed expected) to first recognise the obstacle (sense it), then interpret it (realise that the problem needs solving), then give it meaning (recognise that they will have to guide or respond differently from the normal route or path), then communicate (indicate to, and receive and understand information from their handler), then establish how they will move (will they cross the road, do an 'off kerb walk', stand still or drop as a dead weight), and finally act upon the decision (guide their handler safely past the roadworks, anchor, or pacify a child). What is important to note is that paramount to the human-animal relationship is that it is both a dog's *and* human's agency working together which is key. Each has to take and give information; provide

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[12] The word 'team' will be used extensively throughout this thesis and refers to a human and animal working together: most often the matched client and dog. The term 'working unit' is also used by those in the organisation and means the same thing.

knowledge, commands, and guidance, and thus make decisions and act concurrently in order for the assistance animal relationship to be successful.

There is a mutability in animal agency that these same dogs are, at times, concurrently agents (thinking beings) and non-agents (objects/tools). It became evident that people in this setting have a transitory consideration of animal agency. Dogs here are attributed agency when they are understood to communicate their thoughts. Equally their agency is taken away when they do not perform in the manner congruent with service delivery. The humans decide what work the dog will be trained for, the humans decide whether they are capable of doing said work, and the dogs ultimately become mobility tools, property of the organisation until they are sold or deceased. Animal agency in this setting, then, is transitory and manipulated to achieve a desired goal of service provision and is also something to be encouraged, marvelled, and relied upon.

## Overview of Thesis and Chapter Outlines

My fieldwork site was predicated on various forms of relationships between humans and dogs whilst incorporating training, assessment, assistance, work, and companionship. The aims of this thesis are to examine how the human-animal relationship is thought about in this particular setting, consider how this group of dogs is understood to be an appropriate form of prosthesis for humans and what kind of agency is attributed to them in the process. By describing how the human-animal relationship is developed, organised, managed, and experienced, I will explore people's understandings and beliefs about the roles of these dogs. I will also reflect on people's taken-for-granted perceptions of, and assumptions about, these dogs.

This thesis will therefore contribute to the disability and human-animal relations literature by exploring the explicit assumption that an assistance animal facilitates people's lives, that, as sentient and autonomous beings they are able to 'compensate' for sensory losses in humans and I attempt to convey how, and in what ways, the everyday lives of people with whom I spoke are

facilitated by their assistance dogs. I therefore examine to what extent or in what ways this cross-species sensorial interchange is understood to occur.

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the reader to the fieldsite and focuses upon the concept of access as a precursor to the human-animal relationship in this setting. I first briefly discuss the impact of being an anthropologist 'at home' as opposed to travelling overseas to conduct my research and continue by describing Jarvis, the dog I 'puppy-raised' for the organisation. This offers a reflexive angle of the human-animal relationship in this setting and stresses the rules and restrictions which begin to frame it, thus highlighting the first instance of the importance of control and authority in regard human-animal relations here. I describe the organisation's structure, its aims, as well as the everyday work by staff and the beliefs in this setting which propel the work done. I finish with a description of the epicentre of my data collection: The Guide Dog Services department.

Chapter Two on animal career begins with an ethnographic vignette of a dog 'choosing' their assistance animal role. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of what is referred to as a dog's career from its conception to its death or sale. This incorporates early and official training, assessment, graduation, matching, assistance (work), and retirement. By providing an insight into each of these career stages the chapter describes the human beliefs and expectations that shape the relationships between dogs and the staff, clients, and volunteers of the organisation. I highlight the fundamental importance of dog behaviour when it comes to 'establishing' which role of assistance they will go on to provide (be it guide, autism assistance,[13] or pets as therapy[14]), for it is this 'decision' which emerges as an important contradiction between a human and animal's capacity to decide. I then draw upon the literature pertaining to agency as described in this Introduction in conjunction with the conduct and taken-for-granted beliefs about dogs by humans. I will show that my observations of the staff, client, and volunteers' practices describes

[13] Referred to heron in as AA dogs.

[14] Referred to heron in as PaT dogs.

these assistance dogs as *concurrently* both having and not having the autonomous capacity to decide and act upon those decisions. The variance between these two states of animal agency highlights the importance of the organisation's authority over the human-animal relationship.

Chapter Three focusses upon how human and animal senses (specifically the haptic senses) are employed in this setting and how they propel the human-animal relationship. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldnotes, observations, and conversations about client's experiences, I describe the concept of vision loss and a human's consequent need for 'assistive technologies' when experiencing this sensorial 'lack'. This leads to a discussion of the GD Association's assumptions of vision impairment, their focus on sensory loss prevention, and above all the human-centric approach to service provision. What follows is a discussion of the numerous organisational services. I go on to consider the role of animal senses and thus human-animal communication which occurs when giving and receiving information in their work, as well as a dog's sensory engagement with the humans that care for them when 'off duty'. Having considered the role of animal senses I turn my focus to humans, describing a client's senses in relation to orientation and mobility, as well as their chosen mobility aid, highlighting the sensorial differences between three mobility aids (a cane, sighted guide, or guide dog). It becomes apparent that for these people, haptic and basic[15] senses drive their embodiment and perception of their identity and world, thus becoming a basis for their autonomous engagement with the environment around them.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of three predominant processes in this organisation: assessment, matching and Class. I focus first upon human and animal assessment, describing the process of both procuring an assistance animal and becoming qualified as 'trained' (a dog ready for work). Using the example of two gentlemen on the waiting list for guide dogs, I describe the application process, the concept of suitability, and the emotions that are involved in becoming a

[15] Basic senses here mean, sight, hearing, smell, and taste.

guide dog user.[16] Then, using the example of anxiety (as emotion and behaviour) in particular guide dogs, I describe the manner in which dogs are characterised and consequently also assessed as suitable or not. The chapter follows with an ethnographic analysis of matching a fully trained dog to a human to create a working team. With no anthropological literature regarding this complex activity of matching, I note the ascribing of individuality, characteristics, and 'types' to both clients and dogs by staff. Most importantly, I illustrate the contradiction between what is defined as policy and what I observed in practice, highlighting the importance of human power and autonomy in this setting. The chapter concludes by describing Class, where after the matching process, the 'working' human-animal relationship between client and dog team is initiated and assessed through a training process. Again highlighting the organisation's power and control over the human-animal relationship, I use ethnographic examples of newly matched guide dog teams Olivia and Hunter, and James and Sophia, and describe the critical information exchange, 'evolution of knowing' and staff judgements which sees an assistance animal team graduate or not.

Now with a comprehensive understanding of how a human and animal come to be in a working relationship in this setting, the fifth chapter of this thesis focusses upon the intricate and often elusive nature of bond between human and animal. This chapter analyses what initiates, constitutes, and affects bond between the dogs and their handlers (staff, clients, and volunteers). I discuss the prescribed notion of what GD Services considers a good or bad bond to be and emphasise the intriguing reality and fluidity of human-animal bond here. For example, one dog experiences several bonds – starting with its biological pack, then their puppy-raiser, followed by their trainer, and then with the person they work with. Likewise, the volunteers, staff, and clients also experience differing bonds with the multiple dogs they raise, train or work with. This chapter provides an analysis of the conceptual understandings of the human-animal bond in social science literature with attachment theory providing a framework for understanding bond as a critical

[16] Similar to the term disability, the use of the word 'user' (in relation to a client working with an assistance dog), is imbued with cultural meaning as to whether it accurately reflects the relationship occurring between handler and dog. However, as I have limited space in this thesis and as I did not encounter any informants who took issue with the term, I therefore use it throughout these chapters.

aspect of the human-animal relationship. It becomes apparent that the policies and behaviours of humans and animals in this setting concur with the academic discourse: that bond is developed through affection, communication, and familiarity. Most importantly, however, I highlight that bond for humans and animals in this setting is fluid, it evolves and fluctuates, and that this quality is imperative to being able to function as a safe and effective assistance animal team.

The focus of the sixth chapter is human facilitation by dogs. Here, I examine the GD Association's assertion that animal assistance is constituted by three specific achievements: safety; independence; and social facilitation. Referring to apt and congruent academic literature throughout, I describe the taken-for-granted understanding by humans that animals facilitate the lives of humans physiologically, psychologically, and psychosocially. The chapter considers the human-animal relationship as experienced through these three aspects of facilitation for both people working with guide and AA dogs. I analyse when the matched clients and dogs are considered successful and effective, and describe the various types of benefits which can come from that. While highlighting the potential negatives that can come from being an assistance dog user (such as heightened visibility in the public domain), I focus upon the physical and emotional benefits such as increased orientation and mobility, better balance in and engagement with the environment, improved sense of self and personal confidence; being identified as vision impaired or autistic; a reduction in negative autism behaviours (with calmer, less aggressive or frustrated behaviour); improved language and communication; and overall better engagement with others. By examining these aspects of facilitation, I argue that a triadic balance of control and dependence between the client, dog and organisation exists (albeit submerged) and sustains the human-animal relationship.

In the final chapter of this thesis I focus upon feelings, emotions and distributed agency as observed in myself, volunteers, staff, clients and dogs. Although not explicitly, the organisation's programmes, guidelines and practices regard the dogs primarily as mobility tools, with emotional benefits deemed an addition to the aspects of facilitation discussed in the previous chapter. As a result of considering the dog in this manner, GD Services staff provide services which detach

emotions and mobility from one another: while feelings and emotions are understood as present and important, they are not at the forefront of service provision. I go on to argue that this division is at odds with what is written in the literature and observed in client practices – feelings and emotions are inextricably interwoven with their mobility, and what is more, they are an integral aspect to a person's agency and sense of self.

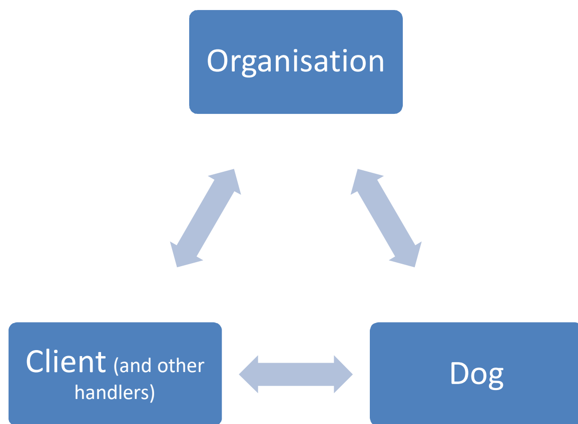


Image 1: Triadic inter-dependence between humans and animals.

This lack of concentration upon human feelings is in spite of knowing that emotions directly impact the success and/or failure of the human-animal relationship as seen with bond. I thus provide ethnographic examples from Kelly and Rosemary where emotions were seen as problematic for 'good' service provision. I argue instead that emotion is a perpetual aspect in the human-animal relationship, and one which both drives and shapes a triadic inter-dependence between dogs, clients and staff members.

# Chapter One: The Guide Dogs Association, Jarvis, and the Anthropologist

## Puppy Arrives

**Image 2: Jarvis on his day of arrival at my home (Fieldnotes, 2010).**

At one o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th June, 2010 the knock I had eagerly been anticipating finally rattled on the front door of my suburban Adelaide home. I opened it so see Lucy, one of the staff members of the Puppy-Raising team from the Guide Dogs (GD) Association holding Jarvis (an eight-week-old yellow Labrador pup) in her arms. "Here he is," she said, as she walked through the door, "where shall we put him?" Excited, I opened the side door to let him outside to go to the toilet and just looked on in stupefied amazement. I simply could not believe the day was

finally here, as I had the idea to puppy-raise[17] more than six months before and was so excited to finally see a dog in my garden.

On the day of his arrival I felt nervous but prepared. I had eagerly read my GDA *Puppy-Raising Manual*[18] from cover to cover and felt confident that I knew how to cope with what I perceived to be a massive responsibility: puppy-raising. Lucy had come the day before Jarvis' arrival to give me his bedding, toys, and food and to answer any more questions that I might have, telling me, "we try and do all this boring preparation stuff and signing of forms the day before the pup comes, as we find it difficult to maintain the puppy-raiser's attention when there is such a cute little fella in the room". Lucy also told me to have some play time with him and to engage him with simple commands. "Talk to him. Reassure him. It was only this morning that he left his mum and siblings for the first time since his birth".

Jarvis had been flown down from the Queensland GD Association with one of his sisters (Jazz) having both been bred specifically for assistance animal training in an Australian Guide Dog school (as GD Service departments are referred to countrywide). He was 'set aside' by the Queensland school for the Adelaide school with the potential role of assistance dog for people with vision loss, for families with children experiencing autism, or other eligible people with various needs and disabilities. Jarvis and Jazz were earmarked for this GD School as part of a reciprocal commitment across Australian GD Schools to keep the genetic lines of the dogs 'fresh and clean'. My manual told me to let him familiarise himself with and explore the house, and to remember that the puppy is "like a baby and will tire out quickly" (GDA, 2010a) so I was to put him in his bed for nap time, ready to give him dinner later on that evening. "Remember everything is on your terms, you decide when play is, you decide when cuddle time is, you decide it all" (ibid.). Lucy left

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[17] Puppy-raising is the process of volunteering one's time to the GD Association in order to raise a puppy (usually from eight-weeks-old and for a minimum of a year) in order to prepare the dog for assistance dog training.

[18] A document of 44 A4 pages outlining the rules and expectations of puppy-raising.

me with my manual, her telephone number (if I had any more questions), and of course Jarvis himself.

Jarvis had arrived at the house ('148' as it was colloquially known) that I was renting. It was also the house my family and I had immigrated to as a young girl but which I had long since moved on from, only to return as a 28-year-old commencing my doctorate. I was living in this house because I had decided (long before my research) that I needed an animal in my life again and had experienced such difficulty finding a rental property in my city that allowed me to have an animal of any kind. I consequently gave up searching for a property which allowed animals and arranged to take on the lease of my old family home knowing it would be acceptable to have a dog, and therefore fill the animal-gap in my life. Prior to this, my depression, anxiety, and loneliness had taken hold again and I knew that having a space with a dog would give me the opportunity to give and receive love, get me into a routine, get me exercising, give me someone to talk to and engage with, give me a purpose to get up in the morning, and in turn ease some of this mental illness. I therefore categorically made important decisions and changes in my life so as to have the opportunity to develop a bond with an animal. This meant: choosing to conduct my doctoral research 'at home' as opposed to overseas; choosing to live in a house that allowed for a dog; and finally choosing a research topic and fieldwork site that would facilitate my need to responsibly care for and bond with an animal.

Being back at 148 reminded me of my many other human-animal relationships that had occurred over the years. At one point in time, 148 had 11 animals: three cats; five guinea pigs; one rabbit and two dogs – so prior to Jarvis' arrival it certainly felt odd to be in this home with no animals at all. When Jarvis finally did arrive, as a fumbling, long-legged, golden boy, he bounced down the same corridors and turned the same corners as my German Sheppard, Jim had done ten years before. My heart broke with memories and grief of Jim, even while I was so excited and filled with joy that Jarvis was finally in the house. It certainly did not help that their names started with the same letter – many a time Jarvis was called Jim. It was very odd to be in such a familiar space with this new young dog. However, I was so keen for what was to come that it did not take long before

it felt as if we had bonded and he was part of the family. I spent the whole of my first day on the floor with Jarvis, looking, touching, talking, and thinking how very thankful I was that he was around. That first night I decided to sleep on a fold-out bed next to his puppy pen (his designated bed space) to give him confidence that he was not alone on his first night away from his pack.

**Image 3: Jarvis in his puppy pen on the first day away from his family pack (Fieldnotes, 2010).**

I had arrived at this point of puppy-raising by being accepted as one of the volunteers[19] with the Guide Dog Services[20] department. This department is one of several departments within the association – the physical centre of my fieldsite for ethnographic data collection. I signed a legal document entitled *Puppy-Raising Agreement,* which confirmed that all financial commitments associated with Jarvis (his food, vet bills, toys etcetera) were to be paid by the organisation, and in return I would care for Jarvis for 12-14 months ensuring that he would be: socialised and educated; a puppy that was well mannered in all environments; calm and confident in a variety of situations; have a safe and loving home provided; teach him manners; keep in close contact with the GD Services regarding his development; and finally, to follow all

[19] There were approximately a hundred volunteers registered with this GD Service department at this time. There were other volunteering roles other than puppy-raising which I will describe shortly, but all the puppy-raisers were in one of three categories: actively puppy-raising; available for puppy-raising, or currently unavailable for puppy-raising. I had to undergo the same application process as all puppy-raisers in order to be accepted as a volunteer.

[20] Hereon in referred to as GD Services.

procedures and guidelines provided by them. Jarvis always remained the property of the Association (GDA 2010a:1).

My personal aim was the same as the organisation's – to raise, train, and develop a dog who was prepared and suitable for official guide, AA, or PaT dog training. My expectation was that this was possible and that I would benefit physically, mentally and professionally as a result. The first four weeks of having this not-so-little pup[21] saw me engage and begin to bond with Jarvis in my home before I commenced attending the offices of the Association to continue my fieldwork. These early weeks saw Jarvis and myself build a routine, begin to understand each other's limits and foster our relationship. As time went on and my research progressed, I began spending large parts of my days in the GD Services office where relationships with staff members and dogs began to develop and strengthen. I was considered a new face, both as a new puppy-raising volunteer, and one staff member said, "that anthro? person with 'our' Jarvis". It appeared I was someone worthy of caution and to be prudent in front of. These new and fragile human-animal and human-human relationships were fundamental to the establishment and progression of my research. What began to appear obvious was that these new relationships, as well as the relationships of others in the office environment, were driven by aspects of access and control. As a result, my 'everyday' and fieldwork began to reflect these themes, as I will now discuss. I begin with a brief discussion of 'doing' fieldwork at home, followed by a detailed description of puppy Jarvis and the behaviours which accompanied his presence in my life. The chapter finishes with a description of the organisational structure (its divisions, people, and dogs) as well as explaining the various other locations and environments which featured in my participant observation.

## Fieldwork at Home

With Jarvis in my care and by my side for (more or less) the duration of my fieldwork, I conducted my ethnographic research in the location in which I normally live. This meant that my fieldsite

[21] At adulthood Jarvis, a trim and healthy Labrador, weighed 35 kilograms – one of the largest dogs in their organisation.

incorporated my house, and the homes of my friends and family, the GD Association offices, private homes of staff, clients, and volunteers of the organisation, and numerous other public environments. Consequently, my anthropological fieldwork was completely unremitting, regardless of how habitual or accustomed I was to the many areas and environments of my fieldsite. Also, having emigrated from Cornwall in the UK, this country and setting was and is not what I consider to be my primary cultural identity. Therefore, for me, although fieldwork was 'at home' (for I was in a culture that I was certainly familiar with), I did not have an intrinsic, taken-for-granted understanding of this society as someone who had been born and raised here. Like Cassidy (2002), "I was always a member of a community of anthropologists" and thus able to "question the founding principles of that society" regardless of my 'at home-ness' (ibid: xi). Also like Cassidy, the very process of 'writing up' "reinforced" my separation from my informants (see also Jackson (1987) for a comprehensive discussion of 'doing' anthropology 'at home'). Regardless of the debates surrounding the process of data collection and developing ethnographies 'at home', as I eased into the role of puppy-raising Jarvis and as my fieldwork extended to the various offices of the organisation, my relationships with GDS department staff began to develop and my everyday became dominated by the organisation's routine, rules, and restrictions.

It was essential to engage and embrace these rules and restrictions in order to collect data. By volunteering as a puppy-raiser as well as conducting my research from within the organisation it was expected that I sign many legal documents and make declarations. Most concerned adherence with the Association's codes of conduct and privacy policies. Others were agreements and statements pertaining to my conduct regarding puppy-raising, while even more were with respect to my practices and behaviour whilst on the grounds of the GD Association offices. In addition to these legal documents I made a personal commitment (as a researcher and perfectionist) to do my absolute best with regard to Jarvis' training and development which meant increased discipline on my part whilst following the training rules. As a result, these agreements, policies, procedures and commitments meant that my daily life became much more organised and controlled by the organisation's wishes, expectations, and permitted level of access

to dogs, people and information. I begin with a description of the control and access relating to Jarvis and puppy-raising, and then go on to discuss these same themes in relation to the GD Association building and other related settings.

## Jarvis

From the date I submitted my application to volunteer with the association, it was nine weeks before Jarvis arrived. I first requested a puppy-raiser application form and then submitted it along with the required Australian Federal Police National Police Check.[22] I then had a formal two-person interview and house inspection. After being confirmed as accepted onto the volunteer programme I received a pre-placement session at which point I was presented with Jarvis' identification disc engraved with 'his' number J101000 and the title GD Association Assistance Dog. I was given a laminated identification card specific to myself and Jarvis, summarising our details and the legislation of assistance animals in public places. I was also given another tag produced by the local council with another number linking Javis' information to mine on my local council database. As mentioned above, Jarvis then arrived the following day.

At this point it was verbally and textually explicit that Jarvis had to remain inside the perimeter of my home for the first four weeks of being with me, as he had not yet received the rudimentary inoculations for puppies which allows them to be in public spaces without risk of contracting harmful diseases. Ergo, I too had to remain inside the perimeter of my home (for the most part) as one of the explicit rules of puppy-raising was that he was *not to be left* for more than two to three hours at a time on any one day. Any non-Jarvis related activities outside the home had to be arranged into a maximum three-hour time slot according to the GD Services procedures.

At this early stage my day was often regulated into as little as 15 minute intervals with reprieve only when Jarvis slept, which happened (sometimes) all through the night and up to three times

[22] A 'police check' provided the organisation with information pertaining to any criminal charges or convictions I might have had.

a day for an hour or so at a time. I had to pre-empt when Jarvis needed the toilet in order to begin training to 'go' on commands. I needed to recognise signs of nervousness, anxiety, or his way of 'telling me' that he needed to 'go' (wandering, sniffing, circling, or vocalising or sitting at the door). I then was to take him outside with his lead attached to his collar as if going for a walk and stand in the one place, verbally commanding him to 'busy busy', therefore associating the action with the word. Learning to toilet on command is an essential requirement to work as an assistance animal. Toileting opportunities occurred up to 15 times a day at this stage as he had no control over his bladder yet. I had to train him to 'hold' his bladder by using a crate or 'puppy pen'. The concept being to toilet him first, then shut him in over-night where he would hold onto his bladder so as not to urinate in a confined space.

**Image 5: Jarvis, content to be in his puppy pen (Fieldnotes, 2010).**

**Image 4: Jarvis waking from a daytime snooze in his puppy pen (Fieldnotes, 2010).**

This puppy pen was his sleeping place for several months, and was his bed and 'safe place'. I was to give him access to it 24 hours a day. It was most definitely not to be used as a form of punishment, but a place he could go to and feel secure (GDA 2010a). I was to feed him three times a day, by exact measurement, of the same dried food, at the same hour, in the same place, with the same bowl. I was to verbally command him to sit, wait, and then whistle the provided

whistle three times, thus indicating permission to eat.[23] If Jarvis or I did not fulfil the tasks in order I was expected to start again. Absolutely no feeding him scraps of *any* kind. No marrow bones were allowed.

The behaviour expected of Jarvis and myself was explicit. GDS were emphatic that I was to *never* punish him. No shouting or yelling, no raising my hand, no smacking. He was not allowed to chew, 'mouth',[24] nor jump up, and there was to be no sitting on ANY furniture. Only walking – no jogging – and no rough play was allowed. We were not permitted to visit dog parks or to let him run off lead. I was told this was because at this early stage of development I had no control over external circumstances, nor of any of the other dogs in a dog park. Jarvis would be allowed to do 'free-running' (off lead) sessions as part of his training further down the track. Conducting ourselves in this way – adhering to the rules – would give Jarvis every opportunity to develop into a dog of good character and temperament that could be trained well.

My human and his animal behaviours were structured by these rules in many more ways. I was not allowed to speak to him as soon as I walked through the front door (in order to avoid so-called 'needy' behaviour). Play time was initiated and ended 'on my terms'. There was to be no chasing or wrestling games, tug of war, no balls, no sticks. He had a 'Nyla' chew bone, rubber Kong and a cotton knotted rope for his toys. I had to ensure that he was not demanding of my attention, ensure his social behaviour was filled with good habits, and not allow him to dictate the boundaries (GDA 2010a:29). I was to expect consistent behaviour from him. GD Services staff would often say that they did not mind so much if we (puppy-raisers) were to 'get it wrong', so

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[23] Using the whistle to indicate that Jarvis could eat was to prepare for future 'off lead training'. The whistle becomes synonymous to eating food and thus when off lead the dog learns to return to the handler at the sound of the whistle and get a food reward for coming back.

[24] 'Mouthing' is when the dog gently gnaws.

long as we got it consistently wrong. This, I was told one day whilst in the offices, was because consistent behaviour is easier to change when modifying an animal's actions in training.

I was to touch him during eating time, take toys off him and not always give them back, teach him to sit, stand, lay down, wait, and leave. I was expected to groom him and physically examine him every day, ensuring that I touched his paws, teeth, ears, nose, nails and I was allowed to bath him only if he had got dirty and no more than once a month. Although I was told these practices help "to build a bond between the handler and puppy" (ibid.:16) as well as help develop a puppy that learned the rules quickly, I had never previously engaged with animals in this strict manner. For both the GD Services staff and myself there was a definite understanding that Jarvis' future capacities were premised upon these rules being met. A lot of these behaviours towards an animal were odd to me, but what was more demanding and challenging was ensuring that *everyone else* I came in contact with adhered to these rules and restrictions also. This was *much* harder than performing and accomplishing the rules myself.

I was told to "let the puppy settle for a few days" (ibid.:3) before I was allowed to invite friends and relatives to visit me so as not to overwhelm him in his new space. "It's important to meet and see people, but first the puppy must become part of the family and feel happy and secure in its own environment" (ibid.). Consequently, my engagement with others, both publicly and privately, became controlled in order to 'make him comfortable' and 'follow the rules'. In these first four weeks, although our bond was becoming stronger as a result of spending so much time together, I became physically isolated due to the requirement of not leaving him for long periods.

As we progressed to conducting obedience and training in public spaces and as my research progressed in both the GD Association office spaces and the public areas associated with this fieldsite, Jarvis was able to accompany me to these offices, ride on public transport, and go to (nearly) all the places which I chose to go. Inclusion and engagement consequently took a dramatic turn. I took pride in my role and enjoyed his company, and although I took comfort in 'explicitly knowing' what I should be doing, at times I felt stifled by a reduced autonomy of my

actions. Everything I did was to revolve around the rules. It very quickly became apparent that it would be impossible for me to 'blend in' to the crowd or just simply 'be me' - I was now Sarah, an anthropologist, with a very handsome dog at my side. Regardless of being beyond the confines of my home and the emerging change from isolation to inclusion, my day-to-day activities were still premised by the above-mentioned rules and hegemony.

I was to make sure he was *always* given the opportunity to toilet prior to going into a public place, that he was always identifiable in his bright orange jacket and that he was to always be under my effective control. This was never more important than when interactions with other dogs and animals were experienced. It was expected that these dogs learn they are not to play with or be distracted by other dogs or animals when in their training jacket (and later working guide or AA harness).

**Image 6: Jarvis in his bright orange 'training' jacket (Fieldnotes, 2011).**

> Dog distraction is a serious problem for a GD client. It is one of the most common reasons why a puppy is unsuitable for guide work...if you consistently encourage your puppy to behave in a calm and controlled manner it will soon learn that this is expected each time it sees another dog. (Ibid.:34)[25]

Amongst other instructions I was expected to ensure that people did not touch, talk or even look at the dog when he was in his 'training' jacket; that the puppy was ignored by everyone but myself when he was 'training'; make sure he travelled in the front foot well of the car; that he always had his four "feet" on the ground; praise the pup "warmly" but not to overdo it; be firm but

[25] Dog distraction refers to the level and type of distraction that occurs when in the presence of another dog. Positive dog distraction refers to when the dog in training is excited to see another dog and want to approach it for example. Negative dog distraction refers to when the dog displays anxiousness or fearfulness as a result of seeing another dog – both forms of distraction can affect the dog's focus on the task at hand.

loving; give commands *only* when he is able to follow them through; teach him to 'walk out' in front of me, in the "centre of the pavement, not along the edge of the pavement where is nearest the road or wall"; stimulate his mind not always his legs; and to train him to respond first to my voice commands before using his lead to indicate my instructions (ibid.). It became glaringly apparent that in order to have a relationship to any degree with Jarvis, or the other dogs throughout the organisation, my activities, interactions, and experiences would be dominated by controlling conduct and, as I will describe shortly, issues of access.

These activities, interactions and experiences of control and access were also expected to extend to the GD Services office and the rest of the GD Association building. As my participant observation of fieldwork became established daily practice, my days were filled up with travelling, conducting informant interviews, writing ethnographic notes, and attending dog training sessions. More often than not Jarvis would be on his bed, next to me, travelling with me to an appointment, 'doing' training together, or waiting somewhere in the house for me to finish writing fieldnotes. Having Jarvis by my side in this way amongst staff members, clients, and volunteers meant that I was being seen by the people who expected the rules to be followed. Whether intentionally or not, I was being watched to see if I was adhering to the puppy-raising rules and putting into practice the pre-agreed conduct in relation to accessing people and information. While showing my commitment to the rules of puppy-raising I began gaining trust and understanding from the people in this setting and was slowly gathering good ethnographic data and informants. Yet the entire process was driven by the GD Association's power and control over access, people, dogs, and information, and this, in fact, is what shapes and makes the human-animal relationship possible in this setting.

## Guide Dogs (GD) Association

This particular GD Association is part of a trademark – Guide Dogs Australia – a brand that represents Australia's six state-based GD Associations. It is an incorporated body under the Associations Incorporation Act 1985, and the offices from where I based my fieldwork are located in the central business district in the major Australian city of Adelaide. These GD Associations

function as not-for-profit businesses, offering services to the blind, vision impaired and/or deaf, hearing impaired, as well as families of children with autism. In this Adelaide setting, the business is provided and managed from one location, its head office.[26] Therefore, a two story, city office building was the base point of my data collection. In addition, a substantial amount of my data collection saw me in the private homes of staff, clients, and volunteers of the organisation as well as copious other public spaces. This head office building was recognisable from the road by means of strips of bright orange colour across the façade, the first smack of what I call the 'orange infiltration', where the use of the colour orange is used to brand and promote the company. The building however does not look overly dissimilar to others in the area. It is with access to this building, its people, policies and information that all human-animal relationships are possible in this context.

During my time at the organisation there were six areas of the association – Discovery Centre, Business Development, non-animal Client Services, Corporate Services, Reception, as well as the GD Services themselves – which constitute the business structure that is the GD Association. Numbers given to me indicated approximately 80 paid staff and 168 volunteers at the time of my data collection. Without unpaid volunteers the organisation would be unable to function. The business has a purpose of providing sensorial support to individuals and families in the community and does this by gaining funds (by means of fundraising or government funding), developing a business brand and identity, generating and applying policies and procedures for daily conduct and engaging with members of the public to provide services. The staff and volunteers of each of these areas have their own specific daily tasks to enable this goal of service provision as is the same with the GD Services Department – the focal point of my fieldsite which will be described later in the chapter.

On my first day as a researcher in the building I had an appointment with the manager of the GD Services team in her office. I specifically left Jarvis at home for this meeting as I wanted to be seen

[26] The head office of the organisation was paid and built from funds bequeathed or otherwise donated.

as an anthropologist, not a volunteer. The manager gave me paperwork to sign, granting me access to the building and computer system, and she then took me upstairs to a pre-arranged, electronically reserved meeting with the Information Technology (IT) manager in order to organise this access. The IT manager appeared to have no concern delivering me access to large amounts of electronic data due to the fact that he had been given permission to do so by the GDS manager. I was however, given access *only* to GD Services files and not to any other departments' data. I was given my own swipe card for admission into and throughout the building (electronically linked to my personal details), a laptop computer to roam desks with (as I would have no permanent work station of my own) and a computer log-in name and password for the email and electronic file systems. I was also granted access to a GD Association email address and account.

Access to the building was electronically monitored. Every time my swipe card was used an electronic log was documented. People with these swipe cards had access to the offices between 0700 and 1900 hours with their cards, whereas the general public were restricted to local business hours of 0900 to 1730 hours. The reception area was staffed by one of two receptionists during these business hours and is the first point of contact (either by switchboard telephone lines or face-to-face) for all members of public, staff, clients, volunteers and others. This front desk area displayed adorable pictures of young pups, emotive scenes of dogs in harness working, and is an area which entices people to purchase merchandise or to donate. "We're counting on you!" says the television screen behind the reception desk. As is the case in many of the offices here, there is a permanent dog bed and tether point next to the receptionist's desk where dogs can be placed until their handler collects them.

All visitors entering the building must document their time of arrival and departure and are asked to wear a badge with an allocated number at all times whilst in the building. The receptionists police visitor access. This front entrance area exudes a corporate/clinical/business feel with industrial carpets (complete with flecks of orange), waiting room chairs (with orange backs) and a desk and locked door which separates those already in the building from those who have walked

through the front door. There is one 'feature' wall painted bright orange with the GD Association logo hanging upon it. The receptionists were ladies who I encountered nearly every day of my fieldwork. They were friendly and interested in my study and were a tremendous source of information, for which in return I would periodically give them permission to touch, pat and talk to Jarvis. Early on in my fieldwork I went to collect him from the reception bed after I spent the afternoon in the GD Services office. The following conversation ensued,

> *Me:* *I've come to collect The J Man. Would you like to give him a pat?*
> *Receptionist:* *Are you serious? Really? Can I?*
> *Me:* *Well has he behaved since he has been sitting there? Was he sitting quietly without seeking any attention? No barking etc.?"*
> *Receptionist:* *Oh he's been magnificent as usual. He's been a very good boy. I sit here and only ever look at the dogs there if I know they are asleep. It is so hard not to touch and talk to them when they are so cute. I make sure I don't make any eye contact though.*
> *Me:* *Yes I find it hard not to talk to them when I am down the back in the office. At least I get to go home with him. Well, we'll get him to do a few commands and then you can give him the praise for doing what we ask.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

I get Jarvis to do three commands – sit, down, and then up-stand – at which point the receptionist knows she can pat him and gives him lots of rubs on his head and ears, she scrunches his fur all the way down his back and talks to him, telling him that he is such a good fella, such a handsome man.

> *Receptionist:* *Oh! Thank you so much. You've made my day. My dog at home is very old, has not been well lately, and it is so sad to watch. This has cheered me up so much. I can't wait to tell my husband that I got to pat him.* (Ibid.)

The receptionists have a very limited physical relationship with any of the dogs regardless of the fact that they encounter them more than most staff members (excluding GD Services staff). However, this does not stop them being interested and at times emotionally invested in them. As a liaison between clients, volunteers, and staff, the receptionists see all dogs that come and go through the main entrance whether being dropped off, picked up, trained, or when they are

placed on the 'reception bed'. Over time, these staff tend to learn the names and characteristics of many of the dogs, asking clients about how well they guide, enquiring about how certain pups are progressing through their training and generally being involved with them. Theirs is an example of a human-animal relationship which is premised upon accessing information about and becoming bonded with the dogs only within the scope of the organisation's explicit regulations. The expectation is that the receptionists try not to touch, talk or make eye contact with the animals – unless given express direction by the trainer, client or puppy-raiser.

Access from the reception to other offices throughout the building and rooms containing dogs is limited to approval, possession of a swipe card, or a chaperone. Once past the locked door from reception a corridor leads the length of the building. Often GD Services staff are seen walking up and down the length of the corridor with a dog in the midst of a training exercise. Although everyone knows they are not meant to engage with the *dog*, conversation with the handler is considered acceptable. On one side of this corridor the wall is adorned with more 'moving' photos of various scenes (some very old and others new) of cute pups, working dogs, white cane users, GDA patrons and public personalities. This montage is the length of the corridor and is boarded with orange strips of colour. On the other side of the corridor are rooms used for various events and meetings. These rooms all have orange doors and are named in dedication to people deemed important to the organisation – more often than not due to large sums of money having been bequeathed. These rooms are where celebrations such as dog graduation ceremonies or fundraising events occur and where staff can meet. At the end of this corridor are another two locked doors. One leads to the GD Services department and offices, and the other door leads upstairs to the non-animal areas of the organisation.

The non-animal areas of the GD Association encompass Corporate, Finance, Information Technology, Client Services and the Business Development Unit (BDU). I did not spend specific time with the upstairs divisions (with exception of the BDU). However, I came to know many of the staff members very well regardless, either by placing dogs next to people's desks, by generally being in the building, by attending events, or as a result of their involvement with the GD Services

team. The departments were located in the upstairs of the building and thus separated physically from the Discovery Centre and GD Services department and each department has a fundamentally different relationship with the dogs in the building; these people and departments however all engage with people who are vision or otherwise sensorially impaired and thus are important to understand.

*Corporate Services*

Corporate Services comprises 'the face of the organisation': a chief executive officer (CEO); the human resources (HR) team; the finance team and the IT and Facilities team – a total of 11 staff at the time of my fieldwork. It is their job to keep the Association's people, money, and systems in working order. For these staff members access and engagement with dogs is determined by GD Services staff decision-making as well as happenstance (whether they encounter dogs throughout the building). The CEO is the only person outside the GD Services department who has complete access to the dogs whenever she pleases, albeit contact with the dogs is still subject to the GD Services manager approval. At the time of data collection, two staff members (the CEO's assistant and the IT manager) were home-border volunteers which sees them periodically take a dog in training home overnight as requested by the GD Services staff and bring it back to work with them the following day. These home-boarders have pet beds with tether points in their Corporate Services offices and often have various dogs placed on these beds. As a result, these particular staff members have more intimate experiences with individual dogs, possess a greater level of knowledge regarding the rules and regulations during training and puppy-raising, as well as having a greater understanding of the GD Services department as a whole.

Two other tether points in this division are located in the Human Resources manager's and CEO's offices. As with the reception area, dogs are placed at any of these tether points, at any given time during office hours and the staff members often show interest in the dog placed there by asking questions, having 'favourites', and showing willingness to 'have them' at any time. Their relationship, as with the other people in the building, is still limited to the restrictions expected by the GD Services department. As all these tether points are located in individual offices (as

opposed to the open-plan desk space area in the GD Services department) the staff here see the dogs only occasionally and are seldom physically or emotionally engaged with individual animals. In comparison to staff in the GD Services department, Corporate Services staff have a relatively detached relationship with these animals.

*Client Services*

The client services of the association encompass Vision Services, Sensory Directions and Hearing Solutions. These services all offer *non-animal* assistance for sensorial loss and other disabilities. As a result, the relationship that these staff have with assistance dogs is mostly minor. I therefore conducted very little participant observation with the people of these departments specifically and instead concentrated on the GD Services staff that engaged with animals more regularly. That said, these divisions and their staff provide essential services pertaining to the loss of a human's senses. People who are clients of the GD Services department are nearly always clients of vision services also (if not Sensory Directions and Hearing Solutions too). Therefore, although the staff in these departments do not have a particularly prominent relationship with the animals in this setting, they offer vital knowledge and support to assistance dog users.

Vision Services is part-funded by the Department of Families and Communities (a State Government[27] department) and offers: orientation and mobility support; acquired brain injury vision services; neurological vision services; children's services; low vision services; and education and support programmes. The 2011 annual report stated that in 2010 this service cost 23 percent of the Association's total expenditure and is offered state-wide to those who are eligible. It aims to increase skills, mobility, independence, and confidence by means of giving advice, providing assessments, organising children's camps and other support groups, as well as offering assistance and training in navigation, rehabilitation, practical 'life skills', and equipment. Case managers, orientation and mobility instructors, occupational therapists and orthoptists manage these services and provide assessments, training and support from the association's offices, client's

[27] Australia has three tiers of government: Federal, State, and Local (council).

homes or even hospitals and rehabilitation centres. In 2010, just shy of a thousand referrals saw close to 1,360 individual support programs put in place by the Vision Services team (GDA 2012:130).

In the same year, 22 percent of the Association's total expenditure was spent providing Sensory Directions as a service. Funded by Federal and South Australian State Government funds, Sensory Directions provides services to people of all ages with a hearing or sight loss, or combined hearing *and* vision impairment. It further offers services to clients who experience additional disabilities, social isolation, difficulty in communicating, physical and mental health issues, or those who have difficulty accessing community supports and services. Sensory Directions services are offered by means of case management, and services come in the form of needs-assessments and support plans, problem solving, advocacy, support for families, community development and education, practical assistance to promote independent living, education and support groups, as well as information and referrals to other assistance. In 2010, over 250 people received a service from Sensory Directions (GDA 2010b:19).

Hearing Solutions is a rehabilitation and information programme and is funded in part by the South Australian State Government as well as monies raised by the organisation's fundraising division. Equating to eight percent of the association's total expenditure in 2010, Hearing Solutions offers assistance to adults with a congenital or acquired hearing loss. It aims to assist people maintain their independence through the provision of various services such as training, support, and education in areas of assistive technology, management of hearing loss, home and work modifications, support groups, lip reading service, and hearing clinic. Figures for 2010 are unclear, however in 2009 over 600 clients received services and close to 200 people attended 26 information and education courses. The programme also manages a specialised smoke alarm scheme with approximately 130 smoke alarms installed in private homes in that year. Hearing

Solution services are offered at no cost to the individual, however any equipment provided is at the client's cost (GDA 2009).

As I previously indicated, the least amount of my fieldwork was spent with these staff and the clients of these service departments as these employees had very little if any specific relationship with the assistance animals. That said, the staff from these areas all showed interest in the dogs and were always excited and proud of the various dogs' achievements and seeing the human-animal relationship prosper.

*The Business Development Unit (BDU)*

The BDU offices consisted of approximately 15 staff members[28] and managed about 80 volunteers. There were six departments: Public and Media Relations; Fundraising; Donor Development; Telemarketing; Projects and Events; and Administration and Management. The Public and Media Relations staff are responsible for conducting and organising metropolitan and regional television and radio programmes, newspaper articles, newsletters, annual reports and other printed publications, all with the aim to inform the general public and specific people of current campaigns and to raise awareness of the work of the organisation. During the final two months of my fieldwork, electronic media such as Facebook and Twitter social networking sites were introduced as a means to inform and spread the GDA 'message'. The fundraising team are responsible for building partnerships, and maintaining relationships and contacts with various people such as high-profile donors, ambassadors of the organisation, the general public, and a range of businesses in the community.

The staff in the BDU endeavour to establish and maintain corporate and community support and sponsorship and to raise the money needed to compensate for the shortfall of government funding for services provided to the community. The Donor Development team specifically deal with promoting and dealing with people and their families who either donate, desire to bequeath

[28] Excluding the telemarketing team, none of whom did I engage with during my fieldwork.

money to the association, or those who have already done so. ‘Telemarketing’ is a telephone based sales department where profits are raised by selling dog-related merchandise and other products, as well as lottery tickets. The Telemarketing team also endeavour to recruit new benefactors and regular donors. The staff dedicated to Projects and Events are responsible for the myriad of events throughout the GD Association’s year. This team are responsible for both large and small scale, and public and private events which reoccur annually such as Top Dog Day, International Guide Dog Day, White Cane Day, Volunteer Celebration Days, Paws Parade, City to Bay fun run, Badge Day, and The GD Services Gala. Most of these events are designed to raise money and awareness, and to celebrate achievements of the staff, clients, volunteers and dogs.

It is specifically the BDU staff in the project/events, public relations and fundraising divisions that have a unique relationship with the assistance animals – more so than the other divisions of the BDU and Client Services. These divisions are often reliant upon the use of the assistance animals to conduct their work – be it for a photo shoot, a celebration, or fundraising event. These staff members openly declare that nothing works better to raise money and awareness of the organisation than by using images of cute, adorable dogs – or better still, by having a dog present at events. This need for dogs was at times a contentious issue for the GD Services staff as they often felt that the BDU team needed a great deal more education and dedication regarding ‘the rules’ and how the dogs were to be handled at these times. However, as the GD Services team were solely dependent upon the monies raised by the BDU for their programme to exist, the two departments knew they were reliant upon each other and a happy atmosphere of compromise existed. For all of these non-animal focussed departments in the organisation however, any relationship they had with the dogs was premised upon their access to them. This access was not of their volition.

*Access to Assistance Animals*

Access to the dogs was always limited to permission and final approval from the GD Services team. For example, a request email had to be sent to the GD Services staff by a member of the BDU requesting a dog for a certain event (a television production or newspaper article).

Permission was then either denied or granted by the GD Services manager herself. Although the GD Services staff were often frustrated by the BDU's continuous and often short-notice requests for dogs to be used, the GD Services nearly always complied with their wishes. It was a non-negotiable requirement however that a member of GD Services staff *always* had to be with the dog in these circumstances in order to control the proceedings – ensuring the dog be treated appropriately, that their training not become jeopardised, and that the dog was not stressed by the scenario they were in. On one such occasion, the puppy-raising manager said she would go to the photo shoot, because "if it is Chris (from the BDU) doing the photo shoot I will need to be there to make sure they don't have him [the dog] doing a dance or something."

I would regularly place Jarvis in the offices of the BDU as there were often not enough beds left for him in the GD Services office. I found this to be a good opportunity to go upstairs and engage with these (mostly) ladies and consequently hear about their work and get invited to projects and events relating to their practices. Having Jarvis 'on-hand' via me was quite convenient for them too and they certainly took full advantage of me as a puppy-raiser with dog in tow, asking me to help promote their cause with them regularly. Yet, it was *always* expected that we check with the GD Services management as to whether I was permitted to do such tasks.

One particular day, Jarvis had completed some training with a GD Services staff member and as I had not finished my work for the day I toileted him and put him in the BDU upstairs in Jesse's office. As usual I ensured he had water, attached him to the tether point and give him his nylon bone and rope toy to chew after his training efforts. I then left him there for a couple of hours. On my return a staff member told me that he had been, "absolutely adorable! He's been dreaming a lot of the time. Ohhh if only we could capture that! It is so cute". I undid his tether, clipped him onto his lead and said thank you to the staff member for having him. Jesse said that I was more than welcome. "Any time! We love having him here". The previous day (ensuring to follow the rules of puppy-raising), I had told the BDU staff that Jarvis was not allowed to be patted

or played with as he had been ‘acting up’ and not responding to my commands. So on this day Jesse did not ask for a pat, yet Chris did.

Still early in my data collection, I wanted to keep the BDU staff ‘on-side’ in order to develop relationships with these people and be invited to events, yet I had been pre-warned by GD Services staff that this particular BDU staff member (Chris) would always want to pat the dogs and that this person never followed the rules – making eye contact and giving them too much attention. I decided to let Chris touch Jarvis only after (as with the receptionist) I made Jarvis ‘work’ for it. As told to do, I gave him a few simple commands and then allowed Chris to praise him for doing them correctly. Whilst doing so, Chris got on the floor, voice raised, and started rubbing and patting Jarvis all over – getting him very excited. “The level of praise is meant to match the work”, I said, but the praise did not stop. Chris’ excitement and agency simply discounted any rules. Upon relaying the story to a GD Services staff member I was reminded, “Yeah, just put him next to Sam next time”.

Clearly thrilled when they engaged with the animals, these employees often said, with smiles from ear-to-ear, that working with the dogs was the best part of their job. However, this interaction was often to *obtain* something from the dog or what the dog represented: its picture; its story; or their ability to ‘help those in need’. The BDU aim was often to achieve a connection with the public to keep bringing in funds, enlist more puppy-raising volunteers, and generally raise awareness of blindness, autism, and other disabilities. Ultimately, the BDU team members had obvious joy, love, and great interest in these animals, yet I saw the dogs also considered as commodities here. The relationship for these staff with these animals was precipitated by funding

needs, moulded by control and access, and tremendously enjoyed (as observed through uncensored displays of emotion and affection towards them).

*Discovery Centre*

A large proportion of the downstairs of GD Association building is devoted to a Discovery Centre. It engages many staff and volunteers in numerous ways, and its *raison d'être* is education, sensory-loss prevention, and awareness of human senses, thus emphasising the organisation's taken-for-granted belief in the value of sight and hearing (a discussion I will expand upon Chapter Three). As Australia's "first interactive vision and hearing education centre" (GDA 2010-2016), the Discovery Centre has nine "interactive exhibits which take visitors through a selection of experiences and activities simulating life with a vision or hearing impairment" (ibid.). Staffed by volunteers (and often guide dog users also), the Discovery Centre gives people the opportunity to engage in feelings of vision and hearing loss and teaches about prevention of these impairments. They also teach and explain the experiences and needs of people who, in their daily lives, use assistance animals and other mobility aids such as white canes. Any opportunity to have a dog present was eagerly seized in this setting, but rarely was it the case to see a dog participate in Discovery Centre activities.

*Guide Dog Services Department (GD Services)*

As previously mentioned, the GD Services are dependent solely upon monies raised by the BDU. Deplorably, there is absolutely no government funding granted in order to provide the assistance animals or the staff's services. Regardless, the GD Services department offers four areas of services to people they deem eligible: Client service delivery; Guide Dogs; AA dogs; and PaT dogs. My participant observation when outside the department's four walls was spent mostly with those who received guide dogs, yet whilst in the building and during training sessions all these areas of services constituted my data source. Taking 13 percent of the association's total expenditure, it cost just shy of AU$800K to operate the GD Services department in 2010. During

my twelve months with the team there was a high turnover of staff, however on average there were eight to nine paid staff and approximately 90 volunteers.

As the only service department on the ground floor of the building, the services offered by this department are *managed* from these offices, however the work done to provide these services often occurs elsewhere. Essentially, any and every public place can be used to train dogs and conduct GD Services work and thus my ethnographic data collection also had a broad range of environments. Private homes, parks, ovals, grassy areas, central shopping districts and malls, walking tracks, supermarkets, restaurants, train stations and public transport were all dominant environments where GD Services performed their work. When inside the GD Association building, the work of this animal-focussed team is divided into various rooms and spaces consisting of: a whelping and Puppy Development area; Autism Assistance training room; kitchen; staff work stations; veterinary room; store room; warehouse; manager's office; puppy garden; and car park. Ethnographic fieldwork of a qualitative nature using participant observation was thus undertaken in countless environments.

The largest of desk spaces for staff (where I spent most of my 'desk' time) had a very long back wall painted bright orange with giant pictures of puppies adorning the walls. The desk 'cubes' had tall dividers between them, where staff were unable to see each other when sitting but were simultaneously joined to each other. Computers, stationary, folders and paperwork dominate the desks with other office equipment in the room also. Staff have individual 'work spaces' and chairs that they consider their own areas – often decorated with pictures of loved ones (human and animal in form). This area is used to organise and accomplish the work of the team and was the effective 'base' during my ethnographic data collection. Computers, telephones, paper files, and verbal information sharing with fellow colleagues, clients, and volunteers occurs here. As an anthropologist I floated from one desk to another as there was no additional space for me to set up a computer. I took the opportunity to sit at the desk of whoever was on leave or generally 'out' for the day, and set up the laptop accessing the internet and telephone system through that staff member's portal. This specific area was for the Orientation and Mobility instructors and cadets,

dog trainers, and the Puppy-Raising supervisor and advisors (as opposed to the managerial side of the department). I developed essential relationships and garnered a great deal of data here from informal and formal conversations, structured and unstructured interviews, and ethnographic observation of, and participation in, the day-to-day activities of these staff members and volunteers such as reading client files, accessing organisational email, and attending meetings, training, assessments, and other events.

As I became accustomed to the GD Services office space and its people over the early months of my data collection I saw signs of a vertical power hierarchy, with the GD manager at the top, and volunteers at the bottom (see Appendix A). This hierarchy governed the ability to access space, animals, and data. For example: electronically controlled locks to regulate access to the office space itself and other specific rooms; online diaries to monitor and control staff time management; passwords to control data, people and information; equipment to control a dog's body; and meetings and information sharing to direct and control decision-making. The night Luna (a pregnant brood bitch) whelped is a prime example of access and control dominating the human-animal relationship in this department.

Weeks prior to Luna's due date for delivery, Kaylee had moved her desk into the designated Puppy Development Centre room, specifically, I was told, in order to bond and let Luna become familiar with her presence in the room. The puppy development rooms see a pregnant dog's final weeks of gestation, then the birth, post-natal care, and early training of the brood bitch and her litter. When it was time for Luna to 'come in' in preparation for her whelp, the electronic door locking systems specific to this department were changed by IT allowing only the GD Services staff members access, and thus barring access to other members of the organisation. Furthermore, the puppy development room specifically was also locked. An email was sent to all members of staff saying Kaylee and Luna were now officially in 'lockdown'. One staff member commented that they did not want marketing (the BDU) coming down and getting photos of them before they were ready. It was also expressly noted by the manager that it was important to keep the room as germ free as possible and therefore the directive was that no more than two people were

allowed in that room at any one time. Shoes were to be dipped in disinfectant prior to entering and leaving the room and hands were to be washed upon entering and leaving also.

Noticing a prime opportunity to gain some interesting data for my research I emphatically implied my desire to Kaylee to be at the whelp, who in turn said that she would really like for me to be there too because otherwise she would be there “doing it” on her own. She told me unmistakably that I would have to “clear it” with Monica the department manager, although she did not expect her be happy about the idea. There was lots of whispers and ‘to-ing and fro-ing’ between staff over the following week regarding the idea that I might be present for the whelp. I was still new to the department and it felt that there was a sense of possessiveness about Luna and this litter as it was the first time this GD School was whelping on their own premises.[29] It had been decreed by the GD Services manager that not even the general GD Services staff were able to enter the whelping room at their own will, for fear of getting Luna ‘too stressed’. It began to look as if I would not be able to access the whelp.

As time went on and I made it clearer that I thought it important to my research to see the whelping process, Monica, the manager, made it clear that she was not keen on the idea of me being present. Chatting with Kaylee, she told me that Monica did not want me in the room at the whelp and that she needed to abide by the rules regardless of whether she wanted me there or not. Kaylee said that perhaps I could be a person on standby, someone who drives the staff member and brood bitch to the veterinary hospital if things go wrong at the whelp. Or perhaps, she said, I could be the one who writes down the order in which the dogs come out. Not prepared to be disobedient in any way or form, Kaylee was keen for me to be involved in any way she could think of.

On the morning of the day the whelp occurred I had said to Monica, “I am happy to be told to do whatever is needed at the time”, but she made it very clear that whatever was needed was

[29] Previously a brood bitch would be sent interstate to a stud, return for the gestation period, and again go interstate to whelp.

"simply for you to do nothing". Regardless, with Kaylee supporting my efforts, saying she would really like the extra support, Monica conceded with the condition that I was to stay in the other room (next-door) and only *look* through the window. If Kaylee needed me *she* would come out to *me* – not the other way around.

Like numerous births, this one started late in the evening and went through the night for a full 24 hours. No one other than select GD Services staff were informed that Luna was in the process of delivering her pups. Throughout the early hours of the morning, the building security company rang no less than three times to confirm and reconfirm that yes, it was actually staff members (not intruders) making movements in the building at three, four, and five am. Kaylee asked me to come into the room with her shortly after everyone in the building had left and to document the order of the puppies being delivered.

The following day, after Luna delivered 13 Labrador puppies, the GD Services manager sent an email to the organisation's staff members sharing the news and details of Luna's new status as 'mother' and finished with a timely reminder to all staff saying,

> If you could just remember that this is a first for our new premises and raises fantastic media and sponsorship opportunities. Due to the fact that the media love exclusives we ask that you avoid communicating this exciting news to external stakeholders (also applies to your personal Facebook pages etc.) while we secure a media partner to follow the pup's journeys and secure some sponsors. Thank you! (Fieldnotes, 2010)

## Conclusion

This individual event, coupled with the daily restrictions of space and behaviours towards dogs (as enforced by the GD Services department) sees the human-animal relationship in this setting dominated by authority and limitations. In regard the whelp, there was a fierce need to control not only me, but also the vicinity of all staff, and their admittance to nearly all areas of the GD Services department. Monitoring and restraining general information (such as the fact that the

brood bitch was even in labour) as well as access to the dogs and rooms appeared one of the highest priorities for the GD Services manager and indicates the high importance of human control over other humans and animals in this setting. The rules and restrictions associated with puppy-raising, dog training and working dogs further indicated the importance of control by the GD Services department.

From an analysis of the dynamics and beliefs of the organisation in this first chapter it can be seen that the human-animal relationship is one that is valued, but is also seen to be in need of being protected, and this is achieved by regulating people, controlling space, and explicitly overseeing dogs. By illustrating the rules, restrictions, and thus hegemony of humans and animals in this setting, I introduce the idea that power and authority simultaneously constrain but also make possible human-animal relations. This was clearly the case with my access to the fieldsite and as a puppy-raiser for Jarvis. Using the example of an animals' career, the following chapter will emphasise that this human control mutates both over time and in accordance to the varying structure and setting of humans and animals – the first of many mutable states of the human-animal relationship.

# Chapter Two: Animal Career

> Hi to all my dear friends. I am speechless and still overwhelmed after my graduation afternoon tea. It was amazing that so many of you were able to come and see me to celebrate my special day. The day could not have been better. There was standing room only at Guide Dogs SA.NT's new Discovery Centre. When my Guide Dog Instructor…and I walked into the room I found it hard not to shed a tear. I was so touched…Once we took up our position in front of everyone, [my instructor] told the story of my training and how the decision was made on my future career path. After a lot of discussion, it was decided that because of my beautiful patient and loving nature, I should take a career as 'Pets as Therapy' Dog.
>
> Now, you may think that I would be disappointed about that, but let me tell you I am very pleased. I am going to be able to help a family who really need me. I really hope you are not too disappointed, but becoming a guide dog was not the right choice for me. We all felt that the 'Pets as Therapy' path was something I could excel in: It is something I really want to do.
>
> I want to thank all for giving me such a great start in life. The support of every single one of you, along with the expert training and support from all my friends at Guide Dogs SA.NT has made it all happen…Thank you and bye for now. You never know, you may bump into me one day, after all Adelaide is a very small place.
>
> Love to you all: your friend always Ruby.
>
> (GDA 2010c:2)

## Introduction

All dogs in a Guide Dog school 'live through' a number of distinct stages in their lives that are referred to by staff, clients and volunteers as a career and this is the focus of this chapter. The proceeding snippet was sent to staff and financial supporters of assistance dog-in-training Ruby and describes her choice to follow a PaT career. A dog's career here is something which is worked towards, trained for, valued by humans, and enables numerous human-animal relationships to occur. It is believed that these dogs enjoy their working life because it gives them purpose and provides activities which stimulate them, as opposed to "just laying at home all day waiting for their owner to come home", as numerous staff members said to me. A dog's career in this setting

is something which is achieved and defines the dog as 'not just a dog', but instead something special – capable of a worthy role and status in the community and possessing specific abilities, achievements and privilege. A driving factor for the human-animal relationships which occur here is that an assistance animal's career is presented by the people in this setting as a choice made by the animal. Yet, while the dogs' choice is evident to a degree, in reality, their careers are in fact achieved by decisions about whether they have the 'right' propensity for the job. Dogs must display 'appropriate' actions, reactions, and behaviours such as willingness, drive, and initiative, and finally be successful in the human-constructed stages of training, and assessments.

Through an analysis of the GD Association's belief and understanding of animal choice, together with the concomitant human involvement, I will describe that animal career allows for the progression of several and varying relationships between human handlers and dogs in this setting. I will describe career as a concept which illustrates a distinct contradiction and movement between choice and control, and between agency and power – a recurring theme of this thesis. Without a balance between these four notions, human-animal relations here would not exist, yet the balance is a contradiction itself. For while the ability for animals to have intelligence, willingness, and choice (what I refer to as agency) is highly valued and seriously considered, the three-tiered involvement by humans: training and teaching obedience; interpreting animal action; and then making decisions relating to individual dogs, is significantly downplayed yet fundamental to the animal's role. I begin now by describing an assistance dog's career.

All dogs undertake and progress through various stages of their career – a designated path – with some experiencing more stages than others. All however are categorised into at least four stages: conception; neonatal; puppy-raising; and assessment.[30] As a human-constructed discourse, a dog's career is what propels human-animal relationships between puppy-raisers, home-boarders, dog trainers, and clients with distinct beginnings, middles, and ends. During these distinct career stages, specific one-on-one human-animal relationships develop, as dogs present behaviours and

[30] Assessment of the dog occurs at specific junctures of the career but there is, in effect, continuous assessment throughout every stage.

actions whilst growing, learning, engaging, and working. In turn, humans nurture, train, match, characterise, assess, and make choices about the dogs' career. As a result of these interactions humans articulate their interpretations of the dogs' behaviours and actions, believing that they are witnessing the animals' desires, emotions, and consequent choice of working role.

However, even though it is believed that the dogs are capable of, and indeed do imply their choice, their specific career role is ultimately chosen *for* them by humans. It is thus through this concept of career that the crux of a contradiction arises. For while career 'choice' is believed to come about by the dogs expressing "willingness" (their desires, and their mind thus having capacity to dictate their working fate), in fact, these desires and willingness are a *human interpretation* of animal actions and behaviours. It is these observations and interpretations of animal behaviour which displays non-human 'choice' or agency, as it is often referred to. While Cassidy (2002: 124-9) has explored the concept of the simultaneous granting and denying of animal agency in regard to racehorses (for example being objectified or personalised "according to the perspective from which they are described" (ibid: 125)), the oscillation of canine agency is a theory ignored in anthropological academic literature. There are certainly no examples in context to dogs. In this setting, a dog's choice is ultimately negated by human 'need' – the need for an animal to assist a human as a utilitarian tool. Control by means of training, codification and decision making therefore sees a dog concurrently having the capacity to choose and not choose. This contradiction simultaneously progresses and regulates the human-relationships here, with the GD Association's active decision-making underemphasised (albeit unintentionally).

This chapter will draw upon theoretical understandings of animal agency as it is this body of academic work that illuminates most clearly non-human choice and willingness. A reoccurring theme in the literature is that of understanding animal mind, thought, intelligence, and capacity (just some of the many terms used). Hotly contested and an evolving discussion in several disciplines,[31] the way we think about animals – their abilities and mentality – is entrenched in

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[31] See Gray (2014), Nyyssönen & Salmi (2013), Pearson (2013), Franklin (2011), High (2010), McFarland & Hediger (2009b:1-22 and passim), Steward (2009), Irvine (2004).

assumptions about human knowledge and language. I argue that the GD Association premise their thoughts and beliefs about dogs based upon the action and behaviour communicated and interpreted. Sociologist Crist's contribution *Images of Animals. Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind* (1999) provides an analysis of such a concept and offers a means to understand animal behaviour and the human construction of animal life through language. By discussing language use pertaining to:

> the deliverance, foreclosure, or elision of the inner life of animals, [she argues the] opposition between action and behaviour has been elaborated within the social and behavioural sciences. [She says,] "action" is identified as conduct accompanied and/or preceded by mental states, while "behaviour" is conceived as physical conduct, the output of the body, or a mere physical response stemming from environmental or inner-physiological stimuli without any corollary states of knowing, understanding, intending, or feeling. (Crist 1999)[32]

Although not explicitly expressed, this definition of animal action and behaviour parallels with the language used by those in my fieldsite. As I have argued, at the GD Association it is the interpretation of animal actions and behaviours that enables the human-animal relationship to exist, as will become evident in the following exploration of the 11 career levels: conception; neonatal; puppy-raising; assessment; official training; assessment; graduation; matching; placement; work/facilitation; and retirement. This chapter will analyse the Association's notion of animal choice by exploring the beliefs, expectations and roles of the dogs during these specific career stages. I will describe that by performing certain characteristics and in turn supposedly expressing desires, it is believed the animal decides which type of assistance work they choose, be it Guide, AA, PaT, or no work at all.

Ultimately, a dog's career here highlights a contradiction and conflict between humans and animals which is evident and ongoing during its 'working life'[33]. This not only drives the

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[32] See also (Sanders, 2007).

[33] Detailed discussion regarding the domestication, welfare, morality and ethical considerations of 'working' animals is worthy of in-depth, extensive consideration – an analysis that would need to go well beyond what this thesis can offer. There are however, several publications which provide a solid base for such a discussion: Burrows et al.

relationships between humans and animals – it is essential to it functioning. It represents a notion of animals as *simultaneously* having and not having agency, a concept not yet adequately explored in anthropological or human-animal relations literature. I begin now by describing the stages of a dogs' career. The following is a chart I constructed to indicate the career a dog has and the relationships that exist as each stage of the career progresses.

(2008b); Cassidy and Mullin (2007); Coulter (2016); Dawkins (1990, 2006); Fallani et al. (2007); Hatch (2007), Huss (2002); and Serpell et al. (2006). Also, Palmer (1997) furthers these discussions with a philosophical analysis regarding the use of contract theory as a means for understanding and conceptualising issues of ethics and domestication in human- animal relationships.

Image 7: Stages of Animal Career in the Guide Dogs Association of SA&NT

## CONCEPTION, BREEDING and NEONATAL

Breeders | Veterinarian | GD Severvices department

## PUPPY-RAISING

Volunteers and family/friends | Puppy-Raising Coordinator | Puppy-Raising Advisor | Public interaction | Marketing & Fundraising department | Sponsors | Veterinarian

## 'OFFICIAL' TRAINING

Assistance animal Instructor | Veterinarian | Marketing & Fundraising department

## ASSESSMENT

Assistance aniaml Instructor | Veterinarian

Fail GD Assessment
→ Reassessed - for Autism Dog
Fail Autism Dog Assessment
→ Reassessed for - Pet As Therapy Dog
Fail Social Dog Assessment
→ Adopted out - Pet

PASS

## GRADUATION

Volunteers and family/friends | Clients and family/friends | Public interaction | Marketing & Fundraising department | Sponsors | Assistance animal Instructor

## PLACEMENT/"MATCHING"

Assistance animal Instructor | Clients and family/friends

## "FACILITATION"/CLIENTS AND DOGS

Clients and family/friends | Public interaction | Marketing and Fundraising department | Assistance animal Instructor

## RETIREMENT

Clients and family/friends | Assistance animal Instructor | Adopter/Purchaser

## Animal Career

### *Conception, Breeding and Neo-natal*

In this setting, an assistance dog's career begins with conception. In most cases, a brood bitch (having been assessed and chosen specifically for the role of what is called 'motherhood') is sent interstate to be bred with a stud. Anxious times await whilst GD Services staff and the rest of the organisation are kept abreast of the situation by group email, hoping for a positive ultra-sound four weeks after the bitch's 'special weekend away' as it was referred to. The conception and breeding of these dogs was calculated and decided upon by the GD Services team manager. Lineage traits and temperament as seen in the 'parents' (sire and dam) behaviours are considered and analysed in the hope of producing a 'good litter', capable of getting a "good number of working dogs" (Fieldnotes, 2011) as the GD Services manager told me – emphasising the high value held for dogs that 'succeed' and work over those that do not. [34] A dog trainer explained to me that by planning the conception and breeding of their dogs in this manner they aim to "cookie cut" (ibid.) their dogs from the best brood bitch, keeping the best traits and breeding out the bad, thus allowing for the training of successful service animals.[35] Ruby, for example, was born in November 2008 (prior to the commencement of my fieldwork) at an interstate GD School and sent to the school where I was undertaking my research as part of the reciprocal breeding programme. Her sire was Dougie and her dam Annie – both were chosen to be mated due to their temperament and personality. As was described in the above vignette, Ruby's actions and behaviours in training indicated she had certain successes and failures whilst being trained but did not want to work as a guide or AA dog. Instead, due to her propensity with children, her role was chosen to be a PaT dog. It is thus expected that not all dogs in this setting are capable of being Guide or AA dogs – even if they do come from a 'long lineage' of service animals not all will

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[34] See Cassidy (2005) and Hurn (2008a, 2008b) for further discussion of breeding animals for specific traits.

[35] At the time of data collection, all male dogs were de-sexed at about six months of age with males from interstate schools chosen for mating purposed. Nearly all of the female dogs were also de-sexed, although this did vary depending on need, current brood bitches and the number of puppies coming from interstate schools. All dogs that were matched and working with clients were de-sexed.

possess the qualities necessary to do the job. All, however, are expected to be trained and developed to assist if at all possible.

It is understood that the conception and breeding process is a success when the dogs are deemed "physically and temperamentally sound" (Fieldnotes, 2011). They should be free from any defect which could affect their training and work. At birth, all pups are checked for physical abnormalities and their colour, sex and weight are recorded, with a specific number given to them. As mentioned in my previous chapter, not *all* puppies are whelped in this GD School. The first brood bitch to whelp at this specific guide dog school produced 13 pups, yet there were many more puppies than just these that were raised, trained, and worked here. The reciprocal agreement between several other Australian and New Zealand GD Schools meant that puppies were provided to each other from all over the region. Hence three of Luna's pups were set aside to send to other schools interstate. The collective aim was to have differing genetics and behaviours in the various dogs at the one school. Staff wanted a "mixed pool of personalities and abilities" (Fieldnotes, 2011) for success in training and matching purposes.

At this school, a brood bitch will have the first part of her gestational period in her normal home with her volunteer providing updates to the GD Services team. Shortly before she is due to whelp the brood bitch concludes her gestation on site, in the Puppy Development Centre, with a GD Services staff member designated to oversee the whelp, as previously mentioned. This particular staff member develops a unique relationship with the dog. With much more one-on-one time spent together, the human learns about the dog in minute detail, ensuring that any of the dog's needs can be dealt with promptly. In the instance of Luna's whelping, the staff member was a qualified veterinary nurse who was excited and felt privileged to be conducting this work. Routine when a brood bitch whelped meant she remained in the same room for approximately another eight weeks while she suckled and reared her pups. In this time a veterinarian conducted health checks on all the dogs, implanted microchips for permanent identification purposes, and provided inoculations against various diseases. The designated staff member continued conducting their day-to-day work in the Puppy Development area throughout this time. Discussion or

consideration of whether the brood bitch desired to undergo this process was absent and is thus the first instance of the contradiction of choice I refer to. It is a taken-for-granted understanding that the breeding of these dogs is essential for the job of providing a beneficial tool to people with a disability, yet considering whether the animal wants to be bred numerous times and have her pups removed is not reflected on – the benefit to humans is forefront.

During these neonatal weeks, the designated staff member observes the puppies – watching to see how the dogs respond to their environment, looking at how they behave and interact with the world around them. This is done with the hope and intention that the dogs will grow healthily and become assistance animals. Responses and reactions of the puppies are considered and recorded with particular attention being paid to the relationship with the brood bitch and the litter mates' reaction to being handled, their response to being reprimanded, their response to people and other general stimuli. Also observed and documented are characteristics and behaviours such as: attachment (to staff member and dam); initiative; concentration; aggression; exploration (willingness and attempts at); levels of distraction; vocalisation (either in distress or attention seeking); play (ratio between playing alone and with each other); dominance; inventiveness; nervousness; 'approach behaviour' (how the pup physically approaches other humans and animals); its ability to learn; sensorial sensitivity (noise, touch, smell); stress levels; fear levels; and the manner in which it socialises with the rest of the litter. While these human-constructed attributes are being considered, staff begin to develop relationships with the pups: preferring the personalities and features of some more than others, enjoying their nature and bumbling experience of growing and getting used to their world. I observed nothing but great joy and pride by each and every staff member at this stage.

The animals' characteristics and behaviours are considered to be a combination of genetics as well as factors of the environment they are in. Kaylee and her other colleagues observed and documented Luna's young, considering their actions and behaviours as indicators of whether the dogs would potentially succeed in an assistance animal role or not. This keen examination by staff is an indication of the importance of characterising and assessing animals in this setting.

Observing the dogs' behaviours and characteristics at this neo-natal stage heralds the beginning of individuality (of personalities and ability) for each of these animals, and it is believed that these behaviours suggest future temperamental qualities of the animal – a major aspect of the human-animal relationship that I will explore in much greater detail in Chapter Four. However, after the eight-week period of Luna having whelped and suckled her litter and after having begun to establish individual characteristics, the so-called best of these dogs (the ones considered most likely to succeed by having a career) are chosen to be sent interstate or overseas as part of the reciprocal breeding agreement. Although these pups are indicating their likes, dislikes, and choices through their behaviours, they do not have the capacity to choose that they will be trained and moulded to be working animals: that is another non-reflective human decision. With utilitarian decisions made about their future career these animals are practicing only minimal capacity for choice in their daily lives, yet are engaging with and forming relationships with humans daily. This links to a larger concept of animal utility more generally.[36] These dogs are from one point of view a sensory, utilitarian disability aid for humans, but I argue that they are much more than this in everyday practice.

In Ruby's case, it was decided not long after her birth, that due to her gentle nature and adorable face, she was to be the latest Puppy Love dog – Puppy Love being a concept developed by the Business Development Unit, where membership can be purchased by private individuals, groups, or businesses in order to financially sponsor one specific pup or litter. As the organisation's website describes, by paying one of the five[37] levels of membership, a member is able to,

> experience the joy of following a puppy's progress from a cute and cuddly bundle of fur to a GD graduate. … Being a Puppy Sponsor is sharing in the hopes and

[36] See Hatch (2007), as well as Serpell et al. (2006) for consideration regarding the concerns and impacts of assistance animals' experiences in their roles. Dawkins (1990, 2006) offers a zoological discussion of animal welfare and suffering which incorporates the concepts of animal emotion and motivation during working tasks.

[37] At the time of my data collection the five levels of membership were Bronze ($35), Silver ($45), Gold ($55), Platinum ($100), or Custom ($ Other) (GDA 2010-2016).

> challenges of puppies and instructors as they go on the journey to graduation. Supporting amazing animals doing amazing work. (GDA 2010-2016)

The membership application form explains that a member's financial support "helps ensure our guide dog puppies have the opportunity to fulfil their destinies and future special roles" (ibid.). Ruby had more than 275 Puppy Love members financially supporting her education and future career. Whether sponsored or not, the general rule of practice is that puppies are removed from the brood bitch at approximately the eight-week mark (depending upon available volunteers) and placed in designated puppy-raiser's homes. This begins the Puppy Development stage of the dog's career.

*Puppy Development*

Puppy development is the overarching name given to describe the duration of time in a dog's career when it is being puppy-raised by a volunteer – undergoing basic training[38] to eventually do the tasks of guide, autism or pets as therapy work. Puppy-raising is the name specifically used for the time the dog lives with, and is in the care of a volunteer for approximately 12 to 14 months; I received Jarvis at this eight-week stage of his career and puppy-raised him for 14 months. All dogs born to the Association (bar one perinatal death) experienced this stage of the career path. Of the dogs who had been selected for the Adelaide GD School, volunteers were assessed and chosen by staff for the role of providing health care, shelter, food and companionship to the dogs. This is the first substantial human-animal relationship to develop in the animal's career.

The purpose of this stage of a dog's career is to familiarise the dog with the world in which it lives, in preparation for its potential role as an assistance animal. Specifically, this career stage is to develop routine, good manners, and obedience, to be socialised and become desensitised to various environments, and to gain confidence as a future assistance animal. It is by engaging in scenarios that help achieve these goals which fosters, frames, and regulates the relationship between puppy-raiser and young dog. Most dogs stay with the one puppy-raiser for the full 12-

[38] At this stage the dog is not yet undertaking the specific 'official' training which is the focus of the next career stage.

month duration, however Ruby, for example, experienced a number of different puppy-raisers (as can happen). The volunteer who first 'took Ruby on' moved interstate and after a number of months of raising her, the GD Services team assigned a new 'family' to her. Ruby obviously had no choice in the decision. She merely displayed a personality which was understood by her handlers as suitable for some carers and not for others, therefore directing the placement process. Ruby also experienced time with yet another family when she was being boarded away from her puppy-raiser, as well as sometimes staying with members of staff over weekends. This happened when the puppy-raiser went on holiday or requested to have some time off from the puppy-raising role. The GD Services staff saw no reason for these changes to be a concern. It was believed in fact that these variations in people and environments offered both the dog opportunities to adapt to differing situations and for the humans to reflect upon and assess Ruby's responses to said changes – garnering more of an understanding of her likes and dislikes, her capabilities and challenges.

Although occasionally needing some time off, puppy-raisers do their volunteering 24 hours a day, seven days a week with an explicit understanding (and sense of pride) that the dog has a very specific and special purpose.[39] This purpose is to be an assistance animal – keeping people with vision impairment and children with autism safe in order for them to be active and independent members of the community. Puppy-raisers are acutely aware of this fact and it is often one of the aspects of volunteering they are most proud of:

> *I've always had at the back of my mind, you have to keep your focus on the fact that this dog is not ours, it is being trained for a purpose. Hopefully with all our efforts it will achieve that purpose. So you don't treat them the same way as you would a pet. It is a working animal which you are trying to raise and discipline to do certain behaviours. So it is distinctly different to just having a pet. She is a purpose dog hopefully to achieve an end result. She's definitely got plans hasn't she! Yes, she has got a job to do. To support somebody. She has a job to do, and*

[39] See Chur-Hansen (2015).

> *part of the job too is to be a friend as well, to whoever, you know, a friend and companion to whoever might have her besides working.* (Fieldnotes, 2010.)

The puppy-raiser accomplishes the objectives for this stage of the animal career as a result of the dog spending nearly all of its time with them, and engaging in the situations and environments that the volunteers themselves attend in day-to-day life. This is all done within the strict framework of puppy-raising regulations – as discussed in Chapter One. Successful puppy-raising is achieved with the help and guidance of the puppy-raising advisors who provide essential support and devise training sessions to suit the needs of the group of dogs 'going through'. Specific home visits also occur where staff make regular appointments to continue training and to assess and establish the progress of each pup. The staff specific to Puppy Development organise, oversee and regulate the care of all the puppies throughout the entirety of this stage of the dog's life, documenting their human perceptions of the animals' abilities, behaviours, and thus supposed choices.

It is the objective of these staff and volunteers to learn, keep a record of, and consider the actions and behaviours of the pups they are responsible for and to ensure the dog will become sufficiently trained and socialised in order to successfully transition to the next stage of its career.[40] There is no one formula to this job. It is often challenging with many problem-solving skills and dedication to the cause required. The understanding of the dog vacillates between being a sentient being depicting their choice, and as a utilitarian tool being moulded and shaped to work. During this career stage, the puppy-raising advisors conduct training sessions and observe and collect information on each pup, noting the animal's individual nature, capabilities, routine, development, and ability to cope with its 'working' lifestyle. The dogs are monitored, and

[40] Official records of the puppy-raiser's behaviours and actions are also noted and considered during this time, thus maintaining authority and control over the dog's and volunteer's experience.

congruent with the literature pertaining to animal agency (cited above), humans interpret dogs' individual abilities and potential purpose by observing the animal's bodily communications.

During my fieldwork, formal and informal discussion and assessments were a regular occurrence at this stage of animal career. These discussions regarded potential issues that individual dogs may have, and which training programme and consequent role it might thus be best suited to. This is another example of the contradiction that is the staff's definition of animal choice. While the dogs displayed their desires and choices through action and behaviour, these displays were interpreted and judged by humans. By showing whether they (the dogs) were able or not able to conduct a specific working role by experiencing external stimuli (such as training sessions or moving to a new home), humans would decide which career direction the dog would take. It is this mutable and unresolved balance between human power and animal agency which sees both the dogs' careers and their relationships with humans unfold.

In Ruby's case, I was told by a puppy-raising advisor that she settled into each new environment with ease (there were no signs of stress evident such as chewing, panting, pinned ears or lip-smacking[41]). Her happy attitude towards her puppy-raiser's grandchildren and her general house behaviour (no toileting inside, good obedience, no attention seeking, no whining, or stealing food) were considered 'good' characteristics for a potential working dog as she adapted to these new situations well. Ruby's degree of 'willingness to please'[42] the handler when walking with her puppy-raiser was considered to be excellent. For example, she would 'listen' (both literally and figuratively) to the handler and get back 'on task' quickly if something distracted her. She showed suitable levels of concentration by listening to the handler and doing what she was asked to do. She responded well to swapping handlers (between the puppy-raiser and staff member) when on a walk for a routine follow up. Her degree of excitability was low, as was her level of distraction.

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[41] When a dog licks its lips somewhat persistently.

[42] The organisation website states willingness is "the dog's readiness to do what is required [placing] a high value on handler approval. It is likely to have a breed or heritability component, but can be altered by effective or ineffective handling" (GDA 2010-2016).

She showed no signs of stress (she settled-down quickly on the train – simply lying on the ground next to her puppy-raiser's feet) and was confident getting on and off public transport which was the focus of that day's training. Human perceptions were that Ruby was a pup that might go 'all the way' – through the next stage of official training, and onto graduation.

*Official Training (Guide, Autism, and Pets as Therapy training)*

Provided that a dog has shown no previous signs of behaviour non-congruent with assistance work, when the circumstances of the dog, staff, and volunteers permit, the dog 'comes in' for the 'official training' stage of their career. The puppy-raiser relinquishes their caring role, and a physical and descriptive 'handover' from raiser to trainer occurs where the dog is brought to the organisation with all its belongings, followed by information sharing about the dog's routines and habits being passed on by the volunteer to the staff member. This handover sees the dog now on an official training programme; it is in training for the preordained purpose of assisting a human. At this stage of their career the dog moves from its puppy-raiser's home to a home-board volunteer and undertakes a substantial change in daily routine with the sole purpose now to learn the tasks associated with assistance work. For the most part, every day, from Mondays to Fridays, nine AM to five PM, the new group of training dogs each have two training 'sessions', while on weekends the dogs stay at home with their home-boarders recuperating for the following week.

Depending upon the abilities of the dog and staffing levels, it takes at least eight weeks to conduct official training, and, although not always the case, it is generally expected that each staff member trains the same group of dogs from the beginning to the end of the training programme. The dog has a job to learn at this stage, with the ultimate aim of official training to see the dog proficient in assistance tasks. The objective is for it to be assessed as successful, to be graduated, to be matched to a client from the waiting list, and then work with that client until retirement. This

career stage of training is when the GD Services *staff* develop the strongest relationships and bonds with individual dogs.

It was at this stage an unwritten expectation that the majority of dogs were treated as potential Guide Dogs – specific to *guide* work, as opposed to AA dogs or PaT dog roles and were thus primarily trained for this work.[43] If the dog indicated a lack of propensity for this guide work, but still had the ability for other assistance work, the GD Service staff would restart or tweak training for another career, framing the process as the animal communicating its choice not to be a guide. Whilst indeed true that the dogs may have indicated a lack of willingness or propensity for guiding specifically, switching careers was ultimately always a decision made by staff to ensure the maximum use of the trained dog – something which makes perfect sense given the time, money, and effort put into getting the dogs to this level. Interestingly, the GD Services department regularly made it especially clear that if the dogs did not pass as guides, they did not *fail*, they were not 'failures' – they were instead 'unsuccessful' in that role. These implicit procedures and beliefs by staff suggested a hierarchy of the various animal career options – guide work being valued most highly. Dogs were trained and graduated as an AA or PaT dog, because they were not successful as a guide.

During this official training stage of animal career, the dog's actions and behaviours were formally documented, and both formally and informally discussed, with specific note of how the dog chose to behave and what it was capable of achieving in terms of the training.[44] The *Guide Dog Training*

[43] Closer to the end of my data collection it was becoming apparent to staff that this practice needed to change, instead setting aside a dedicated number of animals to be trained as AA dogs.

[44] Actions observed are: obedience; individuality; free and pack running; natural working ability; initiative; ability to manage stairs, escalators and lifts; ability to traverse trains and other public transport; speed; guiding position; city walks; residential walks; night walks; dog distraction; shopping centres/districts; physical, mental, aural, olfactoral and visual sensitivity; willingness to please the handler; willingness to work; levels of self-interest, nervousness, shyness, suspicion, anxiety, stress and excitability; initiative; concentration; maturity; distractions (food and other animals); aggression; attention seeking; aloofness; toileting behaviours; development of responsibility and leadership; and general health. I will go into assessment at greater length in Chapter Four.

*and Instructor Manual* (GDA 2001)[45] states that the aim of training is to: familiarise the dogs to all common working environments and situations; train the dogs to the required standards; prepare them for client handling; and to train them to meet the specific needs of matched clients (2001:58). There were four types of GD Services staff members whose role it was to see the dogs progress through this stage of animal career: Guide Dog Mobility Instructors and cadets, and GD Trainers and Cadets. These staff members built strong, emotional, individual relationships with the dogs based upon teaching and familiarising them to common environments and situations. It was the act of training and engaging between staff members and dogs which enabled individual human-animal bonds and connections to occur.

This stage of the career was dominated by the dog's future purpose, its current abilities, and overall performance. The dog performs; either doing what is asked of it, doing something different, or doing nothing congruent with assistance animal work. The dogs are expected to make choices without knowing or understanding the rules which have been decided by humans[46]. Yet staff act based upon the belief that the dog will only complete assistance tasks if and when it wants to – reaffirming the above-mentioned explicit principle that a dog communicates its career choice via willingness and preference for certain actions and behaviours over others. We again see a contradiction between human decision-making and animal decision-making, for dogs are understood to have 'chosen' a particular role *because* it is either in compliance with the GD Services training regime or it is not. The dog's attributed agency is thus tightly circumscribed. The dogs are considered either to be willing or unwilling to conduct working tasks. Yet what is

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[45] A document revised specifically to the specifications of the GD Services division of my fieldsite with the majority of the document taken from 'previous contributors [with] extracts taken from Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind – Scott Bruce (Oct 2001), Mimi Hooper (Cox), Royal GDs for the Blind Association (Australia) [and] Royal GDs for Blind Association (UK)' and will therefore be referred to throughout as GDA (2001).

[46] An idea further extrapolated by Hurn (2015) in regard to conflict between baboons and humans in South Africa's Cape Penisula

considered willing here has been decided by humans and depends on human-constructed criteria of a career, which in turn heralds another level of contradiction.

If a dog depicts choices which are not congruent with being a mobility aid – not in line with the training expectations (and further training renders no change) – then it is decided by staff that the dog is choosing not to work. It thus becomes evident that animals' choice is in fact the dogs acting as themselves, yet the animals' agency is most valued when the dog is indicating skill as a tool. Dogs here simultaneously have and do not have agency – they choose their actions yet humans always maintain power by making the final verdict. *The contradiction must be present for this particular human-animal relationship to occur*. Without the appraisal of a dog's preferred movements (which represent its willingness, purpose and desire) there would be no decision-making by humans for a career to unfold, yet this human aspect of control over dog is underemphasised. Later in the thesis I will discuss in greater detail this concept of slippage of agency in regard to the working team, however, at this training stage of the animal career, it is the ambiguous nature of animal agency and human control which sees the dogs become a tool for facilitation or not. I reflected up on this in my fieldnotes, and was told Ruby showed,

> *better skills and temperamental qualities for the PaT programme. She was showing us that she would thrive more as a PaT. She isn't a lesser dog because she isn't doing guide work, she just showed certain characteristics for a particular area of work, like we all do.[47] In her case it is PaT. It wouldn't work to push her forwards in a direction that isn't comfortable for her. She showed us in the training process that this is where I would best shine... She showed us that she wanted to go as a PaT dog*. (Fieldnotes, 2010)

I understood 'shining at her best' to mean that as a PaT dog, Ruby was not good at, interested in, or able to conduct the work deemed necessary for a successful AA dog or guiding a vision impaired person, but still presented behaviour indicating a desire to work. Recognising that she

[47] Note the explicit likening to humans here.

still had abilities for providing assistance, it was decided by staff that she showed an ability and desire to work with children and was therefore retrained in the PaT programme.

With animal progress reports recorded weekly during both puppy-raising and official training, and a 'final' assessment completed before the dog is considered successfully trained, staff have to constantly be aware of any negative behaviours which are not indicative of assistance work. Any dog can be removed from this 'official training' stage of their career at any time – thus no longer having an assistance animal career with the Association.[48] Regardless of behaviours, enjoyment, or choice to conduct some tasks over others, a dog's career would have been ended based upon human decisions that they did not meet the requirements of an effective working dog – said dog would then be sold as unsuccessful. This slippage between an animal simultaneously having and not having agency contradicts the strongly held promulgation that these animals choose their career and role. In reality, there is a combination of human manipulation of animals (through the process of training) and animal decision-making (as considered in the animal's abilities, its likes and dislikes). The agency is in fact distributed across the human and animal. This is a concept which has not been considered in the literature regarding assistance animals specifically, but has been observed by anthropologist Thompson in regard to the relationship between human and horse when performing the mounted bullfight (2010, 2011, 2013) and show jumping (2014).

*Graduation*

Graduation (also referred to as being officially qualified) is an ambiguous stage of the assistance animal career in the sense that it does not occur at any exact time during training. In its fundamental form it denotes successful schooling. In its ancillary forms it represents permission (by the GD Services team) for the dog to 'work', as well as a time for human celebration and contractual agreements. Occurring after a dog completes the learning processes and exhibits no 'inappropriate' temperaments and behaviours, the graduation is both a status and a performance of achievement. When it has been ascertained (by the team leader with information shared from

[48] I will focus further on characterising and assessing animals in Chapter Four.

the trainer) that the dog has been successful in its schooling, it is considered graduated from the programme and hence officially an assistance animal. “The dog must be deemed to be at a safe guiding standard [and] should have completed at least 10 blindfold walks, having guided the handler with only minimal and appropriate input from the handler” (GDA 2001:61). Graduation, as a career stage, signifies that the dog is now able to be matched with a waiting client. At times celebrations ensue, especially for dogs like Ruby who were sponsored as a result of the BDU’s input. Unsuccessful dogs that were considered incapable of a working role were not celebrated.

*Matching*

Matching is a distinct stage of the animal career yet I refer to it only briefly here due to the considerable attention I pay to it in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Like many other aspects of the human-animal relationship in this setting, a dog can only ‘pass through’ this stage of their career if there is a human (client) in need of animal assistance, a dog which has been fully trained, and a staff meeting which determines the two coming together. The understanding and expectation of this process is to find the most suitable client for a particular dog, and vice versa. The aim is to compare an individual dog’s temperament, working capabilities, mannerisms and attributes, along with their breed, colour, and sex with that of an individual human’s personality, physical attributes, vision status, health and secondary disabilities, as well as their working, home, and social environments. In practice, the dog has no active role in matching, they have simply displayed their actions and behaviours during training. Purported to have expressed its desires and consequent choice to act and work in a specific assistance career, a dog has no other opportunity to influence who they are matched with. Although a complex task for humans, nothing is required of the dog for a match to be made until it is time to be placed and work with the human with whom they have been paired.

*Work*

The specifics of an assistance dog’s work are dependent upon three human constructed principles: the belief that a dog chooses their desired career; the expectations that the dog has the ability to undertake and perform that role successfully; and the need to ameliorate a human

disability with an animal prosthesis. In the most basic form, a qualified, working, assistance animal is expected to consistently execute the procedures necessary for their chosen role. For example, when guiding a person with a vision impairment, the dog and client have distributed agency[49] – moving together with specific equipment to provoke both the dog's and human's senses facilitating reaction to the environment they are in. This a concept I will further develop in the following chapter.

To guide someone with a vision impairment, a dog's work and role is to

> travel in a certain direction unless told otherwise, avoiding obstacles on the route. It will stop at kerbs and steps, find doors, crossings and places which are visited regularly and it will guide the client across the road, but it is up to the client to decide where and when to cross safely. (GDA 2010-2016)

The client is responsible for giving communication through verbal and haptic commands to inform the dog which way to go as well as encouragement and support *en route*. *Vis-à-vis* the belief of humans that animals in this setting have the capacity to decide and act upon those decisions is paramount to successful guiding. What is most interesting is that at times the dog is expected to recognise the handler is wrong, disobey the human command, and provide communication to its handler by means of unstructured, non-requested actions which enables the team to continue with safe mobility. This capacity to take, understand, and follow instruction whilst at the same time having the aptitude to think independently, override, and act against human command

[49] This concept of 'distributed agency' is absent in anthrozoological literature. However anthropologists Kockelman (2007, 2013), Thompson (2010, 2011) and Gell (1998:96-154 and passim) have provided a platform for further investigation of distributed agency between humans and animals. Rammert (2008; 2012) also provides work in relation to distributed agency between humans and machines.

depicts the friction and necessity of the animal concurrently having and not having agency. It is also a good example of the distribution of agency between dog and handler for safe mobility.

Work as an AA dog means the animal's role is to facilitate safety, comfort, and inclusion as a result of being present in their lives generally[50] and more specifically on trips outside the home where the dog is connected to a child's body through a safety belt. The belt is attached to the dog's working jacket, linking the dog to child at the waist. Just as it is with a guide dog, it is the human which retains overall responsibility for the team – in this instance the parent or care-giver of the autistic child. The adult retains verbal control with vocal commands and physical control with a lead of their own attached to the dog. "As children with autism have a high tendency to 'bolt' (attempt to run off/abscond) during times of anxiety or stress, parents and carers are facing multi-facetted challenges to keep children with autism safe" (GDA 2015a). Somewhat of an oxymoron, the child is thus able to walk more freely by remaining safe with the restraint present. The fundamental role and work of an AA dog is to respond to the child's attempts to bolt by anchoring it to the ground, pulling against the child and becoming a dead weight, giving the parent or carer the time and opportunity to intervene and attempt to calm or resolve the situation. This is another example of agency being dispersed between the dog and its handlers. Often the action of bolting is entirely eradicated over time. An AA dog's role also extends to an overall calming of the child, distracting or preventing meltdowns, and other repetitive and distressing behavioural patterns. Parents that I spoke with during my data collection referred to this as the time they realised the dog's capacity to think and act, because often these dogs would act in particular ways towards a child *before* commands were given, defusing sensory overload and other problems before they arose. I talk more about AA dogs and the impact that their work brings in Chapter Six.

The role and work of a PaT dog is much broader as they have no one, specific job *per se*. The organisation's website refers to this dog's role as helping "at a companion level and is temperamentally sound with good obedience, social skills and training" (GDA 2010-2016). Placed

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[50] Chapter Six will describe this AA dog role and its affects at length.

in nursing homes, schools for children (often with disabilities), or with individual clients, PaT dogs provide all manner of supports. Unlike The Delta Society[51] where dogs and their handlers attend numerous settings (health care facilities for example) making regular visits, the PaT dogs programme at the GD Association generally placed these dogs in the *one* location, normally with ascertained persons ultimately responsible for their overall care. Ruby for example, was matched with a young boy named Jack who was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum and yet did not meet the criteria for being on the AA dog waiting list. Ruby's role was to benefit both Jack and his family, effectively performing much the same work as the role of an AA dog, yet she had displayed too much dog distraction to be graduated as such. She thus acted as a distraction to Jack's autistic behaviour, elicited him to talk to her, to become more comfortable at home and in new environments, and to help him to remain safe whilst walking.

Ruby was originally trained in the guide dog programme, then the AA programme, and eventually was considered unsuccessful in both. Yet because she had been trained to conduct the same tasks as an AA dog it was believed that she was well suited to match Jack and his environment as a PaT dog. Money is normally exchanged for PaT dogs and ownership is thus taken of the animal with all following financial and physical needs becoming the responsibility of the new owner thereafter. At the time of data collection, any person/group purchasing the dog signed a contract of agreement with the GD Association that the GD Services department had first right of preference to receive the dog back if the situation changed. Most notably however, State laws dictate that PaT dogs do not have the same legal status of access as the other assistance animals in this setting.

*Retirement*

The final role of an assistance animal's career in this setting is retirement. A dog can be retired from their working career due to (either human or animal) 'issues' that may potentially or actually do jeopardise the client's or the dog's safety or wellbeing. This retirement stage of a dog's career

[51] The Delta Society is an Australia wide, not-for-profit organisation, which offers five programmes that provide "motivational, educational and/or recreational benefits" in various settings (The Delta Society 2016).

can come at any age depending on the health of the dog, or ability and propensity to guide or assist safely. It can occur abruptly with work stopping immediately, or over time with the dog's function slowly being reduced and the client relying more upon their white cane or sighted guides. Assistance animal users here are offered one of three choices at this stage of their dog's career: to either keep their retired dog in their home; to rehome it with a friend or family member (a place that they and the organisation feels comfortable with and which generally allows the client some degree of access); or to return the dog to the organisation where he or she will be either re-matched with another client or permanently rehomed. Preferences and availability of a replacement dog, as well as re-training issues[52] are also factors for humans to consider and make decisions about at this stage of their dog's career.

Retirement ultimately is another unpredictable stage of the animal's career with varying degrees of human need and animal ability impacting the decision making and process of withdrawal from 'active duty'. Dog-related reasons for retirement encompass health and behaviour issues,[53] whereas client related reasons include health and/or handling issues.[54] Retirement as a career stage is another instance of the ongoing contradictions of the animal both having and not having choice simultaneously – for even though the ultimate decision in practice is made due to human constructed assessments of the animal, it is still believed by staff and clients that the dog itself depicts its desire to slow down, become disinterested in, or not driven to work.

The death of a dog or client obviously sees the career stage of retirement a non-issue, but either way emotion is a foremost factor. Retiring a dog from a client is considered often a "stressful and

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[52] Such as whether the client will care for their retired dog while simultaneously work with a new dog.

[53] Such as pain, affected concentration, speed, endurance, senility, incontinence, distractibility, development of phobias, 'sound shyness', dog attack, traffic accident, or inappropriate aggressions.

[54] Such as health of client, cost of care of dog, neglect of the dog, abuse of the dog, inappropriate handling, changing personal circumstances, emotional extremes, dissatisfaction with the dog's mannerism, dissatisfaction with dog's behaviour, and dissatisfaction with dog's work or an inappropriate match.

emotional process for the client, the dog and the instructor" (GDA 2001:260). Much has been written on the topic, most of which being from a subjective stance and generally most often refers to the emotions involved, however psychologist Schneider (2005) refers to the "three good-byes"[55] during the loss of a guide dog – all of which bring the experience of grief to the client while Nicholson et al. (1995) describe the "distress" that arises from the end of a Guide Dog partnership. The impact of emotions such as grief, confusion, frustration, and guilt for the client at this time are immense. What is interesting to note is that the GD Manual is specific about nearly every stage of the career of the animal, yet once retirement has occurred, the 260 paged manual finishes. It discusses no plans or policies for post-retirement/re-homing of the dog or how to best support a client during this time - even though it is actively referred to by staff as a tremendously important stage of animal career.

## Conclusion

Conception through to retirement or death sees a potential 11 roles of an animal's career unfold for any one dog in this setting, premising numerous human-animal relationships to develop and morph. For example, the planned conception and neo-natal period brings staff members, a brood bitch and her pups close in both proximity and regular monitoring. As was for dozens of others, puppy-raising Jarvis saw me open my home and day-to-day life to a bundle of golden love as a GD Service volunteer. For more than a year we taught each other plenty about what it was to be a dog at the GD Association and as our bond grew, I would remember that he was not my own. He had to go back, regardless of the physical and emotional relationship we had developed. When it was his turn to 'come in' for the next stage of his career (official training), his role as a puppy in training was over. Orientation and mobility instructors, dog trainers, related cadets and other staff members began to develop their unique and individual relationships with the dogs whilst undertaking the policies and procedures to teach them the tasks of assistance-animal. The

[55] The "decision making good-bye [to retire the animal or have them euthanised], the working relationship goodbye, and the good-bye of death" (Schneider, 2005:368).

following 'work' stage of an animal's career establishes further human-animal relationships with clients, family and friends. This working stage is when humans seem to peak in pride and happiness in the accomplishment of the dogs' and Association's efforts. The progression and fluidity of these relationships is something I discuss further in Chapter Five, however these varying relationships are all premised upon a contradiction that dogs are both sentient beings and yet at the same time used as utilitarian tools – moulded and supported to be an animal that helps people in need.

It is during these specific career stages that the binary and mutable aspects of the human-animal relationship rise to prominence. People in this setting believe that dogs communicate their likes and dislikes, and thus their choices by means of their actions and behaviours. Consequently, the academic concept of animals having agency is depicted here, albeit framed by human control. For while it is believed and expected these dogs have the capacity to affect those around them – either to bring about the calmness of a child with autism or guide a person with vision impairment – humans ultimately *interpret* the dogs' communication, *humans* make decisions, *they* hold definitive power over the career paths and future role and work of the dogs. By using this example of animals 'establishing their role', this chapter describes the beliefs and expectations of dogs and their functioning purpose in this setting. The need, action and process to provide people with vision impairments, autism or other disabilities with a utilitarian tool to make life easier is paramount, yet completely unachievable unless the sentient, responsive, thinking animal is allowed to be just that. Agency and power is, and must be dispersed across the two species for the human-animal relationship to exist.[56] This becomes even more evident during the highly-valued role of work when a dog and person's inter-corporeal senses are dependent upon each other for success. The following chapter will thus examine the subjects of vision impairment, the

[56] That is not to say that it is *evenly* balanced. The power and agency of both fluctuates as will be discussed later in this thesis.

Association and the sensorial services they offer, and the use of human and animal inter-corporeal senses.

# Chapter Three: Visual Impairment, Service Provision, and Senses

Tap tap, tap tap, tap tap. “Hi there”, James said, “I’m with this shitty thing today, so we’ll have to go slower. I *hate* the white cane”, he declared as we met at the reception of the GD Association office (Fieldnotes, 2010). Upon leaving the offices for lunch together, I could see immediately a level of annoyance – huffs and puffs, no smile on his face, negative remarks about the people and environment around him. We walked down the street side by side. Tap tap, tap tap, tap tap - my high heeled shoes tapped in synchronisation with his cane, yet he says, his so-called noisy taps, are more obvious and thrust him into the public’s eye and space more than mine. My fieldnotes from this informal lunchtime interview describe our joint mobility to the restaurant,

> *James knocks his six-foot-long white plastic stick out in front of him from left to right with every step his feet take. As his cane comes into contact with the pavement, road, walls, steps, chairs, and other paraphernalia in his space, the ball on the end of the cane hits everything in its path and consequently gives James information about the environment around him to which he can then react accordingly. This mobility aid is not the one he normally uses – he is currently on the waiting list for a new guide dog – yet the cane allows James to move through and engage with the space around him independently from human help.*

A client of Guide Dog (GD) Services since he was 18 years old (nearly three decades), James’ file notes, as well as staff members stated that he was a very “capable” guide dog owner (Fieldnotes, 2010). However, due to the unexpected and sudden death of his third dog Buster just a few weeks before our first meeting, James was on the waiting list for his fourth guide dog and consequently had to return to relying upon the white cane for safe mobility for the first time in eight years. He told me that he hated having to get used to that “shitty thing”, all on top of having to come to terms with recently losing his “dear friend” Buster (ibid.).

What became apparent as we walked along the street is that the cane in James’ hand was an extension of his body, an extension which precipitated his perception and understanding of the world he was in. He told me that using either a cane or a dog as a mobility tool evoked the same

feeling of a bodily extension: one human, one mobility aid, mobile together, what sociologist Michalko describes as "moving as one" (Michalko 1999:142; Sanders 2007; Thompson 2011; see also Thompson & Birke 2014). Yet with a *dog,* James' perceptions, understandings and interactions with the environment around him were vastly different. He told me, a dog navigates and guides him *around* the obstacles and potential hazards. It means he does not come into contact with them. He also told me he felt he did not appear 'as blind' to people when with a dog and that he could go the speed that he likes (fast). He told me that he much prefers this manner (using a dog, not a cane) of being in the world and thus his relationship with his assistance animal is paramount to the way he feels in his 'everyday'.

## Introduction

This chapter will argue the use of the senses in this setting and how they not only influence and help to construct the human-animal relationship, but also how they relate to human mobility and thus agency. I argue that sensory loss in this society is considered a disability which negatively impacts a person's autonomy and thus understood as needing to be rectified. As I examine how staff and volunteers refer to and think about the senses in this setting, I document the ways in which people are characterised as lacking senses and how this lack of senses equates to a lack in mobility and autonomy. Focussing primarily upon people with vision impairments,[57] I contend that the concept of sensory loss (as framed by people in the GD Association and the academic literature) leads to consequent 'assistance' and 'aid' offered which aims to ameliorate this 'loss'. I continue by examining the concept of sensory replacement at GD Association specifically, highlighting the human-centric approach of service provision and their focus on sensory loss prevention – reiterating the belief that having different vision from the 'norm' is considered a disability. Unfortunately, there is little emphasis by the organisation upon human emotions at this time, regardless of their impact. Having argued that understanding and use of the senses contributes substantially to the human-animal relationship, I explore the dogs in this setting and

[57] As opposed to families experiencing autism or people who receive a PaT dog.

the role that their senses play when giving and receiving information in their work and when 'off duty'.[58] This re-introduces the idea of distributed agency between the handler and dog.

Having examined the role of the senses in regards to the animal member of the working team I further argue the importance of client senses in relation to orientation and mobility,[59] and then in regard to a person's specifically chosen mobility aid. Providing a parallel to the discussion of dogs in the previous chapter, the concept of choice for humans here implies greater autonomy and agency, albeit attributed. Whilst describing which senses are used and how it feels to be mobile with the three types of mobility "tools" (the white cane, a sighted guide, and a dog (Fieldnotes, 2010)), it becomes evident that clients who choose a dog as their preferred aid do so, due to the way it enables them to engage with the space and environment around them, and how it makes them feel emotionally.

How one's chosen aid allows them to regain a degree of agency and power in their lives (both sensorially and within the realm of the larger disability construct) is paramount to the human-animal relationship and successful working team. Therefore, the way clients use their senses when with their assistance dog and the feelings they have about themselves whilst doing so is what enables the human-animal relationship to develop further at this point. As already asserted, although only possible in this form as a result of a sensorial lack, the human-animal relationship here progresses as a result of the ability for both to use their senses and thus agency in synergy. By drawing upon inter-corporeal communication and information exchange the aim, expectation and (usual) result is the capacity to be more autonomous and active in life – to be a more 'capable'

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[58] The GD Association puppies and qualified assistance dogs are deemed 'on duty' when they wear their harness or working jacket. It is believed that these dogs know when they are on duty when wearing this equipment. Accordingly, when out of harness, it is considered 'off duty'. GD Association staff and clients alike expect the dog to maintain appropriate temperamental and behavioural qualities irrespective of whether the animals is on duty or not, yet I observed a marked difference in an increase of focused and decrease in fun/silly behaviour when said equipment was being worn.

[59] As discussed in Chapter Four, the ability to orientate one's self and be independently mobile with a white cane is a prerequisite to any application for an assistance dog.

person as a result of this working human-animal team. I begin with vision impairment in Australia and the resulting service provisions which aim to compensate for it.

## Vision Impairment and Service Provision

> Together we can see a world where no one is left waiting in the dark.
>
> (GDA 2010-2016)

In Australian society sight is a sense considered most important. In both academic and popular literature sight is often thought of as highest on the hierarchy of the five common or basic senses (Classen 1993b; Ingold 2000).[60] Employing one's senses enables the use of language, the giving and receiving of knowledge, and is inevitably thus linked to human autonomy. In turn the senses facilitate social control, order, and civil attention or … inattention" (Warren 2011:547).[61] Howes argues, "[s]ensation is not just a matter of physiological response and personal experience. It is the most fundamental domain of cultural expression, the medium through which all the values and practices of society are enacted…every domain of sensory experience…is a field of cultural elaboration" (Howes 2003:XI). Therefore, the use of one's eyes and the consequent vision which comes from seeing is often synonymous with understanding and experiencing the world in which we live. Yet when a human's vision does not function as it supposedly 'should', this person is considered to 'have a physical disability' – an anomaly from the 'norm' of sightedness.

As sociologist Michalko explains, "that sight is considered valuable is shown in how we speak of its absence" (Michalko 1998:25) and therefore "[b]lindness is present to all of us by virtue of its opposite – sight" (ibid.:5). A person's absence of sight is often referred to as blindness, low vision, partially sighted, or vision impaired. These definitions are of utmost importance in disability

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[60] See anthropologists Keating & Hadder (2010:119) for an example of the types of differences and the pertinent literature regarding sense priorities across cultures.

[61] Sayings such as 'seeing is believing', 'I see what you are saying', 'visionary', 'blindsided', 'blind faith', and 'there are none so blind as those who will not see!', are all examples of how language relates to sight and its use to explain, comprehend, accept everyday occurrences, and construct "moral metaphor" (Warren 2011:543)

academic discourse as they can frame a person's sense of self, role of wellness, and their social status:

> The language of disability demonstrates that people with disabilities are frequently perceived exclusively in terms of their disability. The community of disabled people is rarely contrasted or balanced with able bodied people. They are limited to a "handicapped role" in which they are seen as recipients of medical treatment. This role includes ascribed traits of dependency, helplessness, abnormality of appearance and mode of functioning, pervasive incapacitation and ultimately subhumaness…the adjective as noun usage [such as The Blind] conspicuously deletes the humanizing of people, person, individual and the like. (Dajani 2001:198)

The most generally-used term by the people in my fieldsite was 'vision impairment', with many people emphasising that an individual is a person before they are impaired, and are therefore, a *person,* who happens to have a vision impairment.[62] Through the duration of my fieldwork, it was reiterated to me numerous times that the use of an incorrect term to refer to someone with vision impairment can leave said person feeling less autonomous in their society. I therefore refer to the clients of this organisation as people with vision impairment throughout.

Vision impairment can develop as a result of numerous occurrences: through disease or infections; by accidents; or as a result of over exposure to ultra violet light (sunlight) or chemicals. In this setting vision impairment is considered as resulting in numerous 'conditions' and variances of vision. Some eye conditions are congenital (present at, or acquired near birth), others present later in life. Most importantly however, many of the most common eye conditions have no known cure (Vision Australia 2015). With so many variables involved, it stands to reason that when a person does not have 'properly' functioning vision they come to experience their own and unique manner of understanding, adapting and feeling in their world.[63] What does not vary however is

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[62] See Michalko (1998:8-34 and passim) for a thought provoking discussion of what blindness is, its effect upon personhood and equality, and the consequent need for those with blindness to be considered the same as everyone else – all exceptional, all imperfect forms of nature, all to be treated equally. He argues that this 'coping' with blindness reinforces the concept of vision impairment as a lack rather than something to think with and learn from.
[63] See Thurston et al.'s quantitative study (2010) of the evidence stating the socio-emotional effects of the transition from sightedness to blindness.

the need to adapt to living life in a world designed for sighted people,[64] with "social (sighted) rules" (Bullington & Karlsson 1997:8). The amelioration of this impairment and ability to become and remain independent and autonomous is considered paramount.

Michalko argues:

> The best that can be made of the trouble of blindness is that it can be coped with, tolerated, and accommodated. Accommodating and coping practices assume the form of medical, rehabilitative, and educational remedies designed to provide blind persons with various techniques required to cope with their blindness. (Michalko 1998:28)

We henceforth have the existence of disability service providers such as the GD Association and of external prostheses such as technologies, canes, and assistance dogs to counter balance this lack of sight and other sensory loss. Therefore, it is the outcomes of vision impairment and disability that begets the human-animal relationship here – centring upon the characterisation that a lack of vision equates to reduction in mobility and autonomy and therefore needs to be amended.

More often than not, in order to adapt to their 'blinding' experience and function in the sighted world in which they live, people who have a vision impairment are referred to and linked with service providers that are specifically designed to assist them. These services come in many forms; most however, come under the banner of technologies, mobility aids, or human services. *Technologies* include braille, talking phones and other such devices, computer programmes, global positioning systems (GPS) and other 'practical' equipment. *Mobility aids,* or tools as they are referred to in this organisation, incorporate the use of sighted guides, several types of cane, and dog guides. *Human services* encompass people providing education, support, advice, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility training, as well as everyday 'life-skills'

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[64] See Kleege (1999) for a profound autobiographical account of blindness, sight, social status, stereotypes, and identity and the way she conducts herself in this sighted world.

programmes. Often collectively referred to as assistive technologies,[65] these human and non-human means of service are offered by numerous organisations to obtain bio-medical diagnosis and assistance for disabled people in order to somewhat rectify the absence of one or more of the physical senses.

There are several organisations throughout Australia which devote their services to people with vision impairments: Blind Citizens Australia; Vision Australia; Blind Welfare Association; Lions Clubs Australia; the online service NVDA[66] (a speech synthesizer software); Association for the Blind; Pacific Vision, and the Royal Society for the Blind, and of course the assistance dog providers such as Royal Society for the Blind, Seeing Eye Dogs Australia and the Guide Dog Associations. The association where I conducted my fieldwork is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to facilitate the lives of vision impaired or autistic people and their families. During the time of my data collection they received more than a thousand new referrals, provided services to approximately 2500 clients, had more than 100 guide dogs working in the community and the GD Services staff conducted approximately 700 direct hours with clients (GDA 2013:12).

## Senses and the Organisation

This GD Association is an organisation consisting of mostly sighted staff members. At the time of data collection there were a small number of employees and volunteers who themselves had a vision impairment and there was one vision impaired member who sat on the board of directors. The work of staff was premised upon a distinct assumption that vision impairment and vision loss is just that: a deficit, the eye not working as it *should*; a negative bio-medical state of being which should and could be recompensed to the best of their abilities. The organisation believes that regardless of this sensory loss however, a person with vision impairment need not lead anything other than a capable, autonomous, and fulfilling lifestyle, albeit different from the norm. This

[65] See Alper & Raharinirina (2006) for a review and synthesis of the literature pertaining to assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

[66] Short for Non-Visual Desktop Access that enables vision impaired people to use a computer by communicating with what is on the screen using a synthetic voice or braille.

belief is the basis for both the services offered in this setting and thus the human-animal relationship also. “Our purpose is to use our expertise with dogs and in sensory service provision to enhance the quality of life of people with a disability” (GDA 2012:9).

The GD Association’s long term purpose then is to gain government funding and raise millions of dollars in donations in order to provide “high quality, integrated services” (GDA 2010-2016) to people, free of charge. Their work (GD Services department aside) is therefore human-focussed and premised upon human need. For employees and volunteers, their own senses were not spoken about as having paramount importance. Yet without their basic vision, hearing, and touch staff would not be able to engage with clients and provide their products and services. Specifically, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors engage the use of their senses by incorporating touch, smell, and taste into their realm of service provision.[67] Regardless of the lack of emphasis on the use of staff senses in this setting, it is a strongly-held organisational and community belief that by providing their expertise and help to others, together with the public’s “generous support” (ibid.) the association plays a very important role in the lives of people with sensory loss, helping them to regain independence and autonomy.

By providing “innovative solutions” (ibid.) to these individuals, a sense of pride oozed from staff meetings, celebrations, and fund raising events for the difference that staff and the organisation as a collective made to people’s lives – for the positive impact they helped to create. “We’re immensely proud of the impact we’ve made on the lives of people with sensory disabilities and autism and on their families’ lives” (GDA 2012:3). “I love seeing people’s lives change because of our services” said a staff member. In turn, I believe there are four commonly held attitudes by staff and volunteers towards those with a sensory loss within this setting: the first being a fundamental expectation to respect and exercise empathy for those who have a sensory impairment; the second is a vital expectation that substituting a person’s sensory loss with various tools will compensate and ameliorate difficulties and increase self-sufficiency; the third is

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[67] For an interesting insight into providing O&M instruction to people with VI whilst himself using a guide dog as a mobility aid see Breslauer (2010).

empathy – a need to learn and try and understand the difficulties of life with a vision loss in order to do a good, effective job; and finally, the fourth is that their clients – on the whole – should want to be as independent as possible, and that without their intervention, this would not be possible:

> See what a difference we make.
>
> Since the establishment of our Autism Assistance Dog Program more than two years ago, we've heard many rewarding stories about our dogs being a positive and calming influence in children's lives. This year we were truly moved by one family's story. They'd gone from being completely housebound to experiencing car travel, outings and greater freedom, thanks to Autism Assistance Dog Gracie, joining the family. (GDA 2012)

People in this setting believed that by organising and providing services and aids, their efforts enabled a positive difference in the lives of people who would otherwise have had reduced independence as a result of reduced mobility. This reiterates the value of sight in our social world and its prominence in academic discourse. In turn, these views herald behaviours by staff and volunteers which aim to combat this negative, undesirable, situation to which bioscience is yet to find an answer. Staff and volunteers therefore meet, talk with, and assess people who have been referred and they structure this engagement with criteria and rules. Decisions are then made about these people, policies and procedures are implemented, and consequently services, information, assistance, tools, and aids are offered – making these people clients of the Association. I will discuss this to a greater extent in the following chapter. In more recent years, the aim of raising awareness about the causes, prevention, and experience of sensory loss also contribute to the group's work as was observed at the Discovery Centre and with the Guide Dog 'experiential walks' which are offered to staff and volunteers. These two sensorial experiences are good examples of how a person's senses (specifically vision) are characterised as valuable: paramount to preserve and intrinsically linked to mobility and ability.

I refer to the Discovery Centre as an experience because that is its purpose and aim – to give an interactive experiential understanding of vision and hearing loss in an educational setting. As

referred to in Chapter One, the centre focusses upon teaching, prevention and awareness of sensory and hearing losses. Run by sighted and vision impaired volunteers, the centre is available to be booked by schools and other community and corporate groups to elicit engagement in interactive activities which see visitors gain knowledge of sensory loss, experience a simulation of life (how it would be affected) with a vision or hearing impairment, and equip people with the skills to interact with those who have a vision impairment (GDA 2010-2016).[68] Walking with a sight guide, using a long cane, playing basketball whilst wearing vision loss glasses, feeling tactile ground surface indicators and objects without the ability to see are all experiences to be had (see Appendix B). The Discovery Centre epitomises the importance of sensory impairment and emphasises the services offered by the organisation to counter-balance the negative effects that can transpire form these impairments

Equally designed to be as sensorially engaging is a Guide Dog 'experiential walk' which I myself performed and saw undertaken by a few staff members and one volunteer. An experiential walk is a practice offered by the organisation for the purposes of either experiencing (to some degree) what it is to have a vision loss and use a guide dog as a mobility aid, or for a puppy-raiser to be guided by the dog they raised as it comes to the end of their training. The ungraduated dogs are used for this exercise. These walks are carried out as if the person is vision impaired. The blindfolded person holds the dog's harness and lead, giving the dog instructions to guide. The person simulates one of several vision losses with a specialised blind or 'mindfold' (see Appendix C). The dog's trainer has a lead attached to the dog also and assists both the human and the dog, maintaining the control and safety of the walking triad.

These experiences depict an organisation committed to decreasing the instances of sensory loss and increasing the knowledge and understanding of vision and other 'impairments'. The discovery

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[68] Activities include: "Using vision loss simulation glasses to play basketball and catch public transport; Learning about how Guide Dogs SA/NT select, train and match a Guide Dog to a recipient; Gain an understanding of how Braille assists people with a VI to communicate effectively; and Test sound levels to develop an understanding of safe listening levels" (GDA 2010-2016).

centre is attempting to do what Michalko hopes for: using vision impairment as something to learn by, not something to simply discuss (1998). The underlying characterisation of the senses is that vision and hearing are very important for day-to-day living. If these senses cease to function to any degree, life often becomes very difficult: independence and autonomy become jeopardised and specific assistance is often required. I will now look at how the working dogs and people with autism or vision impairment in this locale engage not only the traditional five senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell, but also the haptic senses.[69]

## Senses and Dogs

A dog engages its senses in many forms during its life as an assistance animal. Of the senses that we, as humans know that dogs have, a guide or autism dog employs them here in two ways. First (and perhaps the most important in regard to the human-animal relationship) a working dog effectively obtains information from the human being (be it puppy-raiser, trainer, or vision impaired handler) in order for them to learn and conduct their work. Second, as social creatures, dogs use their senses to be involved with and participate in life with the humans who handle and care for them. As was discussed in the previous chapter, any agency that the animal has is interpreted from the dogs' actions and behaviours, and thus the use of their senses to communicate with their handler is essential.[70] I will thus broach the mechanics of the dogs' senses now and go into greater detail of the effects this has on the working team in the following chapter.

In relation to gaining and communicating information, an assistance dog uses their audition to receive verbal commands and instructions. They watch, listen, and smell the environment that they and their handler traverse – critically ignoring certain sensorial distractions and

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[69] See Paterson (2007) for a detailed examination of somatosensory (and therefore haptic) senses – the sense of touch in all its forms as well as a history of haptics in research and literature (ibid.:130-1).

[70] Inter-species communication has been written about extensively. Interesting examples include Birke (2007) regarding 'speaking horse', Miklósi et al. (2000) regarding canines in general, Smith (1984) discusses dolphins and their communication with autistic children, Ittyerah and Gaunet (2009) examine guide dogs as well as pet dogs, and Hurn (2012:112-124) dedicates an entire chapter of her book *Humans and Other Animals* to the topic.

noticing/avoiding potential hazards. They use their sight in order to physically respond to nonverbal instructions such as hand cues; and they touch innumerable surfaces with their paws. These dogs also enjoy 'tasty' food rewards[71] during their training and working lives which are believed to convey encouragement to the dog, and to communicate to the dog that their actions are 'correct' and desired. The use of these basic senses of taste, sight, touch, hearing and smell gives the dog and human information about the environment that they are in, the destination that they are heading to or arriving at, and the level of work that is required of them in order to guide safely and effectively. Communicating information and directives goes back and forth between dog and client.

Equally as important, however, is the so named 'sensitivity' of some senses. The *Guide Dog Trainer and Instructor Manual* (GDA 2001) discusses hearing, body, vision, and olfactory sensitivities of a dog and describes how these sensitivities allow a dog to "interpret its environment" (ibid.: 70). This is a taken-for-granted expectation of the GD Services staff and clients alike. The sensory interpretation of movement consequently impacts a team's work and a dog's relationship with their human handler. A dog can present as interested or uninterested in response to their handler or the environment that they are working in, which is believed to manifest in their behaviours, as described in the previous chapter. Actions such as slight head movements, full body lurching, barking, jumping, or even the refusal to move as a result of being sensitive to sounds, lights, and smells are not irregular at some point during training. "Body sensitivity", when overly positive or negative reactions occur from "physical handling, control, praise, and the close proximity of people or objects" can cause discomfort, concern, or anxiety to a dog thus requiring the handler to respond (ibid.:69).

In regards to their participation in the everyday life of their handler (and other human members of their pack) a dog's senses are used when engaging in an off-duty capacity also. As will be explored in Chapter Five, the use of and engagement with a dog's senses whilst in the home or

[71] Obviously, in addition to their daily food intake.

while working, directly affects the bond they have with their humans and the consequent work they do together. A dog uses its vision, smell, touch and hearing to seek affection and attention, to experience exercise and enjoy play, to sleep soundly, eat well and most importantly – to communicate to their handler. All of these are behaviours which are believed to help build a feeling of trust, love, safety, and strong bond with their human – aspects which are imperative to the ability to move and work simultaneously. However, the use of these common physical senses does not wholly encompass *all* the senses that a dog employs in this setting. Their haptic senses are paramount to the role of an assistance dog and therefore essential to the relationship that develops between human and animal.

There are many ways a dog uses its haptic senses during its role as an AA or guide dog. Via proprioception,[72] a dog kinaesthetically feels the motion of their body when walking, steering, or anchoring a 'bolting' autistic child.[73] They cutaneously feel the elements and environments in which they walk and the tactile pressure of the lead, collar, gentle leader,[74] and most importantly the harness when they 'walk out',[75] steer a client around an obstacle or when tethered to a child. They interpret vestibularly[76] when either they or their handler accelerates or decelerates or when they use the direction of their head and body to "indicate" to their human (Fieldnotes, 2011). The most important of these proprioceptive senses used however is "force feedback" (Paterson 2007:ix), which relates "to the mechanical production of information sensed by the human kinaesthetic system" (ibid.). The dog trainers who teach, and the clients who use this form of mobility aid, consider this sense to be the most important in order for the human-animal team to function. Force feedback (through the harness and other equipment) enables a dog to both

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[72] "Perception of the position, state and movement of the body and limbs in space" (Paterson 2007:ix). These are senses *outside* the body, as opposed to interoceptive senses which pertain to sensations elicited from the internal organs of the body.

[73] I discuss the specific topic of autism in more detail in Chapter Six.

[74] A gentle leader is a specific style of lead attachment which sits around a dog's snout in order to discourage pulling.

[75] 'Walking out' is when the dog pushes its chest into the harness and puts a pulling tension against it, strong enough for the handler to feel.

[76] Vestibular movement is spatial orientation and balance.

provide and feel tension, pressure, balance, and other individual nuances between them and their human. This allows the dog to gauge numerous forms of information, to make decisions and act accordingly – communicating back and forth with their handler.

For example, the direction, of the harness can indicate a need for a change of pace, a new obstacle, or the need to toilet. It is important to make sure that the right instruction is given from dog to handler and they impart this information predominantly through the harness and lead. The corporeal position[77] a human has alongside the dog implies to the dog the commencement, pausing, or end of assistance work, or which direction the dog will need to turn. Often communications of this kind are coupled with verbal instructions and tautness of the lead. The most recognisable of all possible examples however is that of simply wearing a harness or jacket. By physically wearing and feeling the harness on,[78] the dog appears to understand it is now 'on duty' and its behaviours switch to work (not fun) mode.[79] The use of a dog's basic and haptic senses facilitates communication. Likewise, humans use their senses to communicate as I will now explore.

## Senses and Clients

As with dogs, humans in this setting use not only the traditional five senses but their haptic senses also. The rationale is the same too: to procure information from the environment, objects, people around them, and most importantly from their dog guide (or white cane) in order to be able to make meaning of their world and to conduct themselves and participate in it. The use of one's senses when vision impaired is fundamentally no different from any other person – senses

[77] For example, 'up' the dog's body – by the shoulders, or 'down' – by their hips.

[78] Or, as countless individuals mentioned, the dog often 'gets into' the harness (with a little hop) as opposed to the human putting the harness on the dog, thus indicating the dog's desire and pleasure in their work.

[79] Remarkably, this information exchange of putting a harness on and consequently being 'on duty' was evident even in 'puppydom'. Nearly always there would be a shift to a more focussed, less frivolous behaviour in Jarvis when he had his 'working jacket' on.

facilitate a person to act as agents in their own space, build connections with others, share in, and contribute to their society.

The clients with whom I spoke during my data collection made it clear that having a sensory loss is a personal, individual experience within a collective environment (as Sacks (2003) describes), yet mostly, their vision loss is about being able to *do*, not about what cannot be done. Unlike social science literature written on the topic of guide dog users and the *way* that they use their senses,[80] for clients of this Association the concept of being disabled or living in the world as 'blind' only registered minimally in their depiction of their experience to me. It seemed not essential to them to enlighten me about *how* they used their senses – our conversations were not driven by how their noses deciphered or how their feet informed them.[81] What mattered was how they *felt* as an individual with their dog. For them, the use of their senses predominantly referred to their safe navigation and mobility which in turn led to confidence, independence, and what was very often referred to as 'freedom' in their everyday life. It became clear that freedom and autonomy were inextricably linked with the dog's senses and thus their "joint mobility"(Sanders 2007).[82] This section of the chapter will now describe how the senses play a part in a person's 'everyday' and how the choice of mobility aid can make a monumental difference to agency and being-in-the-world.

*Orientation and Mobility (O&M)*

As mentioned above, the very purpose of this organisation is to enhance the lives of people who experience a sensory impairment. No matter which form of mobility aid a person with vision impairment chooses to use, orientation and mobility is *categorically paramount* to their safe,

[80] See: Deshen (2012); Krieger (2010); Paterson (2006); Michalko (1999); Bullington & Karlsson (1997) for example.

[81] See social and cultural geographer MacPherson for an interesting article that explores vision impaired informants and "some of the[ir] problems of talking about the experience of touch" (Macpherson 2009:179).

[82] This is an excellent paper which takes into account interactionist approaches to animal action and also provides a concise discussion of animal mind and self in regard to human-animal interactions.

independent travel.[83] To achieve this, a person with diminished sight must learn to think and act differently, engaging both what residual vison there is as well as their other senses in a manner different from when they had fully functioning sight.[84] Michalko referred to this as a re-arrangement of his senses (Michalko 1999: 33). The GD Association provides for this rearranging of the senses by helping people to 'learn to be blind',[85] yet this is a contradiction to a person's agency: they must learn to act in a way that puts them in a position of need.

Perhaps the most common additionally-used service by vision impaired clients is that of the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) team – a department premised upon the need for humans to use their senses to their best capabilities. By verbally and physically engaging with clients, staff provide training and advice, alongside help with: safety in the home; avoiding objects or hazards; managing steps, stairs, railway platforms and other changes in elevation; learning how to orientate one's self in both familiar and unfamiliar environments; crossing roads with or without traffic controls; using public transport; travelling at night or in poor lighting conditions; and assessments of environments that are new to the client.

Coupled with teaching and development of these skills, staff further assist clients to use various types of white canes, depending on current need.[86] Low-vision training also helps clients to use what remaining vision they have to maximum effect. Lastly, by being taught and supported to use various electronic travel devices (such as trackers) as well as other information technology (the screen reader JAWS and phone applications were popular with many of the clients I spoke with), these people can be notified of obstacles, landmarks and potential hazards, and effectively read anything that a sighted person can find on their computer or phone. These are incredibly important skills to teach and to have, and they all employ the use of a client's sensorial system.

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[83] See Wiener et al. (2010) for a comprehensive, cross disciplinary synopsis of orientation and mobility.

[84] A good example is neurologist Hull's (2013) *Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness* – a unique autobiographical narrative of his transforming life (and senses) into 'deep blindness'.

[85] See Michalko (1999:8, 1998: passim).

[86] Long cane, white identification cane and support cane are all options.

Many clients referred to how emotionally and physically lost (quite literally) they would be if they did not learn these skills and consequently use their senses to accomplish these daily living activities.

The GD Services department have O&M instructors too, and just as in Vision Services, focus upon a client's senses in regard to their mobility. These O&Ms however have further training. Guide Dog Mobility Instructors are specialists within the field of O&M. After completing a graduate diploma, a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor is jointly qualified to train assistance dogs *and* provide O&M assistance to clients. With a case load of their own, O&Ms in the GD Services department simultaneously train guide dogs, participate in matching meetings, conduct Class for matched teams and case-manage individual clients. For the clients using a dog as a guiding aid (as opposed to people with AA dogs or PaT dogs) using one's senses means employing their O&M skills daily. These skills were attributed by nearly all as essential to establishing safety, living independently, and eliciting social inclusion – what I describe as being autonomous.

Take for example crossing a road. Being familiar or unfamiliar with the road will make a difference to what degree one's senses are used. I will use the more detailed example of an unfamiliar crossing. For a vision impaired person to cross a road the use of their haptic senses are essential. They first need to establish when they have physically arrived at a certain road crossing. Any residual vision is paramount, but so is feeling poles and walls or specific tactile indicators, or a kerb. The feeling of one's foot sliding down the slope of the ramp, and sounds omitted from buildings or traffic help to indicate this information also. Gitlin et al. (1997), describe the "intense attention required to process critical orientation cues from the environment during travel" ('Overcoming the Hidden Costs', para. 4) and refer to the use by some people of "facial Vision" (ibid.) where travellers receive echoes bouncing off surfaces in order to complete such tasks (Arias et al. 1993).

Clients also have to determine which street it is that they have come to and they do this predominantly with the use of memory, cognitive maps, or electronic tracking machines. Falling

under the philosophically driven concept of sensoral-spatial experience or spatial imaginary (Paterson 2006), clients must keep track of where their body physically is within that 'map' which is usually achieved by counting buildings or junctions, or simply remembering. Asking other people in the area and global positioning devices are also employed. Once orientation of the crossing is established, the vision impaired person needs to understand essential information about the intersection: What is its layout? What type of traffic control system exists? What is the width and length? Is it a high or low traffic area? Are there pedestrian islands *en route*? Which direction do the cars come from? How fast is the vehicle and foot traffic? And will their guide dog be able to traverse the route? (National Cooperative Highway Research Program Project 2015)

The use of one's senses, their O&M skills, and their ongoing experience are employed to receive and retrieve information about the world around them, which enables the safe crossing of a road. For the human-animal team, engaging the senses to gain knowledge and becoming familiar with the safest and most effective route is the objective of having O&M skills. It is believed by staff and clients alike that by using these safe and effective routes, people with vision impairment then have the capacity for autonomous mobility, and as a result are able to better engage with the environment and community in which they live. For those with a sensory loss, O&M sessions and the use of their senses in these ways become a recurring part of life regardless of what mobility aid they choose or desire. That said, as described throughout the academic literature on the topic of vision impairment, it is the use of one's senses which generally predicates what type of mobility aid is preferred by a vision impaired individual.

I will now discuss three mobility aids and the manner in which they link a person to their 'freedom' and autonomy: a sight guide; a cane; and guide dog, highlighting the importance of the senses in the use of all three. What is also important to note is that while the selection of a specific mobility aid does posit human agency to a degree, it is much like the dogs' *choice* of career (as discussed in the previous chapter) – the choice is framed by external factors. Apart from being categorised as disabled by others due to a vision loss, dynamics such as a client's physical and

emotional propensity to use a specific aid (as perceived by others),[87] what is available to them, what they can afford, the environment in which they live, and the culturally-bound expectation that a person with vision impairment *should* be as independent as possible are aspects that render this 'choice' a limited one.

## Mobility Aids

### *Sight Guide*

As James and I jointly tapped our way to the entrance of the food court for lunch, we realised it was exceptionally busy with dozens and dozens of people everywhere, trays in hands, all looking for an available table to sit and eat their food. James asked me if I would sight guide him to a table. Having volunteered at the Discovery Centre and undergone the 'sight guiding activity', I knew what was required of me.

> *I first established contact and touched the back of my hand against the back of his, he then ran his hand up my arm and gripped my elbow with his four fingers and thumb. He held on with a firm grip, but not so strong that it was uncomfortable, just enough not to be separated. We progress forward…my body is slightly (about half a step) in front of his.*
>
> *He listens to my verbal explanation of where we were and what was happening around us – that he need not be concerned about the door way, it was wide enough for the both of us; that he did need to be aware of the row of tables approaching him on his right; that he would feel the smooth ground change from a paved pathway to uneven broken concrete; and that we would be walking diagonally forward for 25 meters or so and then turn to the right in order to find a seat. We walk, physically and verbally conjoined toward a table that I could see was unoccupied. Without a word on my part, his acceleration and deceleration followed mine, when I stopped he stopped, we were in each other's space, together as one.*
>
> *"Oh yes," he says, "you are short aren't you! I could tell by the size of your stride, but didn't realise quite how short until now". "Well", I rebuff, "I suppose that all depends on how we perceive short doesn't it!" We both laugh. I lead him to a chair and tell him that it is fixed to the floor. I rest his hand on top of the back of the chair*

[87] I discuss this further in the following chapter where I examine human assessment when applying for and training with a new assistance dog.

> *and tell him which way it is facing and where we are located in the room in relation to other diners and the food booths. He touches around the chair, then the table next to it, sliding his hand along the width of the table and up around the corners – giving him information about how much room there is between the two and the dimensions of the space. I sit down at the table opposite him and wait for him to fold up his white cane and put it in his rucksack. "What would you like to eat", I asked. "Oh, anything with chicken" he tells me.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

As with the situation with James in the food hall,[88] there are many times where being sight guided is a preferred mobility aid. Guide Dog user Kelly for example, always dropped the harness handle, giving guide dog Lady the information that she no longer needed to guide and took my arm when we travelled through the busy train station in the morning. Being sight guided means the person with vision impairment is guided by another human who has a better ability to see in order to maintain safety and confidence when being mobile. The person guiding must explain objects, obstacles, stairs, narrow spaces, kerbs, doors etcetera. For example, do the stairs ascend or descend? Is the kerb broad and deep, or shallow and sloping? However, this form of mobility aid is only as good as the capability of the guide. My inexperience of guiding a client in the early days of my fieldwork for example, led a woman straight into a pole on the bus before showing her a seat, which we discovered would not fit her and her dog.

Someone using a sighted guide as a mobility tool still employs their sense of orientation, balance, acceleration and deceleration, and other haptic senses, yet the pressure and touch of another person's arm and the consequent following of *their* kinaesthetic movements (forced feedback), hearing *their* explanations of the environment and other information *they* deem important becomes paramount. An individual being sight guided must listen not only to the environment around them, but to the words of the guide and act accordingly. A person with vision impairment becomes more reliant upon *another's* sense of direction, *their* vision, *their* decision-making skills,

[88] With so many people around, it was easier for James to be guided around all the potential obstacles instead of physically coming into contact with them and then moving around them.

*their* perception of the environment around them, and disability in general. The client's agency here is distributed between the two people.

*White Cane*

The white cane is another option for safe mobility and supposed independence. To receive service provision from this organisation all guide dog users must first know how to be independently mobile with a white cane, therefore all the guide dog users that I spoke with during fieldwork were white cane proficient. As an object, the white cane is understood internationally as a representation of sensory loss and as a tool for mobility to aid independence, as an idiom, it represents three different types of cane. The *Identification Cane* (also known as a symbol cane) is a thin white cane used to symbolise that the user has a form of vision impairment – the person generally has enough vision to safely navigate through their environment and they use the cane to indicate their impairment to the public around them. The *Long Cane* is a primary mobility aid and is a sturdier cane, often with variously sized plastic balls on the end. This cane is generally used when the vision impaired person does not have sufficient vision to determine the ground within two steps and requires an aid to be safely mobile. Finally, the *Support Cane* helps a person with VI maintain physical stability and develop and maintain safe, independent travel skills.

All of the canes are white, reflect light, and usually have a red strip at the bottom. Canes with a double red strip indicate deaf-blindness. The long and support canes are used by tapping in a fan like manner in front of the body from left to right and consequently coming into contact with any new or unexpected objects in the environment. The GD Association website describes that a person uses a cane to

> scan the area immediately in front of [them] and check the ground ahead for the next step. The cane can be used to descend and climb stairs, detect gutters, and avoid obstacles. (GDA 2015b)

The same senses of residual sight; hearing and smell all have a large role are used as with a sight guide when using a cane. However, due to the very fact that a cane *engages* with objects, people, space in general, and anything else *en route*, the user receives information about their

environment specifically through force feedback, vestibular awareness, cutaneous pressure in their hand, and the kinaesthetic movements of the joints and muscles in the body. With a cane, one physically bumps into objects and people, they often have to stop and 'work' their way around obstacles. Often considered an object of, or representation of impairment, its purpose is to extend the sensorium – to bring space and knowledge of that space closer to the user. "My place is known to me by the soles of my feet and by the tip of my cane" (Hull 2013:122; see also Ingold 2004). Yet, as a result of the person already coming into contact with a hazard their pace is often decelerated, concentration level is high, and maintaining balance is interrupted when new and unexpected obstacles cross their path. Guide dog users both in literature and in my fieldsite often referred to mobility with a cane as a type of 'assault' on the senses.

*Guide Dog*

Considered a unique mobility aid by the organisation, a Guide Dog is a

> safe and effective way for people who are blind or vision impaired to travel independently. They assist a client to locate destinations, avoid obstacles and stop at kerbs. They provide the confidence and companionship you can't put a price on. (GDA 2010-2016)

The human senses are engaged with a guide dog when a person with vision impairment verbally and physically gives instructions, directions, and commands to their dog in order for that dog to lead or pilot the person around obstacles and toward the destination required. By walking and being mobile together, a client and guide dog negotiate space and sensorially communicate, giving and receiving information about the environment they are traversing. Specifically, a human's senses must concurrently decipher the behaviours and actions of the dog as well as inform them about the environment they are in. The dog must do the same. A guide dog user's senses *as well as* their dog's senses therefore consequently direct future decisions and actions as a result of the information and sensations they give and receive.

It is residual vision, touch of the feet and hands, and olfaction and vestibular senses that play a predominant role when using this form of mobility aid. Thermoception is another sense to be considered due to the organisation's hot weather policy. No dog should be worked on days when

the temperature will reach 30 degrees centigrade or over (GDA 2006) as the touch of a dog's pads on numerous surfaces such as tarmac and sand can leave the dog with severe injuries.[89] The proprioceptive awareness of the position of one's body and balance is also prominently exercised with this aid, but is done so differently when using a guide dog as opposed to a cane. Again the literature and my informants concur with many guide dog handlers referring to the dog's four legs and harness as an addition to their own sense of balance (Michalko 1999:49 and 33-34). The 'pull' of the dog (referred to above) when 'walking out' can help to keep a handler more balanced than if alone or with a cane. Also, a human can expect the dog to judge the positioning of their (the human's) body in relation to obstacles such as overhanging trees, parked cars, and doorways, thus complementing the human's sense of proprioception when mobile. Therefore a human's proprioceptive senses are not only employed but also complemented when teamed with a dog guide.

Unlike a sight guide or cane, there is another level of sensory information which transpires with this form of mobility aid. When walking with a guide dog, the human touches and grips a lead and a harness handle, receiving vital variances of the dog's body and actions and thus environment. There is a 'correct' amount of pressure needed with the use of these types of equipment – enough to maintain a steady grip, but not so much pressure that the human then influences the dog's guiding. The harness provides another instance of force feedback, with the guide dog user anticipating expected and experiencing unexpected changes in tension and direction of the dog's body, whilst simultaneously providing verbal and physical commands to the dog. The harness is a rigid manifestation of a giver and receiver of information (it is both passive and active) and reflects the very duality of agency that is thus observed in both dog and handler simultaneously. This piece of equipment offers a tactile form of physical control for the human in order to interpret the dog's movements, give the dog direction, and thus enable the human's ability to be guided and follow with precision (GDA 2001:112). The haptic sensory systems of both human and animal working together are thus essential for the effective use of this mobility aid.

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[89] With an average of more than 55 days recorded at over 30 degrees centigrade during the four seasons in this city (Weatherzone 2015), this hot weather policy considerably impacts the use of an assistance dog.

Agency and capacity become decentred from any one sentient being considered in isolation and instead becomes distributed across human and animal. I will continue this concept of cross-species communication to greater detail in the following chapters of this thesis.

However, the senses of a person with vision impairment are challenged in a unique way when using this mobility tool due to the fact that it has a life span: coming to grips (literally and figuratively) with a new dog can be a physical and emotional challenge to say the least, and the sensory variables can be immense (especially when, as with most guide dog users, one has been familiar with the same dog in the same way for numerous years). The speed, balance, gait, strength, ability to give and receive commands and information, and the types and level of distractions are sensory experiences and characteristics specific to each human-animal relationship. For a client of the organisation who has had their dog replaced with another, there needs to be, at the very least a sensory readjustment in order to learn the way their new dog uses its senses and how their own somatosensory systems responds to that as a result.

Therefore, successful motion and mobility for a guide dog user comes from using not just a dog as mobility aid, but at various times a sight guide or cane as well. An amalgamation of all three is common. Emotions and feelings about one's self and the world around them however is what directs a client's choice and way of being-in-the world. Depending upon which aid a person is using at the time, mobility will always involve the use of numerous human and animal senses. All three mobility aids are used by guide dog users at one time or another, yet understandably, all people with vision impairment come to a definitive choice as to which aid they prefer[90] and then use that one for the majority of time. All the guide dog users that I spoke with made a point of telling me about making this choice. Each client told me they had chosen to use a guide dog

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[90] At times "exhibit[ing] strong loyalty to their preferred travel aid" (Gitlin et al. 1997 "Overcoming the Hidden Costs" para. 13).

because of the way it feels personally and emotionally.[91] Simply put, GD users often dislike using a cane and prefer using a dog, because of the way their senses feel (Gitlin et al. 1997). Using a guide dog instead of a cane, Olivia told me, is like using a Rolls Royce instead of a Mini Cooper. "Both get you to the same destination", she told me, "but in such a distinctly different way" (Fieldnotes, 2015)

*Choosing Mobility Aids*

One key reason people with vision impairment choose a dog rather than a cane is the dog's capacity for agency and the way it makes them feel. A working guide dog is expected to have "consideration of the handler as a physical extension of itself, provid[ing] sufficient clearance [height and width] for the handler when avoiding obstacles" (GDA 2001:142). Overhanging trees or bushes, narrow doorways, rubbish bins, and shopping mall aisles full of people were the most common hazards I saw teams encounter. By reading each other's senses and physical actions the human handler interprets the animal's cognition and emotion, thus enabling the human-animal team to solve problems and make decisions about their mobility conjointly. This therefore sees guide dog users physically absorb less of their environment as they are directed *around* obstacles safely. My observations saw frustration diminish, calmness ensue and contentment eventuate. Clients can 'get on' and get to where they are going both figuratively and physically – without having to come into contact with so much of the environment and other's perceptions. It changes the way clients engage with their world, how they feel about themselves and how they govern their choices and actions.

Anthropological literature on the topic indicates that although the cane can be considered as an extension of the body – indeed "being virtual extensions to limbs" (Deshen & Deshen 1989:92) – the dog allows for greater mobility without having to always think about the next step (Schillmeier 2008:619-20). With the fan movement required of a cane user more space is taken up by the person on the pavement and can thus become an obstruction to sighted pedestrians: "Not only

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[91] See Wiggett-Barnard (2008), Wirth & Rein (2008), Whitmarsh (2005) for discussions as to why people choose a dog as a mobility aid.

to the impatient and uncouth pedestrians, but also the patronising and overtly-solicitous ones [thus presenting] even more hazards to the blind cane user" (Deshen & Deshen 1989:93). The general consensus of my informants was that walking with a cane was a glaring advertisement of one's impairment. It is thus fair to say that this choice of 'how it feels' is inextricably linked to the user's identity and their sensitivity of public perception of their abilities and disabilities. Bullington & Karlsson refer to this as the "objectified body" (one of three bodily experiences) as described by congenitally blind people in a phenomenological-psychological study describing their accounts of bodily awareness (1997: passim). One's body in "the world of others" ('The Objectified Body', para. 1) matters, and therefore mobility aids are not solely about sensory information being received congruent with a need to be independently mobile, but about enjoying being mobile, managing stigma about disability, and feeling comfortable in one's day-to-day existence and in their society in general.[92] For James, his disability, his senses, his movements through his environment, his mobility and his independence was and never will be as good with a white cane or sight guide as it is with a dog.[93]

White cane users have to hit and be jolted into everything before they can compute in which particular direction to move. As James came into contact with his space in this way, his concentration would increase and he became tired quickly. He felt drained. He told me it makes him feel like he stands out from the crowd more – a negative for him. He had to travel much more slowly than he would like and he felt that he appeared so very 'obviously blind' to the general public around him. Because his mobility was slower he felt more vulnerable in his environment. In sum, for James, a cane meant reduced confidence and a consequent increase in physical isolation as a result of choosing to forego the stick altogether and remain at home (Fieldnotes,

[92] See (Michalko 1999:174-183) for a good first person account of how it feels to live 'in' and 'with' blindness and the way his mobility tool (a dog) influences these feelings.

[93] It is important to highlight that there are of course people who prefer being in the world with a cane rather than a dog. As Whitmarsh argues, while there is research which 'emphasise[s] the tremendous impact a guide dog can have, providing the most appropriate mobility aid for an individual's circumstances is the hallmark of effective rehabilitation service provision' (2005:19-21 emphasis original). Yet as my thesis is about the human-animal relationship, my focus is inevitably upon those who prefer the use of a dog as a mobility aid.

2010). This attitude was mirrored by many of the guide dog users in this setting[94] and in the literature; to be in the world with a cane is a stressful form of mobility which “demand[s] constant concentration in its implementation, and it is laboriously slow” (Deshen & Deshen 1989:92; see also Gitlin et al. 1997: passim). For many it is not a choice at all.

Linda told me that once her vision had got bad enough that she was beginning to bump into things she undertook her orientation and mobility training in order to know how to use a white cane.

> *I did my white can training and then put it [the cane] away. I didn’t use for about two and a half years… [because] as you get your long cane out you are identified as being blind. I tended to hide it for as long as I could.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

I asked if being ‘identified as blind’ was difficult for her. She said,

> *yes, in a small town it was. It isn’t so much of a worry in a larger city because you are more anonymous … but in small communities everyone knows your business … If you see someone with a long cane, you get a more sympathetic approach [akin to pity[95]], rather than with a dog. With a dog you get a lot more light-hearted conversation out of people*. (Ibid.)

The white cane for Linda was an undesirable aid in relation to her identity as vision impaired. Sociologist Michalko, states the white cane, “was an unmistakable sign of [his] laboured and ungraceful movement. Its whiteness suggested naive vulnerability [it] represented sheer necessity without choice” (1998; 1999:23). For those who prefer a canine aid, the use of any other

[94] Remembering however that it is a non-negotiable requirement by the GD Services that all clients maintain their white cane skills in case their dog becomes unwell or unable to work.

[95] Pity from others was a negative for Linda.

mobility aid amplified their perceived disability and their identity as impaired, consequently limiting their agency and autonomy.

In an unstructured interview with a guide dog user Tim, I was told that the concept of being disabled sometimes goes out the window *because* he uses a guide dog.
He told me, he actually has to stop himself:

> *Every now and again I think, oh that's right, I am disabled. I mean, I know that I can do some things, I know that I can't do some things, [but] that doesn't necessarily stop me from trying … I don't actually consciously think of myself as disabled a lot of the time.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

This, I believe is because he feels so 'at one in the world' with his dog. Many informants referred to this feeling, telling me that using a dog is the closest to 'free walking'[96] and allows them to feel as 'normal' in their disabled identity as possible.

When James worked with his (then) new guide dog Sophia, just as he did when being sight guided by me on our way to the dinner table, he moved with her, she moved with him – together as one (Michalko 1999). This congruent use of sensory-driven information communication between human and animal allowed James and the other guide dog users to understand, embody, and perceive their world in the manner which they emotionally and physically prefer – for James a world where he is perfectly capable to do the things for himself that he wants to do.[97] Once he became aware of his dog's and his own abilities as a result of using this form of mobility aid, James vowed never to be so dependent upon his family for sight guiding again. Walking with his new dog Sophia, James said, "It's just a much better form of freedom" (Fieldnotes, 2010).

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[96] Walking as a person with vision would.

[97] The way James perceived himself as capable highlights a greater argument of visual impairment versus visual disability and the notion of dependency in disability rather than ability in impairment. Lane et al. (1993) offer a medical ethnographic insight into this disparity between biomedical assessments of vision impairments and the perceptions held by individual blind people regarding their function and ability.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by making clear that the human-animal relationship in this setting is premised and progresses upon three fundamentals: a 'lacking' of sense/s; the belief that a sensorial deficit needs ameliorating; and that provision of mobility aids increases autonomy and compensates for that supposed 'deficit'. Using the example of guide dog user James amongst others throughout the chapter, I first described the pedestal on which human sight sits in this society. How vision impairments occur and the numerous variables which develop a 'range' of impairments follow. An unavoidable aspect for people with vision impairment is the effort that is needed to accept and adapt to the sight-orientated society in which we live with 'reduced' sight. It was at this point in the chapter that I began to discuss senses and the organisation and cite that the Association's aim for service provision was to enhance the quality of life of people with a disability. Human-need drives service provision and the delivery of mobility tools, and staff make immense efforts and take great pride in helping people regain independence and a sense of autonomy.

I consider the role of dogs' senses (specifically haptic senses), reintroducing the importance of cross-species sensorial communication as essential to successful work and, of course, the resulting human-animal relations. Agency of human and animal is thus distributed in order to achieve a positive outcome. I subsequently examined the senses of clients in this setting. Using one's senses enables a person with vision impairment to gain information about their environment and the objects and people around them. Indispensable to the human-animal relationship, the use of a clients' senses enables them to engage with their assistance dog and the facilitation that comes from it – often described here as independence and freedom. I provide an in-depth discussion of human senses regarding orientation and mobility, specifically in regards to service provision and the way in which these concepts are a pre-requisite to any client receiving an assistance dog. The chapter draws to a close when I illustrated the sensorial difference

between mobility aids offered by the organisation and how these different aids impact a person physically, emotionally, and sensorially.

I argue that with their dog by their side, combining senses, clients increase their ability to act as agents in their own space – moving from one place to the next, effecting their own change in their world. For these people, the use of their senses fundamentally referred to their safe navigation and mobility, but, as can be seen when I discuss the choice and use of different mobility aids, it is a person's sensorial engagement with the world around them that is what elicits feelings of confidence, independence and freedom. The feelings and emotions that someone has whilst engaging their senses and being mobile are what drives their particular choice to engage in a human-dog relationship. Once a person selects a dog as their preferred mobility aid, power and autonomy shifts yet again as the person seeking a guide or AA dog becomes subject to GD Association processes of assessment and matching as will now be explored.

# Chapter Four: Knowing People and Dogs: Assessing and Characterising Humans and Animals

> *Team leader: "Let's do it alphabetically. We'll start with Vivi."*
>
> *Everyone looks at their paperwork in front of them.*
>
> *Team leader: "Her speed is moderate to moderate-plus. Lucy [Vivi's trainer], would you give us an overview of her temperament please?"*
>
> *Dog Trainer: "Sure, yeah, as it says in the paperwork, she is maintained easily. A lot of her issues are linked to her anxiety. Her speed does go up when she gets anxious and works quite well until she can't cope at all and then she drops back to heel position. Her tension [and consequent speed] is a 'mod strong'. When she's anxious she takes off, she does the 'driving', showing good initiative and making the anxiety work for her. Whoever she goes with needs to be patient and relaxed. A bonding period is definitely needed, she needs to warm to the person and trust them before she will work for them, especially in the early stage to get her past her anxiety. She has a fairly limited environment that she will work in so needs a residential and/or business setting only. For example, she stopped working at the busy central markets. She will need to be worked daily though or else she can't be bothered [to do any work] and shuts off.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

The preceding excerpt from my fieldnotes was part of a conversation which began one of the three matching meetings I observed during my data collection. 'Matching' is a term used to describe the office meeting and consequent complicated procedure for finding the most suitable dog for a client on the waiting list. The objective of matching is for the GD Services staff to effectively and accurately pair a fully-trained assistance dog with a client on the waiting list in order to meet the needs of both human and animal, thus creating a team or 'working unit' (as defined in the introduction to this thesis). It is a time where knowledge and judgements of clients and dogs converge with Class following this tricky decision-making process of matching. This chapter therefore details these procedures because they encapsulate the core processes of bringing together a working team: the assessment and characterisation of humans and animals. As a result of these processes it becomes clear that contradiction continues to be a key structural element of human-animal relations in this setting. There exists a contrast at this time between

what is inherent and what is mutable in the behaviours and abilities of people and dogs. Both have inherent qualities and mutable qualities which are never resolved, nor should they be because it is this binary fusion which sees the human-animal relationship continue to mature. It is necessary to have both fixed and variable aspects in the human and animal's behaviour in order to develop and shape a successful working team.

## Introduction

In order to examine what is inherent and irresolvable, this chapter will first chronicle and consider the assessment processes and the consequent characterisation of humans and animals in this setting. I will explain the process of assessing humans wanting an assistance animal, encompassing the explicit application, documentation, and overall process that is required in order to become an assistance animal user, highlighting the control and power that the organisation has over animal and human agency as a result. I start with a discussion of the deliberation by staff of 'suitability' of potential clients, providing ethnographic examples of two applicants: James and Andrew – both desiring a guide dog.

Then, drawing upon the Chapter Two's theme of animal career (specifically official training), I will reflect upon animal assessment. I will describe the observation and documentation of dogs' physical and emotional behaviours by the GD Services staff members and discuss how this process of assessment and the consequent characterisations of these animals drives the practice of creating and moulding a dog's identity. This process attributes unique characters and individuality to the dogs and reiterates the contradiction of animals simultaneously having and not having agency. I draw upon the assessment process of Coco and Paige specifically here, as they are varied examples of dogs characterised as 'anxious'. The chapter will follow with an explanation and discussion of the above-mentioned matching process, which sees the pairing together of a suitable client with a suitable dog in order to commence the working human-animal team.

The final part of this chapter discusses Class (the time post matching when dog and client begin to work together). What begins to emerge during Class is an evolution from 'unknowing' between

human and animal, to 'knowing', and this propels the joint human-animal relationship during this time. I describe the differing process of Class for the trainer, client, and the dog, and argue that the ascribing of emotions and physical behaviours to humans and animals is what evokes the individual characterisations and 'types' understood by staff and clients alike.

It becomes apparent that these processes of assessing, matching, and Class are multifaceted and dynamic. They elicit the careful consideration of many variables and incorporate a balance of explicit aspects (such as precise training and written policy) and non-explicit factors (such as past experience, confidence, and intuition). Yet it is this balance between what is stable and what is fluid during these three stages of the human-animal relationship which ultimately results in a practical 'end' for those involved: the use of a dog as a mobility tool. The volunteers who raise the animal, the staff that train, assess, and match them, and those clients who walk with them are able to do so as a result of ongoing irresolvability. Yet, staff observation, classification, and judgment of individual people and dogs sanction the progression of dog and person to working team: it is clear that staff retain power in the human-animal relations at this time. This working team, later develops a bond that will be the focus of the following chapter, however, I begin now with an explanation of the assessment of people (clients) in this setting.

## Human Assessment

### *Application*

For a human-animal relationship to develop into a 'work relationship' (as it is referred to and known by all in this setting), people with vision impairment must first be deemed 'suitable' by the GD Services staff as to whether a dog is an appropriate tool for them. This is a fixed process; clients cannot go onto the waiting list without being assessed. Prior to being matched with a dog, receiving training with that dog, being 'graduated' as a team, and then beginning to work a new or existing client has to have many facets of their life measured, judged, and considered by GD Services staff. I was told that this process is done to establish (or re-establish) if the person applying for an assistance animal has the appropriate skills, attributes, and lifestyle for using a GD

Association assistance dog. The decision to be made is whether the applicant is suitable for *any* dog in the first instance, and if so which dog would make a suitable human-animal match.

The events and experiences which a person undergoes in order gain an assistance animal from this Association is emotional: exciting, wearisome – certainly complex. Assessment of the physiological, psychological, and environmental aspects of an applicant and the subsequent 'results' determine whether the person is accepted as a client and consequently 'put on' the waiting list to receive a new dog – a choice that obviously had great effect. For those who are existing clients of the GD services division, most applications for another/new dog come several years after their previous assessment process and therefore re-assessment of current explicit circumstances is deemed necessary. For all the people with whom I spoke, regardless of whether they had chosen a dog as a mobility tool before, the assessment comes at a time in the person's life when feelings such as grief, guilt, frustration and anger are high regardless of the individual characteristics being assessed. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, James was tremendously sad as a result of the death of his dog Buster and felt intense frustration when having to revert to the white cane as a mobility tool – ultimately making him irritated and isolated on a day-to-day basis. Regardless, the well-established GD Services protocol meant he had to be reassessed and paperwork completed in order to understand his current needs and reconfirm he was a 'competent' dog user before he could receive another dog. James had to undergo the standard processes of assessment, entering into a parallel emotional state of grief and hope.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the GD School in which I undertook my year of fieldwork officially follows the *Guide Dog Trainer and Instructor Manual*[98] (GDA 2001) which (amongst other aspects) directs staff on how to teach, judge, and ultimately assess the corporeal, emotional, and lifestyle status of an assistance animal applicant. Although this publication was not necessarily actively referred to it was used as a foundation to train staff and was the source

[98] A document revised specifically to the specifications of the GD Services division of my fieldsite "PREVIOUS CONTRIBUTORS/EXTRACTS TAKEN FROM: Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind – Scott Bruce (Oct 2001), Mimi Hooper (Cox), Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Australia) [and] Royal Guide Dogs for Blind Association (UK)" (GDA, 2001:2) and will hereon in be referred to as GDA (2001).

of policy which premised most actions in the department. Therefore, as referred to in this manual, it was in addition to these judgements of people, that the "potential effects of receiving an assistance animal" were also reflected upon by staff in this human assessment process (ibid.:186).

The aim is to establish the "person's, preferences, likes, dislikes and abilities to care for and handle an assistance animal" (ibid.). The assessment begins with an interview consisting of an "exchange of information with the aim of ensuring the applicant fully appreciates how the service is provided and what the applicant's commitments and requirements are" (ibid.). Following this initial interview a medical clearance certificate (see Appendix D) is essentially the fundamental and fixed requirement to being confirmed as suitable. A legal document completed by the applicant's general medical practitioner, this certificate must be submitted with the person's application stating "how capable the applicant is medically with the view of completing the Mobility Training Course and then sustaining a safe mobile unit" (ibid.:190). Without this documentation, there is no option for being put on the waiting list and is therefore a distinct illustration of the power that biomedicine and staff (medical practitioners and GD Association) have over a person's autonomy – their ability to be mobile in the manner in which they choose.

Once a legal level of blindness has been established by a general practitioner's documentation, the specifics of an individual's physical and emotional abilities and the environment in which they live, work, and socialise begin to be observed and documented by the Orientation and Mobility Instructors (O&Ms) or other staff partaking in the assessment. During my twelve months with this team I observed that the training manual did indeed reflect the practice:

> The assessment should [be] undertaken in the applicant's local area, covering travel on both familiar and unfamiliar routes. The client's physical abilities are observed and recorded. These include speed of travel, orientation ability, balance, problem solving, confidence, correction ability, voice intonation etc. The instructor should also drive around the area and record what the environment is like. In particular hazardous crossings, high DD [dog distraction] areas, or areas of difficult orientation/mobility should be noted. Once accepted the applicant is placed on the waiting list. (GDA 2001:186)

So although applications vary from person to person and between environments, they are all governed and controlled by staff assessments and judgements and the consequent decision-making that result. Characterisation and measurement of people's day-to-day lives by means of assessment and surveillance acts as governance over the client. GD Services acts as a gatekeeper to the human-animal relationship and provides illustration of the Foucauldian biopower that is the task of 'administering' life (Foucault 1990, 2012) by the organisation over its clients: specifically, their lifestyle and behaviours. The practice of assessing an applicant's vocal abilities, reactions and reflexes, and 'general presence' (a combination of vocal, mood, physical size, strength, and personality) only scratch the surface of what is to be considered by the GD Services assessor as appropriate and worthy or not. Ultimately a disciplinary power is established from 'the examination' – a process which objectifies subjects through observation and situates individuality through the use of administrative forms (such as medical and other records) that describe the individual and monitors their progress. Individuals can then be made into cases that can be easily viewed, transferred, managed and classified (Hoffman 2013:31). However, power relations, we know, do not exist without a degree of resistance, yet during the time that I was collecting data, only one person challenged the outcomes/results of these assessments – that person did not receive a guide dog (an example I will discuss later in the chapter).

The age of onset, rate of decline, and type of vision loss, as well as any secondary disabilities are other facts documented by GD Services staff during assessment, thus creating a client file (electronic and hard copy). The staff member then evaluates the applicant's ability to cope with and their acceptance of their vision loss, their confidence, mobility, level of activity, their stress levels, ability to relax, and their general daily living skills – ultimately "establish[ing] how the applicant's visual impairment affects their daily life" (ibid.:187-190).[99] The applicant's visual acuity, willingness to use their remaining vision, confidence in mobility, and the manner in which

[99] I will revisit this aspect of the assessment process and emotion in Chapter Seven due to its considerable unique and individual nature and the fact that the GD Services staff members conducted these assessments with little to no specific mental health education or experience.

they cope with the assessment process were also evaluated, thus firmly rooting the control of the human-animal relationship within the judgements and perceptions of the GD Services staff member. Thus, continues the contradiction and distribution of human agency – how can a client gain autonomy with an assistance animal when routinised objectification precedes the ability to even be on the waiting list? They cannot – instead the agency here lies mostly with staff.

This specific process of assessment was not *always* the case however. Although it was policy for an applicant to undergo these investigations as part of the assessment process, there were times when pre-existing clients (who were applying for subsequent dogs) were well known to certain staff members. These clients' behaviours and manners may have been observed recently or the client may have been 'on the books' for many years. When this was the case, often the need to physically re-establish some of the above-mentioned factors was considered redundant by staff. Depending upon the client, staff members would decide at-will what level of assessment was necessary.

For all applicants however (pre-existing or not), their social interactions, desired companionship with a dog, affinity towards dogs and other animals, their expectations of working with an assistance dog, and their level of motivation were all deemed explicit factors of suitability. In addition to these particularly individual aspects of an applicant's life, their partners, family, friends, neighbours, and size and aesthetics of their home also bear concern in the assessment process. For those who are not pre-existing clients of the GD Services department the importance of enhancement of mobility is fundamental to their chance of receiving an assistance animal:

> This is a major factor, if there is no perceived enhancement in the applicant's mobility then a [Guide Dog] should not be considered. A primary consideration is the perceived reduction in stress associated with less tactile travel, this must be considered in combination with a potential increase in stress associated with dog

> handling skills and a need for more creative thinking to understand, control, and reinforce the dogs [sic] guiding work. (GDA 2001:186)

The belief is that by judging these variable aspects of a person's life there is a better chance of a 'good' match and assessment assures staff that the client can care for, control, and most importantly, maintain their individual share of the responsibilities of a safe working human-animal team. The point, I was told, was to keep both dog and person safe.

*Suitability*

During my data collection at this organisation there was not one person refused placement onto the waiting list for a GD. There was, however, one occasion when an applicant withdrew his application as a result of the assessment criteria. Andrew, a man in his forties with a wife and grown children, living in his own home and working part-time, applied for a guide dog as a result of a retinitis pigmentosa diagnosis, meaning he saw in tunnel vision with only marginal sight in one eye and was thus bio-medically 'officially blind'. A visit ensued by two GD Services staff members and myself in order to interview Andrew and begin the assessment process. The staff assessed Andrew's abilities, asking about his mobility, why he disliked and did not use the white cane, and other questions about his activities at work and social life.

It was known by GD Services staff members before arriving at his home that Andrew owned a pet dog, Chloe, and so during this first meeting the staff members simultaneously talked about and assessed Chloe, who Andrew called his guard dog. They asked what breed she was, what her background and early years were like, and how she behaved generally with other dogs and humans. It was established that Chloe was abused for the first two years of her life prior to Andrew 'saving' her (Fieldnotes, 2010). Andrew had not spayed Chloe nor actively socialised her with other dogs which he said had left her "overtly protective" of him and "very nervous, fearful, and unsure of small spaces and certain noises" (ibid.).

A second visit ensued to continue Andrew's assessment process, with staff bringing a dog in training with them to see how Chloe would respond to having another dog on the property and

around Andrew. The two dogs were also walked in the neighbourhood together and observed by the staff. The instructors employed their previous experience of abused dogs with their current knowledge of the needs a guide dog has to work well – the behaviour of both dogs was considered. Coupled with the surprise on Andrew's wife's face that Chloe "didn't have a 'go' her" (ibid.), it was ultimately decided by staff that Chloe's possessive nature and unease around this other dog would hinder the building and maintaining of a relationship and bond that was necessary between Andrew and a potential guide dog. Although there was no extreme[100] behaviour exhibited at the time of assessment, as a result of Andrews's explanations, the dog's upbringing, the fact that she was not de-sexed, and the non-explicit 'knowing' by the GD Services staff, it was determined that Chloe's unpredictability, jealousy, and at times aggressive nature was not suitable for having an assistance animal in the house. My fieldnotes reflect the staff member's explicit and rational reason as to why having a guide dog in this situation would ultimately not work:

> *A guide dog needs to come home after work to a place where they feel comfortable. It needs to relax and be off duty at home, recover from work and build a relationship [with Andrew] that will allow for the team to work well. If a GD comes home to a place where it doesn't feel safe, happy, and content, they will reduce in their ability to function. They will eventually not work for you.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

This is an example of the hegemony held by the GD Association and their staff members. At this stage of assessment, Andrew would not be able to receive a guide dog until certain variables changed – until his pet dog at home was 'suitable' by their standards. This meant either removing Chloe from the home, or at the very least spaying and certainly training her. Andrew did not consent to engaging with any of those options. A taken-for-granted understanding by staff of how dogs behave (whether pets or workers) and their codified knowledge of how their trained dogs function, anticipated a relationship between Andrew and a new guide dog as one that was determined to fail whilst in this current format. As Chloe was deemed unsuitable in her current state and Andrew unhappy to make the proposed changes which were considered necessary, he

[100] Extreme behaviour is considered fighting, bighting, or growling.

was ultimately assessed as unsuitable to receive a guide dog until the situation had changed. He was permitted however to be on the waiting list for a dog if he worked towards those changes. Andrew consequently requested in an email – blatantly irritated – that he wanted his application to be dismissed, that he would apply for a dog from a different organisation. This outcome was considered by the staff members as sad but unavoidable.

*Emotion*

Although emotion is the focus of the final chapter of this thesis, it is pertinent to discuss here also. It is during this time of assessment that clients experience a sense of uncertainty. The unknown of what is to come, the way it feels to be disabled at this time and the unfamiliarity of day-to-day experiences by clients fuels various emotions. The clients I spoke with, and those writers who offer autobiographical-accounts reference their vision impairment with emotions such as grief, fear, and doubt about the future, eventual acceptance, and a reluctance to rely upon and receive more help from others (Eames 1994; Eames & Eames 2001; Michalko 1998, 1999; Putnam 1997). Clients often stated negative feelings of dependence and of being a burden at this time. These feelings are congruent throughout the myriad of academic and popular literature regarding disability and assistance animals, and appeared especially to be the case for people when being assessed for their first dog.

For these people and their partners, as well as their family and friends, the application and assessment process to receive an assistance dog impacted their feelings of being able. It represented a time of change: the feeling of discord regarding their mobility and day-to-day living was a norm. Safe travel had been reduced and GD Services client Tim referred to this time by saying he had “realised no amount of bluffing and pretending would do it [keep him safe] anymore” (Fieldnotes, 2010). Generally, for clients, the white cane had become too difficult and annoying. Clients referred to becoming more isolated as a result of their reduced mobility and they had often reached a time in their lives when their lived experience of ‘being blind’ was

causing more difficulties for them than it had ever done before.[101] Clients spoke to me of their reduction in autonomy at this time prior to receiving their assistance animal, yet as Tim described, "I thought a guide dog might change that. I had to apply and be assessed to find out. I needed to get past that point of walking into things and nearly killing myself, I just needed to find out whether this [state of being] was it for the rest of my life" (ibid.).

For those clients being reassessed for a new guide dog (having already been clients often for many years) it was explained to me predominantly by clients (but also highlighted by staff members) that emotions ran high at this time. Grief for the retirement and or death of a previous dog, guilt and frustration of moving onto and having to re-learn with a new dog, fear of putting trust in a dog that they were unfamiliar with, and a hope that things will turn out 'ok' – that they would not be on the waiting list too long – were feelings they experienced. Yet, although the *Trainer and Instructor Manual* (GDA 2001) provided an explicit template for what qualities were to be assessed, it did not state *how* to undertake these assessments, nor how to interpret the information once gained, this was left to staff discernment. Emotions, intuition, as well as implicit hunches and past experiences by staff members all contribute to the assessment process, but were discussed at minimum.[102] In practice, aspects of the assessment model were often randomly ignored whereas other areas were focussed on profusely, again, highlighting the fact that the organisation and its staff have the sovereignty of control over dogs and people at this time.

## Animal Assessment

As referred to in the introduction of this thesis, anthropomorphism regarding the interpretations of dogs' actions and behaviours is paramount to understanding the thoughts, feelings, desires and choices of individual animals. It is thus a basis for all human-animal relationship here.

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[101] See *The Two in One. Walking with Smokie, Walking with Blindness* (Michalko, 1999:11-40) for an interesting and unique in-depth phenomenological account of life becoming more difficult as a result of the author's vision loss and his need for a better mobility aid.

[102] If there were any other policies or documents pertaining to the practices of undertaking assessments I neither saw nor heard of them.

Specifically, anthropomorphic language was at its peak during the animal assessment and characterisation stage of the animal's career as I will now examine.

Assessment of canines in this GD School was almost perpetual during their career, be it long or short. The neo-natal and puppy-raising phases saw appraisals and informal tests as a fixed necessary process which was to give ongoing information to staff and paint a picture of the dogs' individual abilities, likes, dislikes, personality, and their propensity to work with the staff members. As referred to in Chapter Two, after this early development stage the young dog 'comes in'. The dog training staff[103] divide and allocate the number of dogs that come in for training and (for the most part) they each work with the same dogs for the duration of the individual dog's training, usually a minimum of eight weeks.

It is during the time of this training (prior to matching) that the individual dog's physiological states, physical abilities, and emotional behaviour become the instructor's focus: eliciting a unique relationship with each dog and vice versa. Animal response behaviours are observed and considered by the humans at this time. There is an understanding that some aspects of the dogs' behaviours are fixed and that others fluctuate in relation to external stimuli.[104] Therefore by judging individual dog's attitudes, habits, abilities, strengths, and areas to work on, the trainers therefore ascribe individual identities to each dog, whilst moulding what traits they believe develop a dog suitable for assistance work. This human-animal relationship between dog and trainer is premised on this irresolvability between what are fixed and fluctuating behaviours, and the need to appraise them. These emotional and physical animal responses and the human

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[103] Be it qualified O&M instructors, Assistance Dog trainers, or cadets of both qualifications.

[104] Such as such as open or confined environments, other people, children, dogs, and human commands and behaviours as experienced during training.

judgements which follow are documented in paperwork, verbally discussed between staff, and form the basis of a dog's overall assessment – what staff consider the dog's identity.

*Physical and Emotional Actions*

Assessment is ongoing for the minimum eight weeks of training. "During the assessment period the dog should walk in a variety of areas" (GDA 2001:64). Just as was required of the dog during its puppy-raising time, official training sees the dogs taken to places where activities, challenges, and distractions are present such as supermarkets, shopping centres, busy precincts, on public transport, up and down stairs, on escalators and in lifts. They are also specifically taken to places with dog distraction to assess how they cope in these environments. Their reactions to elements such as wind, water, or extreme weather are also observed. The dog's focus, responsiveness and reactions in general, its reluctance or willingness to perform certain tasks, its excitability, ability to recover from these stimulations, and their levels of distraction and stress are noted. The degrees of intensity, quantity, and complexity of work that the dog is capable of are also observed. This assessment process is accomplished by the Assistance Dog trainers simultaneously teaching the dog how to 'do' guide or other assistance work while replicating the life practices, routes, and potential experiences which the dog may encounter when officially working. This in turn gives an initial impression as to what type of (human) match would be appropriate, and also the areas that need to be trained and manipulated in order to work better.

Separate dog assessments occur in residential, city, and if deemed necessary, in industrial and country environments. The belief is that a dog's 'natural' ability to orientate themselves and avoid obstacles, their degree of initiative and eschewal, level of sensitivities, self-interest,[105] concentration, aggression, and aloofness are all revealed during the training and assessment process in the dog's body language and actions. Does the dog become needy, protective, excited, more or less capable? Do they show trust, confidence and independence, or wariness, fear and reluctance? Are they doing effective, safe, focussed work, or are they having one too many 'off

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[105] Self Interest describes the dog's compulsion to please its self above anything else (GDA 2001:72).

days'? Do they get naughty, anxious or distracted, or do they 'come into their own' where they show high initiative, solid leadership, confidence and respectful work? This assessment process and these specific questions shapes the irresolveability between the human desire to channel a dog's capacities as an assistance tool and animal agency which is essential to developing a relationship between the two.

The understanding held by the trainers here is that when a dog exhibits certain behaviours their individual character traits are disclosed. It is believed that a dog's individual character as observed during this process of training and assessment, represents not only the animal's choice but more importantly the specific aspects of their character which may be encouraged, discouraged, trained, or retrained. It is believed that these character traits are either able to be fostered or manipulated, or are unchangeable depending upon their nature of permanency. The inherent, fixed aspects of a dog's character are considered unable to be transformed through training. Behaviours which fluctuate are generally believed able to be influenced and trained to better suit assistance animal work.

Assessment continues throughout the duration of the animal's training as 'work' scenarios and tasks are reiterated. At any time during the training period the assessment process can culminate in two differing ways. The first is when a health issue, behaviour, characteristic or emotion is observed which is not congruent with the GD Services standards of a working dog (such as fearfulness, aggression, inconsistency, and distraction), then the animal's propensity and desire to work as an assistance animal is reasoned as highly questionable. More training ensues to modify the animal and work these 'problem areas' out. If the dog is unable to be physically rehabilitated or trained to align their behaviour to what is needed to work, the behaviour is considered an inherent trait of character and they are removed from the training programme.[106] This conduct and these beliefs highlight the organisation's ultimate control in the human-animal relationship. The animal's capacity for decision-making and ability to act upon those decisions

[106] See Goddard & Beilharz (1982) for a comprehensive discussion of the genetic and environmental reasons why many dogs in Australian GD Schools are found unsuitable to work.

are inconsequential when the opportunity to provide a utilitarian tool is the main aim. The second way the process can culminate is if and when the training has been completed, the dog appears to have learnt all that is required for assistance work, proving its capacity to upkeep its share of team safety and shows no unacceptable characteristics, the dog is then deemed successful and ready for matching.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the GD Services trainers present this process of assessment as explicit, rooted in precise and replicable evaluations of reading the animal's body language in order to elicit an understanding of individual psychological and physical capabilities of the animal which are seen to depict which style of work the animal is best at – articulated as "which career it chooses" (Fieldnotes, 2011). However, choice again becomes irrelevant during this assessment activity when again the observation of animal's body language and behaviours is not only an ambiguous practice which involves both rational and emotive decision-making by the human, but also because training sees the moulding and developing for the end cause. It is therefore by discerning, scrutinising, and monitoring the varied *and* homogenous characteristics and gestures of the dog; considering these behaviours and characteristics in conjunction with one's previous experience of these working animals; and by having distinct perceptions and taken-for-granted intuition of the outcomes that occur in these scenarios, which establishes positive or negative assessment status for the dogs. Consequently, it is *both* the categorical documentation of these animals, together with the staff's equivocal perceptions and experience which determines the results of animal assessment. This time of training and assessment is a continuous transposition between the two. Here I use the example of canine anxiousness to analyse how animal emotion is understood and interpreted by staff. Anxiety is seen to affect different dogs in different ways – consequently eliciting certain behaviours and judgements from the staff and ultimately affecting the dog's assessment status or work.

*Anxiety*

Just as a human needs to be capable of maintaining its share of responsibility for being (what is considered) a safe team, so too, for an assistance a dog to be assessed as able to work, it needs

to demonstrate to the trainer that it can do its part in keeping the team safe. This is done by staying focused on the tasks of guidance, walking, and achieving the desired destination. As discussed above, while the dogs' body language is witnessed by the instructor during assessment, markers of certain emotions[107] are also recognised and used to build a representation of the individual animal. These emotional states become integral to the dog's capacity to work or not, and are equally a source of fluidity and change. As these emotional states ebb and flow, staff members determine what emotions shape the dog's behaviours and how these emotions impact the dog's ability to work safely and effectively. Canine anxiety[108] is an emotion particularly commonplace in these dogs and is considered both a positive attribute for working well in some instances and negative in others.

Being an animal with anxiety in this setting means exhibiting heightened physical characteristics – an intensified state of being if you will – which occurs in one of two distinct forms: negative and positive. Trainers place upmost importance on balancing any anxious behaviours from the dog for focus and concentration to prevail. Without effective and consistent focus, the dog is considered unlikely to learn and thus is a significant reason for a negative assessment status. I was told innumerable times that if a dog becomes overly distracted by a form of anxiety their focus on the work at hand can diminish or be lost: this puts both the handler and the dog in potential danger.

> Anxiety can be described as a state of mind, which results in the dog being unsure or uneasy. Anxiety can be an inherent characteristic or a result of environmental influences. If the dog perceives itself incapable of dealing with a stressful situation by some form of positive action in the environment…the dog may be less active and spend longer in its resting area. Anxiety can also appear to present like excitability in the terms of agitated behaviour. Depending on the degree of this trait, it may render the dog unsuitable for training as a guide or, alternatively, it may be deemed useful depending on the dog's other traits and the degree of

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[107] Emotions such as affection, aggressiveness, anxiousness, boredom, confidence, depression, determinedness, distraction, fragility, insecurity, self-consciousness, warmth, suspicion, trust and willingness are attributed to the dogs (GDA 2001:34).

[108] Canine anxiety is not to be confused with nervousness "a neurological [state of being] which some evidence suggests is a heritable trait. It has a similar appearance to extreme suspicion and anxiety, but unlike suspicion and anxiety, will not improve over time, in fact the dog will usually deteriorate over time" (ibid.:72).

> anxiety expressed. Too much anxiety, no matter what form is exhibited, may render a dog unsuitable as a guide dog. (GDA 2001:75-6)

This quote and the actions by GD Services staff that I observed during fieldwork show a dog's anxiety is believed to be both at times an innate aspect of the dog's genetic makeup, and at other times a feature which can be influenced by external environmental factors and therefore changeable. This mutable and innate emotional trait is a good example of the ways in which control and agency between human and animal has different configurations in this setting.

Anxiety is understood to manifest to varying degrees, can be witnessed across canine generational lines,[109] and has the propensity to either improve or diminish over time with training or maturity. It is believed that external factors such as handler technique, environment, and general development of training practices can influence and impact anxiety and therefore add to its variability as an animal characteristic. Anxiety is one of various fluid, variable emotions which exemplifies the slippage between the belief that dogs have innate characteristics, whilst at times training and manipulation of behaviour eclipses this.

Again, as with other emotions such as sadness and anger, the specific markers of anxiety are interpreted from the dogs' bodily displays. Whether momentary or abiding, the customary bodily manifestations of anxiety in this setting include the dog's ears held well back, a tense face, low body carriage (similar to cowering), panting, yawning, shaking of the head, change in walking

[109] Canine siblings Jarvis and Jazz for example were both understood to show anxious traits in their work and these were articulated as specifically coming from their mother's genes.

tension and pace, irregular toileting, trembling, and weight loss.[110] Personality changes such as overly sensitive or particularly energetic behaviour also represent anxiety.

Take as an example Jarvis, whilst still a puppy. When we walked across the road on our way to a train station he had not visited before he saw another dog in the distance, stopped walking and put his ears up to listen, looked straight at the dog and put his nose up to smell more intently. His trainer therefore kept a long-term close eye on his level of anxiety and distraction, enlisting training techniques when needed to curtail becoming an anxious or easily distracted dog. If a graduated dog had done this whilst working it potentially puts the team in danger (perhaps by stepping in front a car or not anchoring a child). If the dog's focus was lost entirely (for example, no amount of commands, encouragement, or relaxation will help to regain their ability to re-engage with the task) then the animal would be considered 'unwilling'. Here, what could be understood as innate or untrainable characteristics becomes labelled as volitional – the agency or choice of the dog not to engage in a task.

As training and assessment nears its end, ultimately the animal's anxious behaviour results in one of three scenarios: firstly, the dog is able to recover from its anxiousness, regain focus and continue work; secondly the dog is able to recover from the anxiousness and use the anxious energy to better complete the task in hand; thirdly the dog is not able to recover from the anxiety and is unable to complete the job asked of it by its handler. If the dog presents this behaviour persistently and the trainers are not able to introduce tactics to counteract it, the characteristic is considered innate and unchangeable. Depending upon how the dog responds to their

[110] Other physical signs of anxiety include growling, 'mouthing' (where the dog knaws at things but does not bite hard), lunging, barking, biting, chewing, lip-smacking, tension (pulling or reluctance to walk), licking, changes in sleep and play and the following of obedience orders.

characterised anxiety they will be assessed as either unable or unwilling to work as an assistance animal, or assessed as a dog able to work whilst in an anxious state.

As specifically referred to in the *Instructor Manual*, the handler (be it trainer or client) can influence the dog's level and type of anxiety and (whether in training or officially working) thus aim to maximise the capacity of the dog's capability in order to attain 'effective' results:

> Any excited behaviour by the handler will only heighten the dog's level of arousal, a quiet and calm manner of approach is best…inconsistency in approach by the handler or dog may cause confusion, frustration and anxiety therefore the dog needs a patient, consistent approach. However, these dogs [with anxious characteristics] may be difficult to read. They may present as a tough, boisterous or badly behaved, i.e. lots of barking and bouncy behaviour. If you go in hard [with training technique] they will only get worse whether negative or positive. Again, spend time getting to know the dog, instead of confronting it, give the dog time out to calm down. Once the dog has calmed down it is then in a position to learn. (GDA 2001:24)

Progress notes which I read in Olivia's client file dating from September 2005 describes guide dog Paige's out-of-the-ordinary anxious behaviour. A temporary state for her:

> *Paige's body posture indicates anxiety – it appears she has experienced something very negative on this crossing for her to pull hard left [the indicator of her anxiety]. The instructor explained Paige's body language and anxiety and advised Olivia to line herself up on the right-hand side of the crossing and use light leash control to affect a straight crossing. The instructor explained that this is something she would need to continue doing until the problem was corrected.* (Fieldnotes, 2012)

The above quote indicates the principle that collective physical markers (the dog's guiding technique of pulling left instead of traveling straight) represent Paige's dislike and negative standard of work at this street crossing. Not normally a dog which guides in an anxious state, this behaviour was thought to be a reaction to a negative experience and therefore considered solitary anxiety – something that could be 'fixed'. Qualified guide dog Sophia, on the other hand, responded to anxiousness in large and busy crowds by working faster and increasing her tension and intensity. Sophia was characterised as a naturally anxious dog. She was defined as a dog which used her ever present anxiousness to get her and her handler past the crowd and out the other

side in a brisk, effective, and safe manner. However, it is also considered that an unsuitable handler – one that did not give her confidence and guidance – would see her struggle with her anxiety whilst working, lose focus, increase suspicion, and 'switch off'. So, whilst at times known as an innate quality, the emotion and actions discerned through anxious behaviour also have the capacity to be mutable, harnessed and controlled.

*Assessment of Anxiety*

For a dog to either progress or deteriorate in its work after displaying anxiousness it is important to first establish what type of anxiety it is – 'general' (a constant level of anxious behaviour), 'internalised' (not shown outwardly by the dog but *felt* by the handler during the walk), 'accumulated' (begins a walk with no anxiety only for it to build during tasks) or a 'specific' anxiety (anxiousness relating only to certain stimuli). The trainers assess a dog's anxiety by observing and taking note of its individual physical characteristics: general health status such as loss of weight, vomiting, diarrhoea; general behaviour and body language (especially any out-of-character behaviour); as well as behaviour when placed in stressful situations; their ability to cope with withdrawal of support from the handler; their rate of recovery from stressful situations; and its reaction to generalised or specific situations that are known to cause anxiety.

Coco, a dog in training and then matched whilst I was in the field, was considered to work soundly until she had to walk past large statues of other animals. Each and every time she waked past two large statues she trembled, dropped her body carriage, slowed down and veered off to any direction other than straight in order to get away from the statues. Steph, her trainer, told me that she was completely unable to 'get through' to her. Steph said she was such a confident and sound worker apart from when it came to these statues. It was established that Coco had *specific* anxiety. She was capable and effective as part of the working team almost all of the time except for contact with these animal statues, which left her unfocussed, scared, and unable to get her handler to the destination required. After a failed attempt of first trying to encourage her (verbally, physically, and then with food) to walk past the statues and then giving her the opportunity to recover, it was decided that the trainers would simply find another route to get to the same destination and eliminate the environmental source of the problem. She was not

considered as a dog that was indicating her desire to not to work, but instead that she just did not like these types of statues. Staff decided to make sure that her future new handler would be made aware that this was something Coco was anxious about and that it might crop up again. "We'll work around it" they told me. Ultimately then, this was a decision made by humans for the dog. The dog had no autonomy other than implying her fear of the statues.

By characterising Coco as a 'sound little worker' as a result of her behaviours whilst working and ascribing the emotion 'specific anxiety' to her individual personality, it is established that she would be a good guide dog, although one which is anxious *at times* during her working career. Sophia, on the other hand, was a dog characterised with excitability, strong tension, moderate to high walking speed, need for a high work load at a moderate intensity, and she was documented as having a *high* level of 'general' anxiety. She was not re-trained *per se*, as this anxiety was considered inherent to her personality, but it was decided that she needed to be matched with someone who could support and guide her through her anxious days on the job and provide a structured home environment to minimise her excitability.

Assessment for the dog concludes when, as mentioned before, the dog either indicates appropriate or inappropriate behaviours which are or are not congruent with a working assistance dog at the GD Association. I have provided anxiety as an example of behaviour that can be considered acceptable or unacceptable for the job of 'working'. The dog, having undergone its full official training, at this time has successfully learnt how to guide a person in numerous environments and settings, has had its behaviour observed and documented at great length, and its individual personality is 'revealed' to those performing the training. Once a dog is assessed as being qualified, the trainer is to complete the *Canine Temperamental and Behavioural Analysis* document (see Appendix E), which the trainer summarises the overall assessment. Written by the instructor or dog trainer "to study the dog in its "raw state" reacting to a new handler to new environments in a variety of areas and situations" (GDA 2001:64), it is the 'go to' document for the matching meetings. Once this document is completed it is passed on to the GD Services manager, the date of qualification is recorded in the dog's file, and if it is a sponsored dog, the

staff inform the Business Development Unit (marketing team) so they can inform the sponsors. Now knowing the dog's and the human's type, temperament and capabilities, it is time for dog to be matched with the human with which it will spend its working life. It is an integral aspect to the coming together of client and animal.

## Matching

With the aim of ensuring an appropriate and successful client/dog match – both being safe and comfortable for the partnership duration – a matching meeting is an amalgamation of paperwork, information sharing, intuition, emotion and decision-making. The discussion of Vivi at one of the matching meetings is a good example to highlight this point.

> *Instructor: Her initiative is high and her imprinting is excellent. You only need to show her once and she's got it. Equally her separation anxiety is high. She links onto one person and one person only. So she will work hard for you once that bond is made. On Friday at the Central Markets as she approached the market and noticed that the crowds were busy, her ears pinned back, she cowered straight away and said "this is too much for me". She made it clear that she has a limit point.*
>
> *Team leader: She is a complex dog. It is going to be very difficult to find the right person for her. She needs a high level of work every day. She is happy to do short walks but she will need more than just a short walk every day. We need to give her someone who walks to new places and goes greater distances. A correct match for this dog is making sure that her anxiety is handled and harnessed appropriately with enough work to keep her turned on and intrigued*. (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Vivi's inability to work in very busy, crowded environments was judged to be an unchanging aspect of her character. Unable to cope with this type of environment, she was not to be matched with someone who needed to travel to these types of environments regularly – if at all. She was understood, however, as a dog that needed to be stimulated with alternating tasks and various travels and therefore needed to be matched with someone who was active and navigated varying distances and locations. Her match also needed to be capable of maintaining and working with

her ongoing fluctuating anxieties. It was going to be a challenge for the team to find the right person to match her with someone on the waiting list, yet she and a client *were* matched.

Matching is considered a complex task, requiring careful consideration, lateral thinking, and flexibility. During my data collection, there were three matching meetings that occurred in the calendar year. With the matching meeting date set in everyone's diaries, all GD Services staff sit around a table with assessment/summary paperwork relating to the clients on the waiting list and the dogs which have been successful in training. The process of these meetings is to consider the dogs available for matching, determine client priorities, and to eliminate unrealistic variables – speed and work load for example. Provisional matching is decided upon, allowing for a 'cooling off' time for staff to consider the match(es) and perhaps view the dogs in action again. If necessary, staff re-examine client information and re-confirm the match. I will therefore describe the practice of matching which occurred during my fieldwork at the GD Association and show that as a result of the way staff assess and characterise humans and animals, the client and dog training that follows is both shaped by contradictions between control and agency.

### *The Matching Meeting and Process*

Matching provides a perfect example of the negotiations between what are considered stable characteristics and what are considered fluid (both in humans and animals). More importantly, the matching process is yet another marker of fluidity in the human-animal relationship due to the trainer beginning to relinquish their relationship with the dog in order for a client to have theirs. It was also during this process that I observed assessment and characterisation of humans and animals at its pinnacle. Yet absent from the academic discourse is literature concentrating on the matching process and there is none which speaks anthropologically to the specific procedures and methods of matching a human to an assistance animal.

Of non-anthropological papers skirting the process of matching, Murphy, a zoologist, describes the various categories of temperament in potential guide dogs and the consequent assessment processes from her research at the GD Association of Australia in Melbourne (1995; 1998). Lloyd

(2004), an animal behaviourist, explored the match between handlers and their guide dogs while undertaking research at the GD Services of New Zealand, but mostly she discusses the outcomes of the matching process; whether the matches are successful or not, and why. Her findings do offer two paragraphs regarding the structure and order of the matching meeting (Lloyd 2004:55-6), which mirrors my description below, yet her definition of the progression of the process is only that, "matches are tentatively proposed, thoroughly debated and provisionally agreed" (ibid.:56). It certainly does not tackle the interesting *process* which I will describe.

The pairing of a human and an animal as a guide team is raised again in Lloyds's work when a focus group of New Zealand GD Services clients describe knowing "next to nothing" (ibid.:69) about the matching process and the decisions made by staff that unfolds. They (clients) go on to refer to the "black box that is the mystery of matching" (ibid.), and express the desire to actually know more about how this process unfolds. Three paragraphs pertaining to the criteria of matching are offered (ibid.:56-7) which also concur with my description of the complexity when matching quantifiable and unquantifiable physical and psychological variabilities of people and dogs. Lloyd's work therefore strengthens my argument of the fluidity and contradictions as ever-present aspects of the human-animal relationship. Regardless of the dearth of anthropological information on the topic of matching, what is more important is the fact that the GD School in which I undertook my fieldwork does not adopt or include in their practices any academic literature pertaining to matching humans and animals. It is this *practice* of matching a human and a dog that I will now focus on.

It is a well-considered belief, both in academic literature and by the staff in this setting that "matching is an art as much as a science, and there may be no such thing as a perfect match" (ibid.:2). As mentioned above, after the dogs have undergone the minimum 'official' training and are considered ready for matching, a meeting date is set for the formal matching process to occur. There were however a number of occasions when matching outcomes were established in less

structured scenarios, but generally speaking the office-staged matching meetings premised the majority of decisions which were made regarding working teams.

Once convened in a semi-circle in a large meeting room with their individual copies of Canine Temperamental and Behavioural Analyses and Human Applicant Summaries, the team leader started the meeting by writing the names of the dogs down the side of a large white board for all to see. It was expected that staff had already read these assessment forms and knew the pertinent information about the dogs and clients they themselves trained or interviewed, ready for discussion. Having received the client and dog summaries from the team leader myself I quickly re-read them while I set up my computer in the corner of the room on a separate table. The team were well and truly used to me taking notes while they are chatting away and they knew that matching was something I was very keen to include in my thesis. I wrote the following in my fieldnotes:

> *We've all been anticipating this matching meeting for so long as we watch the dogs go through their training and meet the clients who are hoping for a match this time around. It feels like an important day, there's an air of excitement. There is a different sense of purpose to this day's work. As we (the staff and I) sit in the board room getting organised, one of the GD instructors says to me, "this is what it's all about – getting to the point where we can really envisage our dogs ready to go off to work and change lives". The team leader started to explain the matching procedure to her staff (as most in the room had been working for the organisation for a very short period of time).*
>
> *She explained which dogs were available for matching and determined the priority of people who needed to be matched. People waiting for a replacement dog and people who had been "on" the waiting list for longer came first. All names of humans and dogs are written on a whiteboard and unstructured discussion ensued. Personal knowledge of the client (which is not documented in the paperwork) is referred to and considered throughout the process. Monica told the team that they were to make provisional matches. This, she said might incorporate trying to convince clients to abandon their ideal choice of dog for another, given which dogs were available and suitable.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

The use of the structured, policy-driven paperwork here represents the codified and rational aspect of the matching meeting. Yet a match is only made possible and brought to a constructive

decision by the combined use of implicit discussion driven by emotive and intuitive staff judgements.

The *Trainer and Instructor Manual* (2001) describes matching as,

> the term used for finding the most suitable client for a particular dog, or a dog for a particular client. Matching is a complex task, requiring careful consideration, lateral thinking, and flexibility. Compromises will be necessary to achieve positive outcomes. (GDA 2001:208)

I was told that ultimately the decision of a matched team lies with the GD Services team leader. This indicated the powerful hierarchy of the GD Services, with the team leader having final say over the staff as well as the dogs and clients. Conversation in the meeting began to flow and matching thus ensued – we continued down the list of the dogs available and heard about their individual mannerisms, negative and positive attributes, initiative and potential working 'issues'. Conversation was informal with both personal opinion and written documentation driving talk. Thoughts regarding human and animal behaviours were discussed in terms of being re-trainable, managed, or changed. One by one conversation about which dog might suit which person unfolds. The following is part of a conversation during a matching meeting:

> *Dog trainer:* *Do we even need to bother with Sapphire?*
> *Other trainer:* *I don't like this dog at all.*
> *Team leader:* *We might leave her, yes.*
> *Other trainer:* *She looks nice, she's pretty but she is definitely not guide dog material.*
> *Team leader:* *Pets as therapy might be good for Sapphire – I know a school that is looking. She is aloof, so the children wouldn't bother her. Although I don't think Sapphire is worth $8000 [the standard price of a non-graduated Pets as Therapy dog] because of her high level of dog distraction.*
> *Team leader:* *So we have two options for her, a high school disability programme or PaT dog. Now that she is not a guide dog we could still carry on her training in the disability side. Her dog distraction is manageable for someone who has their sight. Take away the responsibility of being a guide and just let her be a dog and she would be a great assistance. As I know a school is looking for a dog for a disability*

*programme, let's see if she can fit and we get the money for her.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

The decision of this dog's 'choice' was made right at the beginning of the meeting – leaving no one in doubt that she would not be considered for guiding. Also note the revealing comment about either being a guide or 'just being a dog'. The meeting continued:

> *With the dog's names going down the left hand side of the white board, we move to the humans on the waiting list. These names are written across the top, creating a grid of squares. The team leader reiterates the areas which need to be considered regarding people waiting for a dog. We all look to our paperwork and refresh our knowledge of each client and come to consider all the people for all the dogs. Mismatch of pace between dog and client is the first choice for eliminating numerous potential matches and leaves numerous crosses (representing a non-match) on the grid. As discussion continues ticks are put against the dog's names and potential matches continued to be discussed.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Having established in conversation and through her paperwork that Vivi really liked to have one on-one-attention (in order for her to bond with a handler), and due to her speed, it was decided that only Sam and Margaret's names were to be ticked against Vivi's name as potential matches. It was determined that Sam had the right level of work load for this dog, but would need more time and help to work on building a 'close bond' with her in order to get her to work effectively. Sam had never owned a dog before and affection towards dogs, it was stated, did not come 'naturally' to him. This was of great concern to staff as they envisaged increased difficulty for the matched team. Time, efforts, and training by both staff and Sam would potentially see this 'unnatural' behaviour change into a warm and affectionate relationship between human and dog – and would thus give the dog what it needed in terms of love and reward to work. Margaret, on the other hand had had two guide dogs previously, so in terms of priority she needed to have a dog sooner rather than later. Her so-called 'bold' personality meant that she would better be able to cope with Vivi's excitability. Vivi's trainer added to the conversation, asking whether Margaret would be sensitive enough to the dog's anxiety. The discussion continued:

> *Trainer:* *Would Vivi accumulate anxiety over time or would she become more confident?*

Team Leader: *You see, for Sam you need to have an anxiety-driven dog. He doesn't have much vision to assist him but his orientation is good. At the start, Vivi would be anxious without a shadow of a doubt. I wonder how he would cope with that? They might be too anxious for each other. Vivi is the only possibility for him though, given the pace he walks and amount of work he needs to do. It would depend on what she [Vivi] throws up in her work and how he copes with that.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Control over who would receive an assistance dog was well and truly in the hands of the GD Services staff. Monica was the one that had most information to offer the discussion because she had known these clients over a longer period of time. Because Sam is not a 'natural', she foresaw that he would not handle Vivi's anxiety effectively. She articulated that she was sure Vivi would help him in social aspects of his life and be good for him, but she was not so confident that Sam would cope with the level of attention that this particular dog needed to work safely and well. On the other hand, Margaret was assessed as having had plenty of dog experience; her current dog at the time, Lulu, had anxiety, so it was taken-for-granted that Margaret knew how to deal with this emotion. Monica told us all that she knew Margaret knew how to help the dog utilise their anxiety for good work. However, as Monica continued to share more information about this client we were informed that Margaret would be retaining her current dog Lulu at home after retirement, and Monica believed that Vivi would not work well with another dog in that home. As so, the process of a decision transpired: although Sam has the right pace and work load, his deemed 'rigidness' with dogs foretells difficulties for the team; also, because Margaret has precedence for a replacement dog (having already had one) and having the right work load and experience to complement Vivi's character, the judgment was made that if Margaret would consider re-homing Lulu, Vivi would be matched to her. Sam's potential tick next to Vivi's name on the whiteboard grid was consequently rubbed out and replaced with a cross.

The day continued in this vein until all dogs and humans had been accounted for. During these matching meetings staff had 'cooling off' times, to make a cup of tea or coffee and take a general break. Some had side conversations regarding the discussion in the room and continued to consider the matches that have been deliberated – sharing their personal opinions with each

other. At the end of the meetings, Monica informed us that if necessary the group could assess individual dogs again before finally deciding upon a match. Once a match was decided, staff then contacted the client and arranged a time to come to the GD Services office for the two to be introduced. It is at this time that staff observed the potential team, conducted a walk around the block and made plans for starting Class if everyone was happy with the result.

For the staff at GD Services the matching meeting is a day filled with anticipation and hope. The meeting represents the culmination of an immense amount of time, effort, love, patience, and persistence on the part of the staff and, most importantly, the desire to make the right decision and change lives for the better. Equally, there are just as many, if not more emotions involved for those clients awaiting the assistance they desire. It is a practice which presents the belief that these individual dogs and humans have idiosyncratic emotions, behaviours, and character as exhibited in both body language and external influences. Assessed and unresolved, the intrinsic *and* mutable attributes of clients and dogs allows for the GD Services staff to then apply both codified processes as well as their own experience and intuition to the information they have gathered in order to create a matched team: often to great success. Matching most certainly is a process which involves rational measurability, but at the essence of the practice is an immeasurable 'knowing' and power by staff members to make the right choice for human and animal.

## Class

Once the dogs and humans have been assessed and matched as 'capable' and 'appropriate', the pair are ready to enter what is referred to as Class training – or simply Class – and this is the final focus of this chapter. Class occurs for all qualified clients, guide dogs *and* AA dogs. Early into my 12 months of fieldwork, an AA dog and its parent and child handlers conducted Class but I did not have the opportunity to observe it. However, during the remainder of my data collection I was able to observe and participate in two Class scenarios with guide dogs. During this time the fully-trained dog and matched client learn to perform their roles, and work with each other for successful and safe mobility. The expectation by humans of the *dog* at this time was that he or

she would learn the nuances of their new handler (different from both their puppy-raiser and instructor) and to start acquiring new information about the routes and environments in which they will be working. The *human* also has to learn and adapt to differences at this time. For example, people who have been white cane users need to come to understand what a guide dog is capable of and how completely different their mobility will become. Whereas, pre-existing clients have to accept the differences between this new dog and their previous one/s – learning new techniques and ways while suspending (or at least attempting to quell) judgements, comparisons, and fears of change.[111] The process is riddled with the concepts of 'knowing' and 'unknowing' between the humans and animals, and is again framed by the contradiction between choice and control.

For both staff and clients, the desired outcome of Class is for the matched pair to become a graduated working team – assessed as an appropriate match and capable of working independently from the instructor. As a result of undergoing Class the team spend a substantial amount of time and determination discerning the new behaviours, attributes, and identities of each other. At this point of the human-animal relationship, the team is unformed. It is untested in practice – just a whiteboard abstraction. Yet for the purpose of becoming a safe working team, Class becomes a process of resolving some of the unknown variability and mutability of both dog and client in order to develop a balance of power and knowledge between human and animal. I will now discuss this process of Class: the phase of a dog's career post 'official training' and when a client begins to be mobile with their newly matched dog.

### *The Unknown to Known*

At its most basic, Class is a time for learning and establishing whether the team is compatible in movement, communication styles, and personalities with the hope that a bond can begin. The

[111] The staff at the GD Services department referred to this emotional change in humans going from one dog to another as 'second or third dog syndrome'. It is nearly always referred to in this way in published first person accounts by guide and other assistance animal users.

team spends a two to three-week period[112] learning to work together in a variety of real-life situations (specific to the client and their lifestyle) with the aim that the human and the animal are granted graduated status enabling autonomous successful mobility together. As with the assessment and matching processes, Class was an emotionally affective time where I observed clients and staff experience varied feelings, especially as client and dog learn to 'read' one another and 'move together'. I posit these feelings and experiences premise a 'knowing' of each other that develops into a working relationship where information and agency is shared and importantly, distributed. Human and animal working relationships are assessed in Class and progress to 'good' team work is expected. This is facilitated by a growing attachment and bonding which I describe in Chapter Five. Class is a time predominantly for information giving and receiving, at its core is an evolution from the unknown to known between human and animal.

On the two occasions that I observed Class in full, the newly matched dogs (Sophia and Hunter) were taken to the client's home on the Friday evening preceding the Monday morning start. This time, the instructor said, was explicitly for the client and the dog to begin getting to know each other. It was strongly encouraged in both these cases of Class that the clients not invite people to the home or encourage people to meet the dog. No one other than the client was to feed, play, or even touch the dog over the weekend. I was told by instructors that this time is for the team – for the client to get to know the 'basics' of their new dog and for the dog to begin to look to the client for their food, love, attention, and commands. With rudimentaries confirmed (such as guiding harness size), Class began after this weekend of 'one-on-one' time.

Not dissimilar to the dog's routine whilst in training, the client and dog team, along with the mobility instructor, embark on two walks per day (weather permitting) with an initial emphasis on the most common routes the client takes, such as to the local shops, work place, or church. As referred to in the previous chapter, the use of voice, handling the harness handle and lead, as

[112] There are two forms of Class training courses: domiciliary – which is run from the client's house and home area; and residential – which in Adelaide is run from an hotel in the north of the city.

well as guiding positions and turns were focussed on during these early walks in order to 'get the ball rolling'. For Olivia and Hunter the first route to master was walking the roads, crossing at the traffic lights, and navigating the carpark to Olivia's son's school classroom. For James and Sophia, one of the first routes learned was to the bus stop (about a kilometre away) that takes James to the city centre – a place he regularly travelled to.

It is at this point of Class that the mobility instructor helps the dog to work with a new handler and vice versa with the distribution of autonomy becoming more evident. In these early stages of Class the instructor at times has their own lead attached to the dog allowing for greater control and safety of the situation. The client, dog, and instructor walk together with the instructor physically intervening and verbally instructing when necessary. At this stage the instructor has the knowledge of the dog[113] – the client does not. The client is under the control of the instructor's knowledge and direction. The instructor leads and monitors the team through trial and error, helping to ensure safe travel on these (to be) regular routes.

At times during Class the instructor will sight-guide a client through routes without the dog, pointing out potential issues and requirements both for them and the dog with the aim of enabling the client to better understand the scenario in front of them. For example, it may be a familiar route for the client, yet new obstacles or layout may have occurred since they last walked the route with a cane or dog. With the benefit of the instructor's visual knowledge of the environment and the individual requirements of the trained dog, sight guiding the client through the route aims to help the client better understand and orientate themselves to the location. It also reduces any potential confusion for the dog during training – eventually allowing for the working team to then navigate the road/path/environment independently and safely thereafter. The client then has a better understanding of the route and what they themselves and the dog together will need to do. If (unlike Olivia and James) the client is new to having a guide dog it is

[113] In this GD School the person conducting/supervising Class was often the person who trained the dog.

at this time that ‘the basics’ are learnt: orientation, working positions,[114] kerb location and safe crossing, obstacle avoidance, speed control and the straight-line concept.[115]

As the number of routes/walks increases for the team, other situations such as steps, stairs, lifts, elevators and escalators are all incorporated into the training with the aim that the new team learn to continue to read and communicate with each other effectively. Walking in the right positions next to each other, accomplishing effective and safe kerb work and street crossings, obstacle avoidance, and speed control are all executed in the areas in which the client would normally attend, with the dog and the human learning one another’s manoeuvres, how they give and receive information to each other, and their expectations. Appropriate praise, reprimand, commands, play, and obedience are learned by the *client* on instruction from the Guide Dog Mobility Instructors; while tension, momentum, commands, indication of movement and style of reprimand are learned by the *dog*. It is at this time the individual personalities and capacities of the dog and human are observed and judged by staff members to establish whether a good or bad match has been decided upon. They have the power to determine the outcome, and clients are more than aware of this.

As the days of Class with Olivia and James went on and fluency between clients and dogs grew, the destinations and difficulty of walks changed to encompass more scenarios which the teams would encounter. The expectation by the GD Services staff was that the client and dog, having covered the basics successfully, could progress to more challenging environments: the hope being that a good and strong bond would develop between the matched dog and human as they experienced these situations and as time went on. For example, on day three of the third week of Class for Olivia and Hunter, we (the client-dog team, the instructor, and I) all headed to a large indoor shopping complex. I was told this was an environment which often distracted Hunter during his time in official training. The Guide Dog Mobility Instructor wanted to see whether

[114] Working positions refer to where to stand next to the dog and when.

[115] I observed no one who was receiving their first guide dog.

Hunter would present with the same behaviour now and how Olivia would deal with any such conduct.

I reflected in my fieldnotes,

> *As a group, we ascertain at which bus stop Olivia normally disembarks. She is a little confused as to her orientation because we drove in the car to the shopping centre (instead of actually taking the bus). After five minutes or so, we cannot work out which bus stop she normally alights from. Steph says we won't worry about that today, that we will instead catch the bus tomorrow and will work Hunter from the bus stop then. So for now Olivia is sight guided by Steph to where Hunter will 'take over' and guides Olivia into the shopping centre entrance. At about 50 feet away from the entrance doors, Steph describes where the doors are in relation to the team and verbally explains to Olivia what she physically has to do and avoid in order to work with Hunter safely to those doors. "You need to go forward, up the steps and then around to the left. Avoid the pole that is on your right past the doors." Olivia speaks to Hunter, "Ok. Forward boy. Find the way". Hunter has to manoeuvre around huge poles, cross a pedestrian crossing, and give enough space for Olivia and him to avoid the general public milling around in order to get Olivia through the doors of the shopping centre entrance. Steph tells me there is a lot more for Hunter to be distracted by in this environment. "There are large plastic advertisements boards right in his 'line', there are dozens upon dozens of people, there really isn't a straight line for him to follow. He always finds that a challenge." (Fieldnotes, 2011)*

At this stage Steph is telling Olivia where she should be going and what she should be doing regardless of the fact that Olivia knows this shopping centre very well and has 'worked' it before with her previous dog. Olivia expects this instruction. Steph tells Olivia to stop if the team comes into physical contact with anyone and make sure that Hunter is aware that something has happened – even if it is not his fault. She tells Olivia that it had been a bit of a problem during his training and she wants to see if he has 'come along' – meaning whether he has been trained well enough for it to have stopped. If Olivia comes into contact with someone on her right side, Steph tells her she needs to stop walking and touch her leg, she should pause and shift the harness a little bit (so that Hunter can feel the movement). Knowing that Olivia has previously used GDs and that she knows the difference, she explains, it is a "bit like a harness correction, but obviously

not for punishment."[116] Olivia needs to communicate to Hunter that "something has happened…that he needs to exercise caution." (Ibid.)

> *Steph asks Olivia to head towards a large shop at the other end of the mall and reminds Olivia that she needs to adapt her speed for Hunter to successfully work in such a busy environment. "You need to give him time to work out what people around you are doing. He needs to know by your change in normal pace to a slower one that he needs to take more caution" (*ibid.*). Steph and I follow behind the team and observe. Shortly after, Olivia comes into contact with a person on her right hand side. She pauses from walking and shifts the harness a bit, touches her right leg and then asks Hunter to continue on walking. Steph commented: "That was excellent. Hunter will soon get the idea that he needs to be more careful, and more importantly, understand that he needs to listen to Olivia for this type of communication from here on in."* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

It is expected that over time, this joint travel (where the team navigates around people and objects and thus reach a desired destination safely) will become more and more familiar, less and less of a challenge.

> *Steph and I continue to follow the team. Steph runs up to Olivia and asks her to stop walking. Olivia is expected simultaneously to command Hunter to stop walking verbally and by doing a handle correction. This is a command and not a request says the training manual. I watch as Olivia lifts her left hand up from the elbow and brings her hand firmly down and past the dog's body. She then relaxes her arm, still holding the harness handle and lead, gives Hunter a little rub on the top of his hip with her finger and tells him that he is a good boy.*
>
> *Steph asks Olivia if she knows where she is currently standing and Olivia correctly indicates that she is heading in the direction of Kmart, with the travellators just a bit further up in front. We thus continue walking through the mall. It was day three of week three of Class for this team and they had successfully entered a brand new, very busy situation/environment together and the instructor did not have to intervene with overly detailed instruction. The team were working well together. Steph told me she was comfortable with their level of efforts together and she was delighted in their progress. (Fieldnotes, 2011)*

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[116] Whereby the handler pulls the handle toward their own body and then back towards the body of the dog in a slight rocking motion – a technique the dog has learned in training as a reprimand. If a light strength is used by the handler it becomes a light reprimand for the dog. If a strong strength is used, it is a more forceful reprimand.

The all-important human-animal bond which GD Services expects to see developing during Class is instigated by this type of work of ascertaining each other's individual temperament and behaviours – 'coming-to-know' each other. As we can see from Olivia having to adapt to Hunter's toil in avoiding people in this environment, training in Class as a new team effectively involves Olivia learning and embracing the intricate workings of Hunter's manner and vice versa. Olivia has been here before. She has had several Class scenarios before this particular one with Hunter. She knows that she has no choice other than gradually learn to communicate to Hunter in a manner he will understand in order for him to take more care and to increase his initiative in certain settings. During this experience Hunter communicated to Olivia that he needs more support in this type of environment by being slower in his gait and taking longer to navigate around people. Olivia needed to recognise this and adapt herself to his abilities. Steph noted that he relaxed when Olivia relaxed. He was learning that Olivia expects him to "be on his game" (Fieldnotes, 2011) and work harder and smarter in these environments.

> *As they became more used to each other's manner of walking and information giving, Olivia and Hunter needed to communicate more overtly, yet together. In time, it is expected by staff and by Olivia that they will need to convey less and less their expectations and intentions in this explicit manner. Their bond will develop and allow for almost seamless communication and mobility. (Ibid.)*

Another example of newly matched client and dog coming to understand each other is James and Sophia. Unlike his previous dog, too much verbal and physical praise of Sophia's work would send her into 'anxious overdrive' and in turn distract her from whichever task was at hand. On day three of week one of their Class, the team, instructor and I walked to the bus stop and then back to the house. As my fieldnotes reflect, while we were following behind the team and watching them get to the bus stop we saw Sophia lose her concentration a little bit after getting too much praise from James. Steph tells me that he needs to establish what is 'too much' for Sophia in comparison to his other dogs:

> *We go inside* James' *home for a 'brush up' on the theory of guide work. The GDMI [Guide Dog Mobility Instructor] wants to talk to James specifically about the way*

*he verbally and physically communicates with Sophia, especially in regards to him praising her work. She goes on to tell James, "the most important thing to remember about your interactions with Sophia at this early stage of your relationship is your communication. Her response to vocals is quite complex. Her puppy-raiser was a very quiet and calm individual, and [because James himself is calm and considered], that is one of the reasons we thought she would be a good match for you, but still she would get exceedingly excited over the smallest things such as being groomed, playing with other dogs. She would mouth your hand, or bounce around like a maniac."*

*James responds: "The first dog that I ever had, the first two weeks I was walking around leading a dog, faking the dog leading me, until the penny dropped. It's similar 'cause I am used to the other style of dog [his previous dog Buster]. I mean I know what she's capable of, I am just getting used to her style I suppose – becoming one with her."* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Reading Sophia's temperament and behavioural analysis it stated that her excitability was high, particularly in the home environment. It said that she needed the ability to free-run or have structured play to minimise her excitability – to 'get it out'. Her excitement in regard to other dogs was considered positive-dog-distraction to a moderate level. She was slow to recover from this excitement and therefore James needed to learn his own perception of these behaviours and then give Sophia voice and lead corrections that she will understand as needing to get 'back on track'. More specifically, the Class assessment stated that when transferring from one handler to another, it was her home behaviour which most needed to be addressed, ensuring that she had a relaxed and calm handler to cope with her excitable behaviour in order to affect a good transition and working relationship.

GD Services believed that if Sophia were *not* to have someone who can act this way and respond to her fluctuating, but ongoing excitable characteristics, chances were that her work would suffer, her handler would become frustrated and the team's bond would fail to develop fittingly. It was explained to James that Sophia would get excited over very little because she is such a "firecracker" of a dog. It meant that he needed to learn to re-balance his tone, inflection, and touch to a lower and calmer level when giving her support (and especially praise), which was *not*

the case with his previous dog. Steph said, "Her pay cheque comes from your attention, but you need to make sure you don't overpay her" (ibid.).

Class does not pertain only to the training sessions undertaken with the GD Services instructor in tow; it incorporates the entire period of time before the team is graduated and working independently. It pertains to the progression of knowledge of each other and development of comfort and familiarity throughout this entire time: mornings, training sessions, evenings and night. Client and dog teams are sometimes asked to do homework such as obedience sessions, structured play,[117] or spend time grooming.[118] These homework tasks are to reiterate power structures, encourage confidence and familiarity between the two team actors. Class thus incorporates the entirety of time that the client and dog team spend together both before and after the day's training walks are completed, as well as with family members, visitors and other pets at the home.

In this time both the client and the dog establish the day-to-day habits of the other such as where they sleep, how and where they eat, and how other people engage with the dog and the human. It is a firmly held belief by client and organisation that coming to familiarise themselves with this information allows the human and animal to foster and reinforce a bond of affection and understanding. This accordingly strengthens a reciprocal respect and facilitates this key human-animal relationship.

Again, like all other stages of human and animal assessment, to gain mobility as a qualified working team the final decision and power lies with GD Services department. As they document and deliberate upon the progression of the team during the Class period, staff consider and assess how the dog and client learn to know each other, and also how they accept and adapt to the

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[117] Structured play is where either the dog or client is instructed to win or lose to encourage confidence or establish hierarchy.

[118] "The grooming procedure is an opportunity to bond with the dog and also expect some obedience and establishment of leadership" (Fieldnotes, 2011).

change in handler/dog. Most importantly the GD Services team want to see a progression of safe and effective teamwork as well as the beginnings of bonding between the pair in order to determine whether the match decided upon was correct. If correct, at the end of Class the team are then able to graduate. Of the two instances of Class I witnessed, both matched teams graduated successfully.

Class is officially finalised when the instructor reads 'The Contract' (see Appendix F) to the client, and it is signed by the client, the instructor, and a witness. Paramount to the contract is obligations and accountability of the humans to the dog and to the organisation's values. The association commits to paying for the dog's veterinary needs and follow-up care, while the client commits to paying for the dog's food only. Most interestingly, however, through its directions and expectations, this non-negotiable contract also reflects perhaps the most prominent lack of animal and client autonomy: the guide dog never ceases being the property of the organisation. The client does not own the dog. It is not their animal to do with as they see fit. As a result, the animal can be withdrawn, permanently removed and or retired at the will of the GD Services, representing the power and bureaucracy that this and other organisations have over their clients (Manderson et al. 2015). While the client agrees to take tenure they do not gain ownership of their new assistance animal. At this somewhat clinical point of contract signing, it becomes apparent that in the eyes of the organisation these dogs are a working, thinking tool which need to be controlled, operated, protected and cared for by their human handler, and also ultimately by them, the organisation. This aspect of ownership highlights another area of irresolvability in the human-animal relationship – that between client autonomy and dependence. This is a concept I will revisit in Chapter Seven when discussing the ongoing power of the association over clients and client emotions.

For the clients who choose to use an assistance dog as an aid for the effects of vision loss or autism, the contractual agreement to these specific terms can lead to the fostering of a culture of fear and secrecy. Certainly not *all* the clients I interviewed expressed fear, but indeed a small few expressed a level of secrecy regarding a number of their actions – knowing that GD Services

would not approve, regardless how 'harmless' these actions may be. This concept of sporadic concealment (such as letting the dog sleep on the bed or taking them to a noisy party) again reiterates the control and influence that GD Services have. And so, while the GD Services require the animal and human to bond in order to work well together (the premise of living an 'independent life') this contract and the subsequent overarching power that possession of the working dog brings, is a relentless threat – one that means the dog could be removed if one does not comply with the strict rules. The risk of having one's dog taken away (if observed not doing the 'right thing') is well understood by all clients. Regardless, with the contract signed, a final report is then completed by the instructor, a celebratory 'graduation lunch' is often enjoyed (arranged and paid for by the GD Services) and the team are fully graduated.

## Conclusion

The contradiction between inherent and mutable behaviours of clients and dogs underpin this chapter. These types of conduct from human and animal are framed by the power that is the GD Services department. Under the auspice of getting the best human-animal match, assessing and characterising humans and animals becomes another contradiction to human and animal autonomy and choice. Yet again however, without this contradiction the relationship between a trained dog and an actively mobile person would not transpire. I elucidated this contradiction by beginning the chapter with a description of the process that is required to become an assistance animal user: human assessment. I analysed the application process, the concept and means it takes to be considered 'suitable', and the incorporation of emotions at this time.

I continued the chapter with an equally in-depth discussion of animal assessment. I describe the type of individual canine identities that result from staff characterising dogs' attitudes, habits, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses which depict their (staff) beliefs that some aspects of dogs' behaviours are fixed and others fluctuate. Using the example of negative and positive anxiety I describe this contrast and the way it can impact a dog's focus and concentration. Believed to be both at times an innate aspect of the dog's genetic makeup, and at other times a feature which can be influenced by external environmental factors, anxiety is an emotion which exemplifies the

different configurations of who is in control of whom and when. By judging individual dog's characteristics, the trainers therefore ascribe individual identities to each dog, simultaneously moulding what traits they believe will develop a dog suitable for assistance work.

The final two elements of Chapter Four (matching and Class) continue to highlight the mutability and innate behaviour traits of human and animal in this setting. The practice of characterising and assessing in this way exemplifies the duality and irresolvability that underpins the human-animal relationship. The codified and rational aspect of the matching meeting – made possible by implicit discussion and intuitive, emotive staff judgements – illustrates the reoccurring tensions between choice and control, between agency and power. With the need and desire to be granted graduated status as a working team, the client's autonomy is yet again restricted because control and power sits firmly in the hands of staff decision-making, as is observed in the depiction of Class – yet the client chooses to be part of this process to ameliorate their disability. Class poses another duality between human handler and trained dog – the synchronised journey of embracing what is unknown and then the 'coming-to-know' of each other's individual temperament and behaviours. This 'coming-to-know' that occurs as a result of human and animal being matched underpins the experience of bonding between client and dog. Another mutable and fluid aspect of the human-animal relationship, bonding is not isolated to clients and *their* dogs alone however – there are numerous bonds that develop and diminish during the process of service provision and these are the focus of the following chapter.

# Chapter Five: Bond and Attachment between Humans and Animals

I asked a senior GD Services team member to tell me: what is "bond" between human and animal?

> *Bond. Hmm, well, it's not an easy one to describe! For us [the GD Services staff] it all comes down to whether the animal and human team function well together. Do they work effectively and safely together? We want to see that bond exists between a dog and a person as they develop a positive relationship of trust and confidence; through the act of physically working, the getting to and from places. Of course there are tangible, physical ways of starting and securing a bond: touching; feeding; grooming; using non-threatening behaviour; positive voice; positive reinforcement and establishing who is boss. But down the track, it is about mutual understanding, positive feelings, affection, discipline and consistency that are all essential to forming a permanent bond and a sound working partnership - which for us is imperative. Each dog and each person grow to respect and become comfortable with the other, they learn to anticipate the other's behaviours and needs. They connect as a result of coming to 'know' one another.*
>
> *Obviously different people experience bond in their own way. The puppy and the puppy-raiser have a bond of their own, but then that changes as the dog is 'handed over' (to another volunteer, the home-boarder). The dog has a new boss,[119] a new home and a designated GD Services instructor which it also bonds with while it learns to do the job. Finally, the bond morphs again to exist between the working dog and the client. Each of these bonds is a connection between one person and one dog and is definitely individual – unique to that team. Above all, I would suppose you would say it is a feeling that is 'two way'. Once a dog has been matched to a client, both members of the team have to want that bond to happen and they each have to strive for it. Then years down the track, you see the payoff of a solid bond with consistent, successful orientation and mobility.* (Fieldnotes, 2015 emphasis mine.)

The concept that bond is developed by time progression, physical and emotional familiarity, and attachment are all taken-for-granted notions in this setting. It is understood that at the most basic level, a human and dog must engage with one another in order for a connection and relationship

[119] See Michalko (1999:68) for further discussion of bond developing from social hierarchy between dogs and humans.

to occur at all. Then with interactions such as general and specific obedience sessions, playing, socialisation, feeding, grooming, and other touching, a relationship of respect, trust, control, routine, and boundaries, a bond between human and animal evidently follows. Bond does not just eventuate in this setting; it is regularly articulated as something the team has to work towards and accommodate.

## Introduction

Specifically for the staff and clients of the association it is explicitly understood that (so long as an appropriate match has been made between a dog and person) a bond and relationship will naturally grow and strengthen if you have respect for, patience with, and support between handler and dog. Yet as I will come to describe, although encouraged and planned, bond is something which cannot be controlled by policy or practice. However, by adhering to the association's procedures and practices of puppy-raising, training, and working, on the whole, one will routinely see an 'optimal' relationship established. Most importantly to note is that bond is not a stagnant construct – dogs at various stages of animal career must shift their bond and 'look to' different people for food, affection, fun, shelter, and training. They learn to experience differently their training practices and their guiding work and do so, developing bonds with different volunteers, trainers, and clients. They decipher who feeds them, what is expected of them, how they are to engage with the environment around them. They learn to trust and gain confidence with one handler and when circumstances are dictated to change, it is expected that the dog will transfer their bond to another person.

Humans too have to shift and change their physical and emotive bonds to the dogs they encounter. Puppy-raisers (and other pup-volunteers), trainers and clients all experience a bonding process with the different dogs they encounter. Some puppy-raisers took home another eight-week-old pup (more or less) as soon as they 'handed-over' the one they had been raising; Others (like myself) puppy-raised once only. GD Services trainers juggled getting to know numerous dogs at the same time and regularly built different relationships in order to teach the animal and gather knowledge for matching meetings, Class and work. Clients experience a different bond with each

dog that they learn to walk with, and, as they are the human that has the longest relationship duration with a dog I ethnographically analyse client-dog bonds as an example in this chapter. Therefore, while roles and life occurrences change and develop, so too does attachment and bond. While the human and animal dynamics shift in this setting so too does the bond, but most importantly, it is always present – whether it is considered changing, good or bad.

Considered present when the client/dog team function in a safe and effective manner, ultimately, 'good' bond in this setting is reciprocity and having knowledge of the other; a form of cross-species embodied behaviour and communication – something which is denoted in the academic literature on this topic also: Brown (2007:336, 2004); McFarland and Hediger (2009a); Peretti (1990); Sanders (2007, 2003); Smuts (2008:136-146); Solomon (2010:149); and Thompson (2010). In this chapter I will argue that bond between a human and an animal is an interdependent, two-way form of engagement consisting of common goals and embodied communication. Bond is variable, it shifts and evolves between numerous people and changes over time as each human-dog relationship develops and ends. Bond becomes a basis for and constituent of the human-animal relationship.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptual understandings of the human-animal bond in academic literature, drawing upon attachment theory as a framework. I describe what constitutes bond, stating that it is 'two-way' and inter-dependent between human and animal. For people in this context, bond is a physical and emotional sensory exchange of understanding and information as is also illustrated in the literature. Frequently referring to the GD Services depiction and understanding of bond, this chapter will go on to discuss the beginnings of bond between Olivia (a client), Steph (a trainer), and Hunter (a newly trained guide dog).

I refer to the emotions and physical aspects of bonding involved in Class which sees the trainer relinquish an established bond, the clients develop a new bond, and the dog shifting its bond between the two. This supports the greater argument of the chapter that bond is both a 'coming-to-know' of each other, and is something which transforms between dog and human: it is fluid. I

then return to client Olivia, and highlight the human-animal bond as a physical, emotional, and lengthy process of 'coming-to-know' and trusting each other that is shaped by the discipline and surveillance of the GD Services. I contribute to a gap in the literature on this topic by arguing that bond not only *is*, but *has* to be flexible and transforming – it cannot be controlled nor instructed by any one individual and it does not always develop as expected. I begin now by examining the academic literature regarding human-animal bond.

## Academic Literature of Human-Animal Bonds

Since Lorenz and Levinson first attributed the term bond to their work on human-animal relationships in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many theoretical discussions have centred on the topic,[120] yet few proffer a specific definition of it. The American Veterinary Medical Association Committee characterises the human-animal bond as a;

> mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviours that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, other animals and the environment. (American Veterinary Medical Association Committee 1998)

This definition fits well alongside the wide-ranging academic literature on the topic, with qualitative and quantitative material from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychiatry, psychology, social work, gerontology, animal behaviour, veterinary science, and ethology frequently contributing to the human-animal bond discussions. Three things become immediately apparent when exploring this literature. First, the terms bond, attachment, and relationship appear to be synonymous throughout. Second, the bond between humans and animals is thought of as special, magical, and enchanting for many people – and it is discussed as stable and solid rather than in terms of transferrable as I will discuss below. Third there is no *one* theory which drives the discussion regarding human-animal bond (Brown 2004; Kidd & Kidd

[120] See Hines (2003) for a comprehensive synopsis.

1987), however psychiatry's attachment theory is a widely used theoretical framework used by many disciplines to consider the matter and is appropriate here also.

When considering the myriad of literature pertaining to bond between humans and animals, more often than not the terms bond, attachment, and relationship become one and the same. If it is not directly articulated, it is often implied. Many academic works use the word bond in the title yet use the word only sparingly throughout the text, instead using the terms relationship or attachment. This synonymic manner of writing about the topic is, I believe, indicative of the fact that bond between human and animal can be emotive and kaleidoscopic. A substantial amount of this literature discusses the *outcomes* of bond, yet rarely if ever describes its variability; instead it describes what constitutes bond metonymically and implies that relationship and attachment behaviours are bond.

The literature denotes bond between a human and an animal as an interdependent two-way form of engagement consisting of common goals and mutual future (Brown 2004; Peretti 1990; Sanders 2003). It has been argued that bond is culturally-driven, symbolic in meaning, and comprises of four elements – safety, intimacy, kinship, and constancy (Katcher 1983). It is considered symbiotic, intimate, and subjective in nature (Katcher & Beck 1983:110-133; Putney 2013; Sanders 2003) and is premised on emotions, feelings, behaviours and communication. Bond is fundamentally reciprocal, as well as complex and varied (Netting, Wilson & New 1987; Risley-Curtiss et al. 2006:438). Being bonded is depicted as having a complex and variable relationship, and similar to human-to-human bonds, it differs with variables such as gender, ethnicity, and social class, thus resulting in a powerful connection influenced by cultural norms and other cultural and personal, individual variables (Brown 2004:79; Risley-Curtiss et al. 2006:434; Wilson & Netting 1987).[121] Bond "is a special and unique relationship," says Brown in her paper *The Human Animal Bond and Self Psychology* (2004), "built on shared experiences, which is not easy to replace" (Brown 2004:77). In 2007, through her qualitative research

[121] See also Segal, 1995 for an in-depth discussion of attachment regarding Latino, African American, Asian and cultural 'other's' adolescents and their pets.

(comprising one-hour interviews with companion animal owners) Brown established that bond is an "intense, non-verbal *communication* with their animals which gave them a feeling of oneness" (Brown 2007:336). The human emotions that underscore these experiences and relationships are therefore a strong feature of human-animal bonding in the literature.

*Attachment Theory as a Framework for the Human-Animal Bond*

When discussing the human-animal bond in relation to dogs specifically, the literature examines the human species alongside their *canis familiaris* counterpart, be it: a pet; a companion animal; an assistance dog; a therapy dog; a service dog; a psychiatric service dog; emotional support dogs; guide dogs; police dogs; AA dogs; hearing dogs; military dogs; shelter dogs and more. Regardless of the title given to the dog in question however, what sweeps across the literature is that attachment theory can be useful for understanding human-animal bonds (Topál et al. 1998).[122] "[E]vidence suggest[s] that the dog-human affection bond can be characterised as an attachment: [that] dogs show towards their owner attachment behaviours which closely resemble those reported in human infants and chimpanzees" (Fallani, Previde & Valsecchi 2006:242).

Originally a theory to establish the degree and type of attachment which exists between a parent and their child (Bowlby 1973), attachment theory has evolved to include humans and other species. Considered a construction which denotes a one-to-one relationship with a particular other, attachment is said to manifests itself in behaviours – such as those described in the discussion of assessment and Class in Chapter Four. Therefore, when applying this theory to the human-animal bond literature, Ainsworth & Wittig's (1970) Strange Situation test[123] is replicated many times as it fittingly offers empirical results of human's attachment to animals (Endenburg

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[122] See also: Siniscalchi (2013); Beck & Madresh (2008); Crawford et al. (2006); Prato-Previde et al. (2003); Brown & Katcher (2001); Serpell (1996); Rynearson (1978).

[123] A laboratory test where attachment measures of children to parents are assessed by observing reactional behaviours of proximity seeking, fearfulness, and playfulness to identify the child as expressing one of four levels of attachment: secure; anxious-ambivalent; anxious-secure; or disorganised/disorientated (Ainsworth et al. 2014). See also the Companion Animal Bonding Scale (CABS), the Pet Attachment Survey (PAS), or the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS) for other qualitative scales for determining attachment between humans and animals (Crawford, Worsham & Swinehart 2006:100).

1995; Kurdek 2008; Prato-Previde, Fallani & Valsecchi 2006; Scott 1992; Siniscalchi 2013; Voith 1985), and of animals' attachment to humans (Fallani, Previde & Valsecchi 2006; Prato-Previde et al. 2003; Topál et al. 1998), and at times there are discussions of both (Crawford, Worsham & Swinehart 2006; Rynearson 1978). These human-animal attachments presume the ability to discriminate and respond differentially to: the object of attachment; a preference for the attachment figure; and a response to separation from and reunion with the attachment figure that is distinct from responses to others (Topál et al. 1998) This hints to the 'embodied communication' that enables a good bond in this context that I will discuss further in the chapter. What is explicit however is that forming and strengthening bond is gradual. It takes time and synergism. It is believed that different people have different bonds with different dogs and vice versa. It is a feeling and experience which shifts, changes, and evolves but inevitably, the longer one person and one dog are in a team together the stronger and deeper the bond and relationship becomes.

Drawing upon Wickler (1976) and Cohen (1974), Topál et al. (1998) summed up attachment between dogs and humans as an "affectional relationship between two individuals that is specific in its focus and endures over time. This relationship is based on dependency between individuals that becomes evident through behavioural preferences" (Topál et al. 1998:219). This is harmonious with the thinking of GD Association staff, clients and volunteers. That said, for a topic as extensive as bond between humans and animals, attachment theory is one which needs to be applied wisely. "Although attachment theory may provide an empirically supported construct for conceptualizing human-animal interaction, it might lead to an overtly determined and inflexible conceptualization that can include judgements about what is and is not psychopathological or otherwise unhealthy" (Putney 2013:69).

## The Beginnings of Bond

Drawing predominantly upon Bowlby's seminal work regarding child-parent bonding in 1973, Archer (1996) argues that if the dog is appealing and makes their owners feel comfortable, a "train of interactions" is aroused to initiate a bond (Archer, 1996: 251). Development of the human-

animal bond it appears, begins with *being* together in one another's company with reciprocal interactions and mutually satisfying forms of visual, auditory, and sensual communication (ibid.). This communication behaviour, as well as "enjoyment of walks, loyalty and affection, welcoming behaviour, attentiveness, expressiveness and sensitivity" (Serpell, 1983: 62) are "key" for unlocking what constitutes the Human-animal bond (ibid.). Add to this, Walsh's opinion (2009a) that many individuals "experience a profound intimacy in this bond, enhanced through touch, nonverbal communication, and sensory attunement to feeling states" (ibid: 471) and one builds an understanding of bond comprised of consistent, unconditional, and non-judgemental physical and emotional joint interactions.[124] With sensory exchange between dog and human such as this encouraged (and even required for the human-animal relationship in my fieldsite) it would appear that the academic discourse regarding the building of bond marries to the actions and expectations of my informants.

Again, as read in the literature and throughout the fieldwork period aspects such as information exchange, joint goals, routine (Sanders 2003), and familiarity (Fallani, Previde & Valsecchi 2006; Morris, Knight & Lesley 2012; Sanders 2003) are also said to contribute to the construction and maintenance of bond, just as having roles and responsibilities is considered an important element. In Australian society in general, there are countless instances where dogs have responsibilities imposed upon them to guard (buildings), guide (people), use and pick up objects, detect (drugs/fruit/money), or round up (cattle), whereas the human in these instances has responsibility and commitment in the role of pack leader, care giver, and to understand and facilitate their social and behavioural needs. The human handler has the same role in this setting also. The above features of bond, together with the use of physical senses (both human and animal) such as described in Chapter Three become fundamental to formation and structure of a bond and thus the human-animal relationship.[125] The senses which allow for cuddling, kissing,

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[124] See also Putney (2013), Walsh (2009a), Kurdek (2008), Risley-Curtiss et al. (2006).

[125] Again as cited in the literature (Anderson, PE 2008a:18-43).

general body contact and "mutual gazing" (Kurdek 2008:248) and "speaking for"[126] (Sanders 2003) are key and important features of a bonded relationship.

Before I go on to discuss the beginnings of bond more specifically, it is necessary to highlight the importance of 'the gaze' (Foucault 1973). Since Foucault's prominent work *The Birth of The Clinic* (ibid.) much has been written about human to human gaze, but between *canis familiaris* and humans specifically it "is widely known that gaze plays an essential role in communicative interactions" (Barrera, Mustaca & Bentosela 2011: 727). It can help establish location of food sources and toys (Agnetta, Hare & Tomasello 2000; Gaunet 2008; Hare, Brian & Tomasello 1999; Soproni et al. 2001), determine potential predators and conflict (Miklósi et al. 2000), and enable understanding of numerous human-given cues (Cooper et al. 2003; Hare, B 2004). There are several forms of gazing that occur in this setting: between trainer, handler, puppy raiser, family members and the dog; between dogs themselves; and between members of the public and the active working and training teams. As many clients have residual vision, there is an opportunity also for reciprocal gaze between a client with vision impairment and their dog. In relation to my fieldwork, three publications are significant.

Scandurra et al. (2015) investigated the impact that the gaze has upon guide dog training, "evaluating possible behavioural differences between guide dogs living in a kennel and interacting with a trainer and those living in a house and interacting with a blind person and their family" (ibid.: 937). They found that "guide dogs' gazing towards humans is favoured by living in close proximity with people and by interacting with them" (ibid.: 943). Scandurra et al.'s work highlights that gazing between humans and these dogs whilst being raised, trained and working is impacted by being physically close to one another; something which is important to bond between the two (a point I will highlight further in this chapter).

[126] The most simple way to explain what 'speaking for' an animal is; a human, upon seeing a dog yawn would speak the thoughts or scenario of what *they* think the dog feels, such as, 'Oh I am so tired!' or 'Oh he is such tired boy'. It is a grammatical first or third person description of the dog's perspective – via the understanding of the human.

Ittyerah and Gaunet (2009) compared guide dogs of blind owners with pet dogs of sighted owners "to determine if dogs are affected by the visual status of their owners, by comparing the responses of pet dogs of sighted owners and guide dogs of blind owners to human given cues" (ibid: 258). They found that "the two groups of dogs do not differ from each other in response to gestures of point, point and gaze, gaze and control cues" (ibid.:262). This paper follows Gaunet's previous work (2008) which analysed "whether the interactive modalities of guide dogs and pet dogs differ when they interact with their blind, and sighted owners, respectively" (ibid.: 475) and "whether, as a consequence, dogs have somehow set up a way to trigger their owner's attention when the owner is blind" (ibid.: 476).

She established that guide dogs were "not attuned to the non-visual status of their owner" (ibid.: 482) and concluded that "guide dogs did not detect that their owner could not see (them), but that [they] have motivated their interactive behaviours slightly, to adjust to their owners (ibid.). Therefore, as both sets of dogs did not differ from their response to either sighted or vision impaired handlers one can conclude that there are "no differences between guide and pet dogs in the understanding of their owner's state of visual attention" (Ittyerah and Gaunet (2009: 262). However, while the concept of the gaze can relate to those in my fieldsite and is certainly worthy of further research, what is significant for this thesis is that gazing in this setting was not something that was considered as significant by my informants. It was never raised as an issue or idea to me by a client[127] and certainly not considered as fundamental to training, working, living or bonding with these specific dogs. I will therefore return to the beginnings of bond in this setting.

In Michalko's works (1998, 1999) the human and guide dog bond is learned and developed by communication, anticipating behaviours and responses, and is influenced greatly by feelings of devotion, mutual respect or as Zee states, "profound affection and continual interdependence"

[127] Gaze between human and animal was actually only ever mentioned once during my twelve months of fieldwork. During one puppy-raising training session myself and several other puppy-raisers were conducting public transport training. The puppy-raising trainer told us that we should practice giving commands to our dogs when not looking at them because the clients do not have vision (Fieldnotes, 2010). This comment was not only contradictory (many clients still have vision), it was also not further explained or elaborated upon.

(Zee 1983:472). Although overtly *articulated* as subscribing to the concepts of the likes of Michalko and Zee, *this* GD Association does not explicitly consider the sharing of emotions between human and animal in policy making and performance. Bond is instead described as having good communication, knowing each other very well, being really in tune with each other and working together as a great team. Yet the emotional aspects are somewhat submerged or implicit. Humans and animals becoming bonded is an embedded assumption here, but the emotions that support bonds to exist in this context are not unpacked nor explicitly considered during service provision.[128] While the GD Association discourse indicates bond to be both a platform for and constitutive aspect of the human-animal relationship, the fact is that the emotions involved are considered only subliminally. This indicates a focus upon the end result – the working dog as a tool.

As was read in the vignette that opened this chapter, it is staunchly understood by staff at the GD Services that for a client with a vision impairment, it is when their safety and independence in mobility and travel is secure that a reciprocal 'good' bond is present within the human-animal relationship. Premised upon physical and emotional 'knowing', satisfaction for the dog (by having purpose in life through work) and satisfaction for the client (by their increased "freedom") is when you know the team is bonded and working well. "When they read and know each other properly and the dog becomes invaluable to the person's day-to-day existence is when they have a good bond" (Fieldnotes 2014). I draw upon Olivia and Hunter's experience of Class to describe this 'coming-to-know' each other and introduce fluidity as the concept that shapes and influences bond.

### *'Coming-to-know'*

On Friday 18th of March 2011 Steph, one of the Guide Dog Mobility Instructors, left newly trained Hunter at Olivia's house for the two of them to spend all weekend "beginning to bond" (Fieldnotes, 2011). On the following Monday morning Steph and I arrived at Olivia's house

[128] This will be the main subject of Chapter Seven.

together. As described in the previous chapter, Olivia, (a client who had been waiting to be matched with a new dog) had already been a guide dog user for many years. The three of us sat in Olivia's lounge as Steph "restrained" herself from touching Hunter whilst he bounced with excitement at the sight of her presence. At this point he was ignoring Olivia and myself. Steph had been boarding and training Hunter for the previous few months and she told me prior to arriving that she really liked him. "He's probably my favourite of all the working dogs at the moment" (Fieldnotes, 2011). She told me she still had a really strong bond with him, having effectively lived and worked with him for several months. She said that she really wanted to pat him, but said to me "I can't, I won't even look at him [because] he needs to learn that Olivia is now his handler – not me – and *they* need to bond now" (ibid.). It was made obvious that if Steph touched him and gave him attention then this would hinder Hunter bonding to Olivia. It was becoming apparent that familiarity and personal discipline were drivers of bonding.

Steph asked about their weekend together. Olivia told us that she was a bit concerned because Hunter was a bit "standoffish", but that "he did end up following me everywhere which was nice" (ibid.). Steph told us that Hunter wanting to be in Olivia's presence all the time was a sign of the bonding process getting underway and then asked Olivia how her children (primarily her youngest) coped with him (Hunter) over the weekend.

> *Well, Jimmy knows that he isn't allowed to have any interaction with him for at least the first couple of months. But getting a child to actually follow through with that is difficult. So I am forever on his back saying, "Don't talk to him! Don't touch him."* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Meanwhile, during the conversation Hunter was still trying to get Steph's attention by bringing her toys to initiate play and putting his head on her lap, staring up at her. One-on-one physical interactions between dog and person were clearly related to the ability and speed of bonding between human and animal at this point.

Referring to her own experience of bonding with Hunter, Steph said, "Hunter doesn't understand why I'm ignoring him. He's like, [impersonating Hunter's thoughts] 'what are you doing?'" Steph

told us that this was standard behaviour for Hunter, “he takes a while to bond to you, to get that attachment, but when he does, you’ve got him!” Steph suggested that Olivia put Hunter ‘on lead’ when Jimmy is around her and the dog.

> *By keeping Hunter physically close to you, it will help build the bond between the two of you; help build that respect. It has to be about the two of you if that bond is going to grow. If Hunter is on the lead you can control both Jimmy and Hunter, making sure that you are the only one engaging with him [the dog].* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Steph then told me that ensuring this bond begins and develops between the two members of the team is really important and that this is premised upon knowing each other and communicating well. She explained that the level of bond will eventually equate to how well the team works, implying that the stronger the bond, the better the working relationship between human and animal.

Emotions were not the focus at this time, instead communication and ‘coming-to-know’ each other was. The way Steph felt about ‘having’ to ignore her favourite dog, or the experience of seeing someone else take responsibility for the dog she had trained and cared for were not feelings or thoughts that were discussed. Equally, Olivia’s emotions about the situation were not given a prominence either. Embarking upon Class, having a new dog, keeping a retired dog, her past experiences of Class – none of these experiences were focussed upon to any special degree, nor considered as a highly important issue that needed to be directly addressed. As Olivia began the mechanics of developing a new bond with a new animal through Class and home life, overall attention was upon: Olivia’s and Hunter communicating; moving well together with the aim to gain a level of common understanding of movement and expectation; and ultimately seeing Hunter become Olivia’s best option for being guided. The purpose of GD Services at this time was to ensure Hunter functioned as the appropriate tool for Olivia; human emotions were not

highlighted even though the impact that Hunter had on Olivia's emotions would affect the overarching way she felt about her existence as a person with vision impairment.

My fieldnotes describe when we embarked on the first of two walks for the day. Due to the strong bond developed between Hunter and herself, Steph the trainer told me that she was not verbally engaging with the new team as she might normally do in Class because it would distract Hunter's attention from Olivia – something that would hinder bonding. It was expected by all involved that for Olivia and Hunter to form a bond, both members of the newly matched team need to learn to read the information about the other's individual way of being whilst on walks, as described in Chapter Four. As the day went on, I asked Olivia to tell me about the bond that she still maintained with Bella, her now retired guide dog which she had chosen to retain living with her while she embarked on the new relationship with Hunter.

> *The bond is the same between a person and their retired guide dog. The roles of the dog may change but the bond is the same. Oh yes, it is still a strong bond but she's probably a little bit more stubborn now. [The retired dogs] are like, "You know what, I'm retired now, I am going to do exactly what I want to do". And I suppose you probably are not as strict on them either. I mean you sort of pamper them more and let the obedience ease off. I mean she worked eight hard years for me so she deserves it. You can treat them more often unlike when you have a dog working or in training. You relax that strictness about it all. I mean out of all of my dogs I just couldn't part with her*. (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Olivia turns to Steph and said, "Don't ask me to get rid of her Steph, because Kim wanted me to do it, and she pushed and pushed and pushed. But I won't be getting rid of her. Hunter will just have to work out his place in the family, and it's behind her". Olivia told me several times about her fierce connection to Bella and her fear for what was to come with Hunter. She expressed strong emotions about the experience of bonding with a new dog and undergoing Class. Regardless of these emotions, the three of us got out of the car and did a 'residential block walk'; Steph and I trailed behind the two of them. For all intents and purposes, the walk was considered successful. Olivia gave Hunter reassurance at the right times and Hunter guided Olivia around the street without incident. We finished with Steph and Olivia both very happy with the team's efforts

and excitement for the following walk. There was a genuine hope and expectation that before long, Hunter and Olivia will be working with each other in a much more succinct way. Soon they would know each other "inside out and back to front" (ibid.).

Steph asks Olivia to do some grooming and obedience when they get home in order for Olivia to cement Hunter's attention upon her as his new handler. I refer to the conversation in my fieldnotes;

> *I'd ask him to do that twice a day every day for a few minutes...it will help start that bond and respect... as well as doing some structured play. Sometimes you win, sometimes he wins. 'Cause all these things will help him become familiar with you and the home and because at the moment it's a new environment [the house], really stimulating and he's not really paying that much attention to you. We need to get his focus on you and for you to expect that of him. I'd have him on lead or on tether all the time to reinforce that control.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

While this quote raises a link between trust, love, dominance and dependence between humans and animals, as well as the concept of human control over behaviours and training practices (a vast area of theoretical consideration[129]), for the purposes of this thesis, what emerges as prominent from this quote is the importance of getting to know one another and the need for hierarchy to be established in the house in order to develop the *right sort* of bond for a successful working relationship here – it is expected that Olivia demonstrate her agency to the dog at this time.

With this, Olivia and Hunter returned home having completed their first day of Class. This day of training between Steph, Olivia, and Hunter depicts various aspects and examples of the human-animal bond in this setting. Specifically, I depict emotions and the concept of 'coming to know' as the premise of bonding between Olivia and her dog, Hunter. I also argue that the degree of bond

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[129] See Ingold (1994a), Armstrong (2010) and Greenebaum (2010) for comprehensive anthropological discussions regarding these expansive themes and Kerepesi et al (Kerepesi et al. 2005) in *Behavioural Processes* for an ethological and psychological insight.

varies – bond between trainer Steph and Hunter was long-standing at this point (yet diminishing in strength), whereas the bond between client Olivia and Hunter was new (and increasing). The bond between Jimmy, Olivia's youngest son, and Hunter is non-existent as both are controlled from engaging with the other (Jimmy is told, Hunter is on the lead). My bond is minimal as I do not engage physically or emotionally with Hunter at all.

We first encounter Steph's bond with Hunter by means of his trusting, excited, and "welcoming behaviour" (Serpell 1983:62), as well as his attempts at play and his overall attention seeking behaviour. We see anthropomorphic familiarity between the two when Steph verbally speaks what she believes to be Hunter's thoughts; she explains his behaviour (putting his nose in her lap, bringing her toys) and says that he does not understand why she is not engaging with him. This is not egomorphic engagement. It is specifically anthropomorphic because it is rooted in Steph's taken-for-granted assumptions of how these dogs act, it obscures any other inter-subjectivity that exists between Olivia and Hunter, and is not rooted in perception. Steph does not think that Hunter is 'like her' (as a human) she is attributing the human-like quality of confusion to Hunter as by doing so maintains the expected events of the matching/working scenario.

Steph is maintaining a hierarchy in the situation here. She is in control of herself and Hunter (as their bond alters or breaks), she is maintaining and managing the GD Services 'rules' (which sees the development of bond between Olivia and Hunter) and she is maintaining control over Hunter's interactions. The connection between Hunter and Steph is referred to as the result of their reciprocal roles (Hunter as a dog in training and Steph as his trainer and caregiver). Steph explains that their bond has already been developed due to their previous physical and emotional interactions with each other. She has enjoyed her role as Hunter's trainer – liking the way he works as well as feeling pride in his success in the official training programme.

However, as Steph relinquishes her time and responsibilities as Hunter's trainer, the GD Services team expect her physical bond with Hunter to stop, her emotional bond with him to at least diminish, and then be able to transfer her bond from Hunter to another dog in training. She now

passes all the information and knowledge that she has of him to Olivia to help them connect. Instead of Olivia maintaining her (one and only) bond with now retired dog Bella, she is expected to develop a new bond with Hunter through the explicit processes of Class and the implicit, unstructured engaging of emotions. As human and animal gradually come to know each other's variables, their bond and relationship prosper.[130] Steph the trainer consequently stated to me that she needed to detach emotionally and physically from him in order for Olivia and Hunter to develop *their* specific bond. It is this aspect of transference or interchangeability of bond which is missing from the anthropological literature. This setting exemplifies bond and the consequent human-animal relationship as mutable, shifting, and indefinite. It is present in numerous ways, with different dogs and different humans – and to varying degrees – yet is not represented in the anthropological literature in this manner – something I discuss further below.

The above ethnographic material of Olivia and Hunter beginning Class and coming-to-know each other depicts the common understandings of bond in this setting. It also implies the differing gradations of bond between humans and dogs. At this stage, both women 'know' that because Steph has spent more time with Hunter she therefore has a stronger bond with him. Therefore, as a result of Class, there is a purposeful, concentrated change in physical and emotional interactions between both women and the dog. The humans here want, need, and expect to observe a change in Hunter too: for him to transfer his bond from one handler to another – from Steph the trainer to Olivia the client. By Steph eliminating her sensory engagement with Hunter,[131] it is hoped by the GD Services and by the client that a good match has been decided

[130] Variables comprise of both the dog's and the human's individual personality and behaviour traits as well as the experiences that the team have whilst training, working, and living. All these aspects will affect the bond which occurs.

[131] These include not talking, touching, or looking at him. Not training him whilst on duty, not loving him when off duty.

upon, that the trainer/dog bond will eventually arrest and in its place a good client/dog bond and relationship will grow.

With Hunter physically dependent upon Olivia for food, shelter, love, and exercise, the new team were well and truly ‘coming-to-know’ each other. They became familiar with each other’s routine, personalities, and for Hunter specifically, his new environment and handler. Initially “standoffish” due to uncertainty, as the first weekend drew on, Hunter followed Olivia around the house, thus apparently indicating the onset of trust and attachment. It was articulated by GD Services staff that these early days in the home see interactions that allow for each to get to know the other such as learning each other’s temperaments, moods, concentration levels as well as where everyone sleeps, where they eat and whether the dog is welcome/accepted in those spaces. As told to do, Olivia purposefully plays with Hunter and conducts obedience training in order to establish herself as his pack leader. It is believed that these actions give the dog confidence of his new status in the new household. With the commencement of Class, the new team learns to listen to and feel each other’s verbal and non-verbal information sharing. By coming-to-know these individual traits, the two learn to communicate and understand each other in a working and emotional capacity. The aim is to share what is described as the common goals of working together happily with good communication and trust.

What is apparent in these specific citations and the breadth of academic literature is that it is believed being bonded to an animal brings about love, loyalty, devotion, and companionship – for both dog and human. Sociologist Michalko offers a phenomenological account of the bond he had with his GD Smokie in *The Two in One. Walking with Smokie, Walking with Blindness* (1999), emphasising the symbiotic nature and respect in a bonded team. Fallani et al. (2006) discuss bond and attachment specifically to guide dog puppies and their various/changing handlers. Published in Anthrozoös, Nicholson et al. (1995) discuss the emotion of grief as a result of the end of the human-guide dog bond. Veterinary scientist Lloyd (2004) explores the importance of bond in relation to the success of being matched and working with a guide dog in New Zealand and

historian Putnam describes the extraordinary bond experienced by numerous guide dog users in his book *Love in the Lead* (1997), focusing on individuality, communication, and love.

These concepts in the literature are congruent with my fieldnotes and the beliefs held by staff and clients of the GD Association. Rewarding feelings for both human and animal when bonding are described as a sense of calm, balance, harmony, comfort, and closeness (Fieldnotes, 2012). See also: Walsh (2009a:471); Beck & Katcher (1996:111). Bond between humans and animals is a connectedness; a unity if you will, which is transferable, evolving, and is maintained through behaviours such as engagement of the senses, meeting each other's needs, communication, love, and trust. The analysis of this literature and the vignette of Olivia and Hunter's first day of Class is thus a suitable platform to discuss the fluidity of the human-animal bond. The changing bonds between humans and dogs in this setting is perhaps best explored in the same order as the way dogs encounter them – first with their puppy-raiser and other volunteers, then with the GD Services staff members and then with their client handler.

## Interchangeability

### *Puppy-Raisers (and other Volunteers)*

As already mentioned, puppy-raisers usually receive their pup when they are a mere eight weeks old. Behind clients, puppy-raisers spend the most time with a dog. They come to know the animal's temperament, skills and weaknesses. They teach them obedience and other social interactions, groom, feed, and love them, experiencing the above-mentioned time progression, and the physical and emotional familiarity that comes from experiencing the dog by their side all the time. For myself personally, I felt truly emotionally and physically bonded to Jarvis when he was physically *not* by my side. I was so accustomed to having his presence next to me, anticipating his behaviours, and incorporating his needs into my choices, that it was when he was *not* by my left leg that I felt the strength of our connection and bond. Yet, as planned the time came when I provided all the information I had about Jarvis to GD Services staff and handed him over to go

and live with a home-boarding volunteer. Our physical bond arrested. My home was no longer his.

Sometimes (as was my case) puppy-raisers chose not to have another pup and therefore do not develop another animal relationship in this context. Often however, the case is that a puppy-raiser will take another eight-week old pup and start the puppy-raising process again, building a new physical and emotional bond with a new dog. For some this process has occurred more than a dozen times, with each and every puppy-raising team becoming bonded. Regardless of their choice to continue in the puppy-raising role or not, for all the puppy-raisers and volunteers I encountered, a degree of emotional bond remained for all the dogs they had cared for.

*GD Services Staff and Trainers*

Another example of the transitional nature of bond is between GD Services staff and the dogs in training. Although the staff in the office develop a degree of bond with the dogs that become pseudo-members of the office, it is the trainers who worked day-in, day-out with the same dog for months on end who develop strong bonds with various dogs. The trainer and dog build a bond both as a result of this training process and daily interactions. Just as what happens in Class, the human and animal learn each other's individual characteristics. For example, the dog learns that the trainer is different from the puppy-raiser – they feel different when walking with them and their expectations change as new demands and tasks are asked of them. The human learns the physical preferences and emotional maturity of the individual dog. This new human and animal team spend months becoming familiar, working in the same environment, practising the same tasks together, and as a result they become connected.[132] As a rule, these trainers prepare numerous dogs for assistance work in unison, and thus develop different bonds with each of

[132] See Fallini et. al. (2006:242-3) for further discussion regarding communication, security, familiarity, comfort, and safety developing between the human-animal team after long periods of intense training.

them. Some dogs present a personality preferred by a trainer, while others display behaviours which are disliked.

Reiterating the changing nature of the human-animal bond, this bond between GD Services staff and dogs in training must come to an end too. When training is complete and the dog is ready to be matched to a client on the waiting list, the instructor's physical bond with the dogs they have been training stops and their energies, efforts and bond are shifted to the next group of dogs that have "come in". All their knowledge and understandings of the dogs they bonded with is passed onto the rest of the GD Services team in order to conduct matching. Not unlike the puppy-raisers, dog trainers often continue to be emotionally connected after the physical bond has stopped – especially to those dogs they felt more bonded to than others.

*Clients*

As I described with Olivia, when an assistance animal user's dog dies or retires – having relied upon and engaged with the animal (often) for many years – their bond is perhaps obviously going to shift. The decision first has to be made either to go on the waiting list for a new dog or to return to life without that manner of facilitation. If a person chooses to apply for a new dog, as I have discussed in previous chapters, they go on the waiting list, become matched to a dog and complete Class. These decisions and processes see the bond between client and dog wax and wane. The everyday practices which once enabled and cemented a connection between team members must shift if they are to go on to "function successfully" (Fieldnotes, 2011) with a new dog. Routine, dependence, expectations, boundaries, information exchange and familiarity are dynamics of the new relationship that will shift: a new bond must develop with the new dog. Every client I encountered said they still retained an emotional bond with their previous animal, as was the case for Olivia.

After joint discussions and a decision made *with* the organisation, Olivia retired her guide dog Bella. Bella had "worked eight hard years for me" (ibid.) and the time thus came for Olivia to make two important decisions. Did she want to go on the waiting list to be matched with another dog?

And did she want to keep Bella in the house with her once she was retired? "I just couldn't part with her" (ibid.) was Olivia's response and the answer to both questions was yes. Olivia was thus re-assessed and characterised as being acceptable – a confident guide dog user – and her name placed on the waiting list for a new dog. Her bond with Bella had to change. Olivia would not be relying upon and working with Bella anymore, but without doubt she still loved, respected and cared for her. She had been matched with guide dog Princess – not Hunter, the dog discussed above. Olivia had undergone Class with Princess, several months before she went through the same process with Hunter. Olivia had to shift her bond from Bella to Princess in order to function as a good working team. However, not everything went to plan and the results demonstrate that bond is by no means predictable.

## Unpredictable Bond

With the culmination of Class, Olivia and Princess were graduated as a successful working team. The team worked together for nine months before Olivia went back to using her cane and Princess was retired from guide work. I asked Olivia what behaviours Princess exhibited when they were working as a team during that time. She told me that Princess was "basically a window shopper. She just ambles along, not paying attention to what she's doing, looking into the windows instead of the task in hand" (Fieldnotes, 2015). Princess was easily distracted. She regularly did not indicate[133] when she was asked or when required to. She would often not walk in a straight line and would approach at an angle.

> *Don't get me wrong, she was a good dog; really cute. But she just wasn't a good guide dog. You know how they say there is 'no I in team'? Well that was the trouble. We were two 'I's and no team. We were two people out of sync. We didn't move as one. I tried and tried and tried to make it work, but it didn't. Other factors made a difference too. I was using the trainer's harness instead of one of my own and it didn't fit me. She [the trainer] is much taller than I am. But not only that, I had trouble with her too. I mean, as a person she and I got along very well until Princess was placed. But when things weren't going well in the team I kept ringing and ringing [the organisation] and telling them that it wasn't working but I got no*

[133] The presence of kerb, doors, stairs, overhanging trees etcetera.

> *support. I wasn't getting the support from the [the GD Services] that I needed. In fact it felt like they put it all back on me. It was all my fault: I wasn't handling Princess right. I didn't know her well enough. I needed to spend more time getting used to her. So in the end I just didn't feel comfortable or confident to tell them that she [the instructor] was no support. I had to go through all the rigmarole of a formal complaint before anything changed with her [the instructor].[134] Princess and I worked at it for nine long months and of course, I had numerous falls in that time. She had everything on my wish list, but nothing on my need list. I needed her to be comfortable and confident in new environments – leading into the harness with assuredness. But her willingness to work was non-existent. I finally said I couldn't cope anymore after she threw me down a set of stairs in Sydney Harbour.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

In a new environment, the team were walking along with Olivia's son by her side. Princess, distracted, and not looking where she was going, did not approach a flight of concrete stairs straight on. She instead was positioned at an angle. She did not indicate to Olivia (by stopping) that they were approaching the stairs and consequently Olivia went over the top step and somersaulted down the flight of steps, smacking her knees and chin as she went down.

> *Of course my body went into shock. People came running from everywhere to me. I was so sore and embarrassed, my breathing was out of control and then, of course, because I was in shock I started to cry*. (Fieldnotes, 2015)

Olivia rang the organisation and told the GD Services manager that she could no longer work with Princess. "I'd lost my confidence with Princess and I'd lost my patience with [the trainer]" (ibid.). She handed Princess back a few weeks later – Princess did not work during that time. Olivia believed that their bond had no chance to develop because Princess was not capable of guide work. She said that Princess had everything on her "wish list": she was a black[135] female[136] who

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[134] It is important to note that this GD Services employee stepped down from her position not long after I commenced my fieldwork. There was a sense of disappointment, sadness, and uncomfortableness by the remaining staff members that Olivia and other clients experienced any negative behaviour as a result of engagement with this particular instructor.

[135] Having a certain coloured dog stems from various needs and desires. Residual vision, aesthetic preferences, social perception, and attention are all reasons people have a preference of one colour over another.

[136] Olivia hated the sound of a male dog cleaning itself.

was affectionate but not clingy (ibid.). It was determined that Princess's speed (although a little slower than ideal) and temperament were a suitable match for Olivia's needs and thus the two commenced Class and graduated. Yet, what ensued was not considered normal.

> *I knew from the beginning that things weren't going well but I convinced myself that it would work out. I just thought it would get better. I wanted it to work so much that I just convinced myself that it would…I was doing all the right things that I was meant to do to bond with her – obedience training, play, working, and spending time together. I established myself as pack leader.* (Ibid.)

Yet a good bond between Olivia and Princess failed to develop. Princess indicated a distinct dislike and unwillingness to work and "[t]he further I got into the training [Class] I knew that something wasn't working properly. But I plodded on. I was desperate to have a dog" (ibid.). Olivia mentioned to me months later, when she was successfully working Hunter, that she thought at the time perhaps the bond would improve once they "got on with it" (after training was complete). It became evident that many other clients believed bond would be better fostered once they 'got out there' on their own. The consensus was that the bond between them (client and dog) would bloom once they were past Class and could simply get to working and living together – without the overarching control and surveillance of the GD Services team; but Olivia and Princess' example proves that even though matched, fostered, harnessed, and encouraged, bond is unpredictable.

Importantly, this vignette also demonstrates that when Olivia was not being facilitated well by her assistance animal, she, as a client of the organisation, was inter-dependent upon a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor to support her and help her overcome the working team's issues. Olivia was reliant upon the processes and polices of the organisation, and the staff's decisions and actions to help her achieve safe working conditions with her guide dog. Any agency she might have was dependent upon other people's choices, actions, policies, and procedures regarding her mobility and ability. Appointments, training sessions, knowledge of guide dogs, equipment, phone calls, emails, discussions, and problem solving are all aspects of help that she expected from the staff at the Association. However, as explained by Olivia herself, observed by me, and referred to by many other staff members in this setting, the physical support that she received was far from an

acceptable standard and emotional support was certainly lacking. This example highlights an ongoing level of dependency between clients, their dogs and GD Services.

## Conclusion

This discussion of failed bond demonstrates that without bond, a working unit is impossible to achieve. I argue that bonding is a physical and emotional sensory exchange of information and knowing, which is shaped by the control of the organisation's policies and procedures. It is developed through time, familiarity, and attachment. Aspects of affection, communication and equal satisfaction are evident, with familiarity and personal discipline also drivers of bond and bonding. There is a gradient to this concept of bond between the handlers and dogs, but specifically for clients, bond equates to how well the team works down the track – the better the bond, the better the work. For a client and a newly trained dog, bond is considered by those at the GD Association to be present when the team communicate well and are thus able to function in a safe and effective manner. It is a fluid concept, premised upon coming-to-know each other and while inter-corporeal communication exchange is the key at this point, the literature points to the fundamental importance of human emotions that underscore human-animal bonding. Yet this is not replicated in policy or practice at the GD Association. With a strong emphasis on emotions in the literature but not in the field, it should again be noted that the GD Association see these human-animal relations primarily in utilitarian terms.

I began this chapter with an analysis of the conceptual understandings of human-animal bond in literature, and having recognised there is no *one* theory which drives the discussion regarding human-animal bond, I draw upon psychiatry's attachment theory and argue that the GD Association's understanding of bond and what is written in the literature concur: that bond is two-way and interdependent. I explain that the words bond, attachment, and relationship are synonymous terms in the academic literature, and I go on to contribute an insight into the concept of transferability of bond between human and animal – omitted from anthropological literature. I depict the beginnings of bond between person and dog, using client Olivia, instructor Steph, and dog Hunter starting Class as examples. puppy-raisers, trainers and clients alike develop and

relinquish their bonds to the dogs they encounter. There is an underlying expectation that the dog will adapt or transfer their bond to their new handler also.

In this setting it is representative that a human and animal have settled into working life when a client and dog team have a good, strong bond. 'Coming to know' each other is surpassed by joint movement, and mobility together becomes more fluid and thus easier. With a successful bond and good working relationship, the client and dog develop their joint, unique identity as they safely traverse their environment together. As such, objectives of animal assistance are achieved; independence, social and emotional facilitation, and will be the emphasis of the following chapters.

# Chapter Six: Human-Animal Facilitation

Just as it was for James when he reverted back to using a white cane, the effect for Olivia of experiencing a nasty fall and then relinquishing Princess back to the organisation was both emotionally and physically dramatic. The lack of bond and ability to work together as a well-functioning human-animal team obviously jeopardised her safety and left her without her preferred form of mobility aid.

> *My line of independence was taken away. I lost my freedom. I couldn't live the life that I wanted to lead. I suppose technically, I was as free as any other person to do what I wanted but I just emotionally and physically couldn't do it. My confidence was shot to pieces and I felt so restricted. I had no choice but to go back to using my cane. I was constantly physically tense and emotionally stressed. So I didn't do much or go far. I had to rely more on family members for everyday chores, errands, and of course for guiding me. I went to the shops once in four months because it is just so much harder without the dog… I was SO proud of myself for that. When I finally got to those shops by myself and survived! But I only did it the once. I felt so vulnerable with the cane. I mean, really it is just a flimsy stick, whereas with a dog you have strength in more ways than one. It's as much about emotions as it is about the physical with a dog.*
>
> *Using a dog makes me the person that I am. It allows me to live the life I want to lead instead of the one I was dealt. It is so much easier to navigate, to find your way around with a dog. You avoid the objects. But there's that companionship too. You feel more secure. Say for example if you get lost, you know you're not alone. You feel you can cope more.* [137] *You don't panic, 'cause you know you've got your dog, you know you're going to be ok. Really, it was such a 'catch 22' at that point because I knew I wanted another dog, but I was petrified about trusting another dog and another trainer.* (*Fieldnotes 2015)*

The above ethnographic vignette highlights an interrelation between companionship and work and the confidence a client experiences. Also, a client's safety (or lack thereof in Olivia's instance) is a paramount element to having a successful social life, to being autonomous, and having a sense of freedom to live life the way they want to in the world. Princess's unwillingness to work,

[137] This was a feeling reiterated by many clients: "It [the dog helping you find what it is you are searching for] gives you a tremendous feeling, it really does because if you can't see where you are, if you don't know where you are you've got someone to help you … it's really something" (Fieldnotes, 2010).

coupled with Olivia's anxieties and frustrations left both members of the working team unsafe. For Olivia (and James) as discussed earlier, the lack of a guide dog was the precursor to a decline in autonomy, an increase of dependence upon other people and effectively a frustratingly limited life. I refer to this interrelatedness as triadic inter-dependence and will regularly draw upon the notion whilst describing human facilitation in this chapter.

## Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Five and also articulated extensively by the organisation and clients alike, the human-animal bond is essential to the production of 'good team work'. If a good bond does not exist, nor does a good working relationship. It thus goes to say, for the human, if a good working relationship between themselves and an animal does not exist, being assisted is near-impossible. I have also established that bond between human and animal is a taken-for-granted founding principle of assistance for the disabled person, as seen in the ethnography and literature that I have discussed. However, there are other principles which contribute to this assistance. Therefore, starting with the platform of bond (as it is now understood to be in this setting), this chapter will analyse the triadic, inter-dependent relationship between the dog, client and organisation which makes possible the tangible help that results from using an assistance animal. There are several terms used to refer to this process – the literature and the organisation use words such as freedom, help, assistance, benefits and service provision. So, for the sake of simplicity, I choose the overarching term 'facilitation'.

There are four central markers of support gained from working with an assistance dog: safety; independence; social facilitation; and emotional facilitation. I observed these modes of animal assistance as articulated by the organisation, volunteers, clients and their families, and they are persistent features of an ongoing human-animal relationship in this setting. I will divide this chapter into three of parts; focussing upon safety, independence and social facilitation allowing for the discussion of emotional facilitation to be the sole focus of the subsequent chapter. I start by discussing the AA dog programme, highlighting safety as a key marker of facilitation for the clients using these dogs. The chapter continues with an ethnographic portrayal and analysis of

independence as described by guide dog users James and Tim. Safety and independence pave the way for social facilitation and this dominates the chapter.

I provide an in-depth analysis of the multiple types of changes to a person's 'everyday-life' that is owed to using guide and autism dogs. This includes both the positive and negative effects for those who work with an assistance animal which at times brings about a heightened visibility in the public domain: there is partial agency attributed to clients who use assistance dogs whilst their disability becomes more visible. I argue that there is a triadic balance of control and dependence between the client, dog and organisation that sustains the human-animal relationship here – yet this concept of cross-species inter-dependence is overshadowed by the organisation's overall aim of client autonomy, and is thus submerged.

There is a vast array of literature written on the topic of animal facilitation and the discussions span many disciplines with varying methodologies, environments, groups of people and disorders focussed upon. As such, I draw upon the literature specifically pertaining to facilitation by assistance animals throughout this chapter and demonstrate that the general narrative concurs with client and staff expectations of a good working team: that of safety, independence, and social inclusion. Essentially, the literature presents a taken-for-granted notion that assistance animals can and do facilitate the lives of humans, usually within the physiological, psychological, and social realms. I argue that in regard to the human-animal relationship, facilitation focusses upon the *human*; it is the human which is the focal agent here, not the dog. The assistance animal is a tool for facilitation and its use results in the distributed control between humans and animals as mentioned above. I now describe autism and the aims and expectations of the AA programme in order to discuss safety - the first aspect of facilitation in this setting.

## Facilitating Safety

Ochs et al. (2004) describe autism as "a culturally defined neurologically based developmental disorder characterized by a spectrum of severity, ranging from the mute and profoundly retarded to highly gifted and intelligent individuals" (2004:149). Adults and children who experience this

neurological difference[138] (frequently referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD) often "display social abilities that reveal a basic awareness of themselves and others…[y]et…typically evidence difficulties in sharing affective experiences with others vis-à-vis a third referent" (ibid.). Communication, social interaction, and restricted or repetitive patterns of interests, behaviours, and activities are observed as being the three principal areas of functioning which are considered abnormal and the basis of an autistic diagnosis. "Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects, among other things, the way an individual relates to his or her environment and their interaction with other people" (Autism Spectrum Australia 2015). Behaviours shown by a person on the spectrum vary, "[s]ome have profound challenges and will remain non-verbal, while others will demonstrate traits of brilliance" (Grandin, Fine & Bowers 2010:247).

The GD Association states that the AA dog programme offers "safety, comfort and inclusion to families of children with autism" (GDA 2010-2016), and similar to the dogs who guide the person with vision impairment, it was considered by all involved (staff, clients, and volunteers) that AA dogs have a very specific purpose: to work to facilitate the child's safety, which then inevitably leads to increased independence and culminates in social facilitation:

> Every child with autism is unique; however typical behaviours that are exhibited can lead to isolation, mobility issues, sociability issues, and lack of awareness of danger and limits. Due to these circumstances the family may experience high stress and lack of "normality" in social situations e.g. not being able to go shopping, visit restaurants, and participate in travel and leisure activities with their child. (GDA 2010-2016)

The overall expectation of outcomes from using an AA dog are three-fold and interrelated. The first and most important is to increase a child's safety by means of a triadic form of physical attachment to each other when in public places, thus allowing the parent to be in control and the dog preventing the child from running off. The second is to be a comforting, calming (non-human) influence, which "provid[es] the children the opportunity to practice non-linguistic but highly

[138] See (Silverman 2008) for an ethnographic discussion of Autism as a form of *difference* rather than a disorder when providing support services.

social actions" (Solomon 2010:156). The third expected outcome is the improvement of the child's motor and language skills, with consequential ability to potentially better engage with others. As a result of training, matching, and a good bond between dog, parent, and child, the overarching potential of facilitation from an AA dog impacts more than the child and handler attached to the dog alone. With a focus upon all the family's need, there is hope that the child will have the opportunity to learn new skills, better manage challenging situations, and gain greater participation in community, social, and recreational activities. For the parent, facilitation is observed in daily activities becoming much easier with a dog in the mix, specifically – a substantial reduction of stress and fear and an increase of respite and family fun activities.

During the twelve months of my data collection I interviewed and observed only three AA dog teams (largely due to the newness of the AA dog programme) and each of the dog handlers in these three teams was the parent of the child experiencing autism. The children in these teams experienced limited language and communication skills, great difficulty in performing simple daily tasks and had the disposition to 'bolt' or run when feeling stressed, upset, or anxious. Physically and emotionally, Adam, one of the three children I observed during my data collection, exhibited these behaviours as seen in many children experiencing autism. Violent tantrums or behavioural outbursts – often referred to as 'meltdowns' – were common behaviours for him, which lasted "sometimes well over an hour" (Fieldnotes, 2011). The desire to run away was another "ongoing battle" (ibid.). His parents called him an "escape artist" (ibid.) and that their fear for his safety when running off was a major cause of stress and emotional turmoil. He also had trouble going to sleep, staying asleep, and staying in his bed during the night. These actions often left Adam, his mother, and other family members bitten, bruised, exhausted and confined to the home. This, as would be expected, had a trickle effect of increased stress levels, desperation, fear, frustration, anger, grief and sadness for the rest of the family. The family had high hopes that an AA dog would help to improve their everyday challenges.

For those who use an AA dog, safety due to *orientation* is generally a non-issue due to the human handler (the parent/guardian) having fully functioning vision. Yet that does not imply that the

sense of safety (or independence and social inclusion) which comes from using an AA dog is any less than a guide dog user. As mentioned above, when guide dog Princess misguided Olivia and she consequently experienced a physically and emotionally damaging fall, Olivia chose to relinquish Princess as her mobility tool. Yet it was obvious to GD Services staff that Princess still had great skills and the ability to provide a service to someone in need and was thus reassessed by the trainers and noted as having a distinct rapport with children. Wanting to procure at least some benefits from the love, time, and money put into raising and training Princess, the already highly trained dog was understood by GD Services staff as demonstrating behaviours appropriate to an AA dog role. She was consequently re-trained to undertake the specific tasks of an AA dog and matched with a family who had been on the waiting list. The staff, as well as Olivia, and Princess's new family were all pleased with the decision. The Jones family (consisting of a mother, a father and two young boys) were matched with Princess. Both children had been diagnosed as 'being on' the autism spectrum, and Adam (the eldest) had been put onto the GD Services waiting list to receive an AA dog. For the Jones family, keeping Adam safe was their first priority.

As it is with a guide dog and their handler, bond between human and animal in an AA dog team is key to eliciting safety. However, attachment between human and animal in this instance is much more literal, for there is a unique form of inter-dependence between team members: a triad form of physical attachment. Similar to dogs in training and when working, an AA dog in this setting wears a brightly coloured jacket which has a strap that is secured to a belt around the child's waist (see Appendix G). The parent has a lead attached to the dog's coat, as does the child. The child is thus able to roam somewhat freely, but should he or she attempt to run away, the dog will resist this motion by sitting or lying down as a dead weight, thus becoming an anchor.

> This is a unique triad compared to traditional assistance-dog uses such as guide dogs or physical disability dogs. The dog must walk with the child but take commands from a parent (handler) following behind. (Burrows, Adams & Millman 2008a:43)

This human-animal inter-dependency sees the dog engage its training and agency, reacting to the child's sudden behaviour by anchoring the child. This gives the parent time to intervene and gain

control to diffuse the situation which is causing the child to want to run thus keeping them out of danger.

Tethering the child to the dog frees the parent from having to hold their child's hand or physically restrain them for the entire duration of their time out of the home. It means the child does not have to be in physical contact with human touch –a notorious dislike – and means they are unable to abscond, therefore keeping them much safer. When the child is connected to the dog in this way they "quickly learn that they are unable to run away and the attempt to abscond may be reduced or completely eliminated" (GDA 2010-2016). The child's agency is being overridden by the dog and parent in order to keep them safe (through the use of a lead, and verbal commands), meanwhile the parent's agency is superseded by the rules and processes of the GD Association. Ultimately however, partial agency is gained by parent and child by means of the team working together to continue their day-to-day tasks. For Kate[139] it proved to be the greatest of assistance:

> *The biggest change is that we can leave the house for a walk without any stress or fear of danger. It's such a relief to know he is safe. [AA dog] Poppy has given Ben a new level of independence.* (Fieldnotes, 2012)

In their paper *Sentinels of Safety,* Burrows et al. (2008b) reiterate the enormous improvements for both parents and their children experiencing autism due to the extra support and safety an AA dog can bring. Drawing upon participant observational data, they describe the unique triadic relationship between parent, child, and trained dog, identifying the many and varied benefits that come from ensuring the safety of a child experiencing ASD. Grandin et al. (2010) are in agreeance with Burrows et al., that safety brings tremendous physical and emotional benefits for the child and their family. They go on to state that, "improvements in overall motor functioning as well as

[139] Mother of Ben – a young boy who received an AA dog from the Association.

learning to walk at a more controlled pace (as a consequence of being attached to the dog)" is another benefit of an AA dog (Grandin, Fine & Bowers 2010:256).

The AA dog-child-parent is a physical triad to ensure safe mobility – in contrast to the guide dog and human which is a physical dyad (except at times in Class). This physical triad is premised on a link to the GD Association just as the guide dog-human dyad is. For the AA dog teams the dependence on GD Services (and its policies and rules) is submerged so the autonomy of family is highlighted when with its dog. An AA dog facilitates partial autonomy, eases distressing emotions and directly precedes the second factor of facilitation addressed in this chapter – independence.

## Facilitating Independence

As mentioned in Chapter Four, once James was matched to his first dog it became apparent to him exactly how much his children assisted his mobility without him knowing.

> *It all fell into place when I had my first dog. The instructors said to the kids, 'What do you think of Harley?' and they said, 'Fantastic, we don't have to worry about pushing and pulling Dad around town.' And I didn't even realise they were doing that.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

James was shocked and embarrassed that his mobility was in part an unknown dependence upon his children. It was only once he had gained the skills to walk together with his dog in public places and deal with infrastructure and traffic with confidence, unassisted by a human, that James really felt as if not in a "straight jacket" (Fieldnotes, 2011) and rather as though he was acting as an independent adult. Determined not to be what he considered *dependent* upon others in such a way again, James became reclusive and much less socially active when his "dear friend Buster" (ibid.) unexpectedly died. Being mobile with a guide dog, he said, gave him his confidence and freedom; he told me that having the dog gave him assuredness to be mobile. Like Olivia, regardless of his proficiency with his white cane, James felt less safe, annoyed and had a great dislike for using a cane as his primary mobility aid. However, there was nothing he could do about the situation by himself. He was reliant upon the GD Services department to reassess him,

consider him viable, put him on the waiting list, match him, and then train him with a new dog in order for him to regain that sense of independence and dignity that he wanted.

James had to wait until a matching meeting 'came around', hope that there would be a suitable match for him and that he would then go through successful training with a new dog – all regardless of the grief, guilt and other emotions he felt. He was determined to "do all the right things" (ibid.) that would see him reach that point of mobility and independence again. It was the second dog that he had which did not 'make it' to retirement (through no fault of his own). His situation was considered by staff as sad, certainly. He was grief stricken, but there was nothing specifically done other than reassure him that he was going to get a dog when the time and dog were 'right'. Although not explicitly referred to by James, it seemed as if there was a degree of disenfranchised grief[140] in this and other situations of grief in this setting. His need for emotional support was not a focus of the organisation, a common issue for people who are "grieving their companion animal's death" (Merrill 2012: 3) and something I will discuss further in the following chapter of this thesis. Yet he maintained composure at this time, not overshadowing the requirements for successful assessment.

James could do nothing other than accept this process and temporary lack of independence. His sense of autonomy was rooted in his ease of access to the environments around him and the GD Services department for providing him with a dog to do so. Without a dog he would walk miles instead of catching a bus, because to go on the bus meant he had to do things differently – be mobile in an uncomfortable way – and it was too stressful.[141] He felt that people recognised his disability quicker when he walked with a dog, which for him was positive, as people moved out of his path; people bumped into him less. He also told me, the dog *glides* him around obstacles instead of being jolted into recognition of the hazard when walking with a cane. He preferred how

[140] See Archer (1997), Chur-Hansen (2010), Field et al. (2009), Merrill (2012), Meyers (2002), Stewart et al. (1989), Turner (2003) and Walsh (2009b) for comprehensive social science analyses of disenfranchised grief.

[141] See Deshen & Deshen (1989) for an ethnographic discussion of how people with vision impairments change their behaviours and strategies depending of their choice of mobility aid.

he felt as a person[142] when travelling with a dog and so, left without his first preference of independent travel, James slowly lost his sense of autonomy and social life whilst he awaited the next match. Presenting yet another instance of inter-dependence between human, animal and organisation in this setting, clients were only able to become autonomous agents due to the dependence they had upon the organisation to provide them with the tool to do so.

I spent a few days shadowing one particular client and advocate of the organisation, where further ethnography highlights the sense of independence due to walking with a guide dog

> *Tim, a prolific spokesperson for the Association, regularly attributes being facilitated – having his freedom – to using a guide dog as a mobility aid. At the conferences and forums for which he is regularly invited to share his experience of living with blindness and using a guide dog, he without fail shares the following insight, "I was walking down King William Street by myself, for the first time in years…with a dog! It was then I realised that he was a living, breathing, thinking mobility aid and the key to my independence and freedom".*
>
> *He told me: "It makes it less necessary for me to ask questions because he [the dog] is obviously… an indicator to the fact that I'm blind and might need assistance. You get more offers for help when you have a dog by your side".* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

Another client Linda, reiterated this notion during a structured interview,

> *You look awkward with a cane and people don't like awkwardness. If you look like you are struggling [when using a cane], people are more hesitant [to help you or to offer help]. That said sometimes people can be overbearing when you are working with your dog.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

These feelings of independence expressed by guide dog users indicate idiosyncratic and broad facets of mobility which facilitate autonomy and steer emotions in people's day-to-day lives. Regardless of whether they use a cane, dog, or family member as their mobility tool, they feel their disability becomes more or less visible to the broader public. These feelings depict a sense

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[142] Referring to how James felt as a father, as a man with a disability, and as an active agent in his environment.

of individuality in choice of mobility tool, due to the fact that different people feel differently about their disability and others' perceptions of it. As a result of choosing a guide dog, clients told me they generally had a better sense of balance, navigation, and engagement with the environment; and an overall physical and emotional confidence. They and their physical and social capacities were visible to others in a manner that they were comfortable with. These aspects of independence are reiterated in the academic literature regarding guide dogs (Chevigny 1946; Lambert 1990; Michalko 1999; Miner 2001; Putnam 1997:157-165; Sanders 1999a:39-58; Beck & Katcher, 1996:147 and passim; Valentine, Kiddoo & LaFleur 1993; Whitmarsh 2005; see Wiggett-Barnard 2008).

I therefore argue that the above discussion of independence, as referred to in the literature and as observed in the behaviours of people in this setting, stems from the continued triadic inter-dependence between dog, client, and GD Services staff. Generally speaking, people become more comfortable both publicly and privately when they choose to use a guide dog as a mobility tool. Specifically, client independence emerges from the organisational aims, and support that is elicited through improved (animal-delivered) mobility. Yet client independence here is only possible by working towards and accepting the GD Services terms and conditions, policies and practices. It is only *then* possible that the capacity to be better socially included ensues. I now address the third form of facilitation observed in this setting, describing guide dog and AA dog teams separately.

## Social Facilitation with a Guide Dog

I argue that individual experiences, perceptions, personalities, and expectations all affect how anyone thinks and feels about their personal manner of social facilitation. It is no different for the clients in this setting – thoughts and feelings of being socially interactive (as someone with a vision impairment and with a guide dog by their side) were as unique as the team themselves. There were however two specific forms of social engagement raised by all clients during my data

collection. The first encompassed their personal lives and choices, the second was in regard to their interaction (with public) and their 'visibility' in environments outside the home.

It became apparent during my fieldwork that these two arenas of 'being social' were momentous to clients' emotions and sense of self. Whilst the social life of a client with an assistance dog is the same as that of any person *without* a vision impairment (it is unique, changing and specific to personal experiences) it is nonetheless fact that a person with a visual disability in this society has the *capacity* to be more mobile and hence social as a result of having a guide dog. Highlighting the concept of triadic inter-dependence (by having been provided with an assistance dog and 'gained freedom' due to their reliance on and engagement with said dog), a GD Services client has the capacity to pick-and-choose when, where and with whom they engage in social activities with, in a manner that they are comfortable.[143] This aspect of facilitation therefore is a marker of the granting of partial agency.

Using open-ended interviews and drawing upon phenomenological theory, Miner's paper *The Experience of Living With and Using a Dog Guide* (2001) explains that the feeling of being safer, as well as having increased confidence and independence, led to an increase in public contact (Miner 2001:187; see also Sanders 1999a:43). As discussed already in this thesis, reduced mobility can drastically restrict opportunities for social interaction and the conduct of everyday tasks – resulting in feelings of isolation and exclusion. Assistance dogs have shown to counteract this loneliness and marginalisation. "In addition to the other benefits that an AD [assistance dog] may bring to an individual, an impact on social functioning could have broad implications for several areas of the individual's life" (Scachs-Ericsson 2002:267). Leaving and returning home when one feels like it, attending events, getting and maintaining employment or education, collecting children from school, visiting friends, and going on holiday are examples of positive, social experiences that clients had during my participant observation. Ultimately it is a firmly-held belief of those working and volunteering at the Association and for those using the dogs, that the

[143] It must be remembered that clients must make choices that fit within the GD Association's contract signed at graduation.

introduction of an assistance animal into one's life increases activity in their personal life. This is considered not just a positive for the client, but also the main objective of human-animal relations in this context.

The presence of an assistance dog can thrust people into a social sphere outside their home-life that they perhaps had not experienced in a long while or may never have known (Wood, Giles-Corti & Bulsara 2005). In relation to guide dogs specifically; "dogs return them to the world of the sighted by restoring their self-esteem and linking them to [other people]" (Beck & Katcher, 1996:147). Again, Lane et al. (1998) explore this concept of increased social activity regarding assistance dogs and specifically, their ability to decrease social distances. "The research suggests that assistance dogs can act as powerful social facilitators and the role of the dog as a social catalyst may be at least as important as the increased mobility and independence afforded by the dog" (ibid.:52).[144] As I experienced with Jarvis (and my own pets over the years) dogs are certainly an effective tool to promote interaction and conversation with strangers (Messent 1983) and guide dogs specifically have been identified as catalysts for communication through human contact (Valentine, Kiddoo & LaFleur 1993).

For some, it is not just narrowing the social distance but about changing other's perceptions: clients often become either more or less visible to the public when working with a dog as a mobility aid. "Having an assistance dog appears to not only increase the likelihood of interactions taking place but also serves to shift the focus of attention away from the recipient's disability towards their competence in handling a highly trained dog" (Lane, D, McNicholas & Collis

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[144] Although not all relating solely to assistance dogs which are guides, see also: Hart (2010:69) who discusses the socialising effects of animal assistants and remarks on dogs as social magnets and their socialising effects. McNicholas offers an interesting study of increased social interactions for a person with a guide dog by their side even though the dog has been "schooled not to solicit attention" (2000:63); Hart, Zasloff, & Benfatto (1996) provide insight of *The Socialising Role of Hearing Dogs*; Robins et al. (1991) ethnographically describe how canines expose their human companions to increased social interaction and help them to establish trust; Mader et al. (1989) offer an analysis of the effects service dogs have in terms of social acknowledgement; and Hart, et al. (1987) discuss the *Socializing Effects of Service Dogs for People with Disabilities*.

1998:58).[145] This suggests that there is a move from considering a person as disabled and dependent, to an agent: their agency becomes visible.

Regardless of the reason *why* people become more socially active, it is the process of being socially more active which is important here. On the whole, increased social activity is regarded as desirable and is one of the contributing factors for many people applying to be a guide dog user. Conversely, this increased social inclusion can have an altogether unexpected, and at times unwanted, effect as unsolicited interaction with strangers comes from being conspicuous out in public spaces.[146]

To extrapolate, I refer back to Linda, introduced in Chapter Three, who experienced feelings of pity from those around her when she used a cane. This feeling of pity was a distinct negative to engaging in the world around her and was in part, what helped her choose to apply to use a dog as a primary mobility aid. With a dog, Linda received more positive attention from strangers. She referred to the fact that the dog takes the pressure off because people are more interested in them and not her. One gets more "light-hearted" (Fieldnotes, 2010) conversation when with a dog. Linda's experience was that her lack of vision made her stand out to members of the public one way or another – either with a cane or a dog. Her vision impairment thrusted her from obscurity into overt recognition, and she was consequently assumed as needing help. Yet, regardless of this conspicuousness, with a *dog* rather than a cane by her side, Linda felt that her

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[145] See also Rabschutz's doctoral dissertation, *The Effect of Partnering with an Assistance Dog on Self-Esteem and Social Connectedness Among Persons with Disabilities* (2007).

[146] See Matsunaka and Koda (2008) for a discussion regarding the stress levels that increase as a result of using a guide dog in Japan.

experience as someone of interest, or of difference was instead a positive.[147] "People were more interested in the dog than they were me" (ibid.). However, this is not the same for all.

Sociologist Sanders (2000) provides an ethnographic insight of the thrust into the public sphere that clients often feel as a result of walking with a guide dog:

> Made publicly identifiably by their association with a guide dog, owners with whom I worked commonly expressed the view that in public situations they felt pressure to foster a positive image of people with visual impairments, guide dog owners, and the local program that had trained their assistance animals. In short, they saw themselves as being defined by members of the public as representatives of these collectives. (Ibid.:135)[148]

Although some clients I spoke with find this unsolicited interaction a constructive ice breaker, an opportunity to educate, or the chance to raise the public profile of assistance animal teams, others feel it a frustrating intrusion, an indicator of difference, an invasion of personal space, and an ongoing battle with an ignorant and at times arrogant sighted public. This is represented in the academic literature also (Deshen & Deshen 1989; Eames & Eames 2001; Miner 2001; Sanders 1999a:48-53). This visibility reiterates the triadic relationship that occurs between human, animal and organisation, due to clients being considered ambassadors and advertisers of both their disability, the working dogs and the organisation – whether they like it or not. At a puppy training event, the GD Services team articulated that clients, staff and volunteers are all "representative of Guide Dogs Association" (Fieldnotes, 2011) and are thus expected to be at the very least polite to the general public, "as it is them [the public] that provide the funding for clients to receive the dog, don't forget" (ibid.).

Throughout their published works, vision impaired anthropologist and sociologist Eames and Michalko (respectively) both describe that the staff, clients, and volunteers in this setting regularly

[147] An informant in Serpell's participant observation endorses this precise sentiment (1999:50).

[148] See also (Sanders 1999a:48-53) for further discussion of anonymity, violation of privacy, and the frustrating feeling a GD client can very often have due to the general public's ignorance of assistance dogs and VI.

articulate: walking with an assistance dog creates a sense of being noticed more by strangers and often brings feelings of coercion into social activities such as question and answer conversations, or interruptions to their mobility and 'everyday'. This social interaction usually consists of offers of assistance, statements of opinion, feeding and patting the dog, general enquiries, and general ignorance of the capacities of the human or animal.

There is a sense of being on display which transpires – a feeling I certainly experienced countless times during my time puppy-raising Jarvis. There were innumerable occasions where people would talk to me and attempt to engage me in conversation, when engaging with strangers was my last desire. That said, at least *these* instances evoked a level of socially expected manners from those interested. There were just as many times when people would talk about Jarvis and me – assume my and his feelings – and declare their opinions and expectations, all at an audible level for me and others to hear – as if I did not exist. It is at these moments that the dog handler must choose how they respond. Of the clients who I observed and interviewed, these engagements were mostly kept to as brief an exchange as possible – politely answering questions yet without elaboration. Some clients were most put out by these experiences, while others enjoyed the engagement. For the small number of people that I spoke with who were mobile without a guide dog (known as white cane users), this attention was often a deciding factor to use a cane instead of a dog for safe mobility.

More importantly, this form of social facilitation can put the team's safety in danger if nothing else. Distractions elicited by others with food, conversation, or patting or praising a working dog can dramatically influence the team's mobility. For the staff of the GD Association, by and large, what the client chooses to do and where they choose to go is of no great concern so long as these experiences come within the boundaries of the contract signed at graduation. However, reiterating this inter-dependence between dog, client and staff, it is when social experiences (either good or bad) jeopardise, or potentially jeopardise, the safety and mobility of the team that the GD Services evoke their power and staff will intervene. The staff will either decide on or help to make decisions about routes, offer suggestions on how to manage the unwanted

distractions, and ask for certain conduct to be maintained. Again though, this power and degree of control is not explicitly at the foreground in the structure or practice of service provision.

To be socially facilitated a person using a guide dog as a mobility tool can therefore be twofold. Although being more active and autonomous in one's mobility and thus social life is the foremost aim of the organisation and considered an absolute positive by all; being socially 'on show' can be an emotional and physical counter to this, and regularly draws potentially unwanted social experiences. Other times they are welcome. Ultimately, there seems to be a sense of irony for the person with vision impairment – unable to view the world around them 'clearly', yet by choosing facilitation from a guide dog, these people become dramatically visible to those around them. However, for those engaging with AA dogs, an altogether different experience is had.

## Social Facilitation with an Autism Assistance (AA) Dog

When analysing the language of those associated with the Association's AA dog programme[149] one can conclude that AA dogs improve the quality of life of individuals and families of children experiencing an autistic disorder by means of establishing safety and thus fostering increased social inclusion. The organisation's understanding of how an AA dog assists and facilitates stems from anecdotal testimony and other information directly gleaned from clients. It is the organisation's understanding that parents, siblings, extended family *and* the autistic child are all facilitated by these dogs. The parents of children experiencing autism as well as the GD Services staff agree that there is a general overall improvement of everyday family life as well as social experiences specifically when an assistance dog is introduced to the family. This belief is supported in the academic literature on the topic also (see Arluke 2010:401-419; Carlisle 2014;

[149] The AA dog programme was discussed and observed on the organisation's website, articulated by those working and volunteering at the association, and within the media coverage such as television, social media, radio, magazines and newspapers.

Davis et al. 2004; DeMello 2012:194-214; Sanders 1990; 2008, 2010). Yet it is fair to say that to be socially facilitated by an AA dog is radically different from the experience with a guide dog.[150]

With the safety of the AA dog team established by means of a triad of physical control, the opportunity for social facilitation follows in three amalgamated steps: being identified as autistic (as opposed to exhibiting 'naughty' or 'inappropriate' behaviour); calmer conduct with fewer, less intense meltdowns or aggressive behaviour; and the opportunity for improved language and communication skills. These three aspects therefore allow for the improved capacity to go places, do things, engage with others, and to develop and maintain relationships. I will now discuss these three steps which lead to social facilitation, drawing upon the concept of a triadic relationship and the academic literature throughout.

*Identified as Autistic*

The process of being socially facilitated begins with being identified by others as autistic. Unlike people with a vision impairment, children and their families who experience autism have long been thrust into the public sphere, being visible to others due to *unwelcome* social behaviours. Yet it is a disorder ironically called a 'hidden illness' or 'hidden disability' as there are supposedly no clear physical stigma or obvious characteristics (to others) of the ailment. Severe mood swings, acute sensory sensitivities, a lack of impulse control and of understanding social rules often see children with autism exhibit 'antisocial' behaviours in public, thrusting them into a spotlight of judgement. As alluded to above, meltdown behaviours for Adam include screaming, biting, kicking and the desire to escape at any given chance. For his mother, as is with so many families who experience ASD these behaviours often equal a feeling of stigmatisation and isolation –

[150] While there is not enough space to thoroughly examine the negatives to AA Dog ownership, it is important to say that they do exist. For "parents who are already highly stressed, the service dog could add to their work load as another body in the family that requires feeding, grooming, exercising and toileting" (Burrows, Adams & Spiers 2008b:1648).

parents lose friends and other loved ones due to the lack of understanding and acceptance of their children (Farrugia 2009). Stigma and acceptance goes beyond family and friends however.

In their research of the benefits and risks of assistance dog placement in the paediatric population Davis et al. noted that for some families,

> the assistance dogs were a signal for the child to be noticed in a more positive light while in public. One mother felt that the dog was a signal to others that, despite her child's hidden disability, "not everything is normal," and that outbursts or erratic behavior wouldn't elicit typically critical reactions. (Davis et al. 2004:138)

The AA dog helps people to recognise that the child attached is different, that they have a disorder and need empathy, not derision. Mentioned by each parent I spoke with, this benefit of undergoing day-to-day tasks with an AA dog by their side acted as an indicator to the public around them that the child's aggressive behaviour or temper tantrums were an effect of autism, *not* poor parenting or disobedient children. In fact, children with service dogs attract much more positive reactions (Mader, Hart & Bergin 1989). This recognition absolved parents of feelings of being ashamed or inferior. The literature shows that an AA dog can prove to be a tremendous tool for the family for deflecting the negative, socially prescribed perceptions of this disability, thus facilitating them socially.

> The service dog was a source of pride for other children in the family. Their service dog gave other children in the family an opportunity to talk about their [sibling] without have to talk about autism. ... The presence of the service dogs, especially in public, enabled the siblings…to feel prouder and less embarrassed. The attention the family received was more positive than the attention they have received before the dog was placed with them. (Burrows, Adams & Spiers 2008b:1646)

This in turn,

> improved people's awareness, understanding, and tolerance of autism. When the dog and child were in harness, strangers quickly realized that there were special circumstances regarding the child. Specifically, public confrontations were avoided when the child displayed inappropriate behaviour or a tantrum, whereas strangers had previously attributed ['bad'] behavior to lack of parenting skills. For

> the first time, being out in public became a positive experience…for the first time they did not feel stigmatized because of their child's behavior. (Ibid.)[151]

*A Reduction in Meltdowns: Calmer, Less Aggressive Behaviour.*

A second aspect of social facilitation with an AA dog is a reduction in meltdowns. Describing the safety, enhanced freedom, and general well-being that comes from having an AA dog, Burrows et al. (2008b) further argue that not only does having an AA dog identify a disorder to others, it actually evokes a sense of calm, fewer meltdowns, and a decrease in challenging or aggressive behaviour in the child. "Walking beside the dog allowed the child to regulate [their] pace, making the walking process more efficient and relaxing for the entire group" (Burrows, Adams & Spiers 2008b:1645). Berry et al. (2013) describe dog-intervention strategies for children with ASD based upon the "exploitation of the emotional aspects of human–dog relationships" (2013:1) and also draws upon Burrows et al. data. They each describe a dramatic change in a child's conduct once an AA dog has been introduced, such as "increased compliance, decreased anxiety, increased calmness, reduction in meltdowns or tantrums, dissipated/defused anger, and more manageable bedtime routines" (Berry et al. 2013:2). In many cases, the parent reported that their child "just seemed happier" (Burrows, Adams & Spiers 2008b:1645).[152] In this setting specifically, the role of Adam's AA dog is to intervene in these similar moments of negative emotions. Adam's mother explains Princess's behaviour and role:

> *We've often both come out of it covered in scratches, bruises and blood noses, so Princess's role during a meltdown is to run up to Adam, wherever he is, and rest her head on his lap. If that doesn't distract him enough, she'll basically get up and lie over him. That sort of response is modified for each child, but Adam just loves deep pressure. Quite often he'll stroke his fingers through her fur and he'll calm down.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

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[151] See Anderson (2008a) who describes a ten-year-old boy with limited motor skills and who uses a wheelchair. "I'm not known as the kid in a wheelchair… I'm known as the kid with the dog [and] that changes a lot for me" (2008a:130). Also, Bardill & Hutchinson (1997) offer an ethnographic insight that argues dogs serve as a catalyst for human to human interactions and often change people's perceptions about a given experience.

[152] See also: Hart (2010:71-3) for a good source of literature pertaining to the calming effects; Nattrass et al. (2004:58) for insight into the improved focus, soothing and calming effects, and improvement in the child's mood that an AA dog can bring; and Celani (2002) describes autistic children with therapy dogs as having more playful moods and better attentiveness.

Ben's mother describes how having their AA dog Poppy facilitates her family's life:

> *So it just makes it a lot easier process, I can talk Ben around a lot more…I went through a really bad stage when Ben first started at…school, and he decided he didn't want to go, and it's really, you just cannot convince them, I mean they don't really understand, and we had to persist to get him there, so we could keep up the routine, otherwise we just never would have got him back – Ben wouldn't get dressed in the mornings, he wouldn't get in the car, so, I actually got my hubby to take a couple of weeks off work, because I was just struggling big time – so I'd connect Ben up to Poppy and we'd start walking to school, and it is, I mean you could walk, but it is a fair way – so then hubby would just come along and we'd all jump in the car nice and calmly and go to school. So it was just getting him walking with Poppy to calm him down, and taking his mind away from the fact that, he is going to school…So that was a big plus, and we did that quite a few times, and then Ben discovered oh – and then we'd just walk from here to the car and jump in.* (Ibid.)

The literature also shows that AA dogs make everyday tasks much simpler. "For children with autism, the dog often provided the kind of security in routine that made daily tasks easier to cope with" (Davis et al. 2004:138). As we see with Ben's struggle getting to school, the AA dog helps to calm difficult situations and helps the parent reach their desired destination or objective. "More than one parent found that it was easier to motivate their children to get ready to go places, because … "[the dog] is coming, too"" (ibid., see also Burrows et al., 2008b:1644). For the clients of this organisation, getting exercise, conducting appointments, attending events, doing the shopping, visiting friends, attempting employment, and getting sleep all become easier due to the positive changes in behaviours that resulted from having an AA dog. With the dog by their (and their child's) side, a parent garners more control over the child and the situations they are both in. As with guide dog users, dependence upon others for help reduces and independence increases as it takes less and less time to do everyday tasks, and the increased calm enables better access and inclusion to everyday environments. Moreover, the dog provides indispensable extra support as another kind of caregiver. Adam's mother described a regular trip to the speech therapist with Adam which turned out to be anything but regular;

> *Without fail we always take the elevator up to the floor where the office is located. But when we approached the lift we discovered that it was out of order. We had*

> *to go up the stairs instead. This instigated a meltdown. I was punched and kicked and Adam screamed as we climbed the stairs. When we got to the office I let Adam go, where I just let him scream and get it all out. He lay on the floor and as she was trained to do Princess moved to lie on top of him. She lay there like that for eight or nine minutes and by the time she moved Adam had quietened down and become relaxed again and able to be distracted. Princess was rewarded plenty for her work. Lots of rubs and pats and verbal praise.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

*Improved Language, Communication, and Social Engagement*

A third marker of social facilitation is that of improved exchanges with others. The academic literature reflects an improvement in language and communication (and therefore engagement) for those experiencing autism and using an AA dog and was observed during my time in the field.[153] Again, Adam's mother describes how Princess has facilitated:

> *We've also seen a real boom in Adam's language since Princess has come home and she's also teaching him responsibility. They're so gorgeous when they play together. It makes my spirit soar to see Adam interacting with another like that. Princess has been the best therapy we've had for him. (Fieldnotes, 2011)*

Anthropologist Solomon (2008) reviews ethnographic studies written about children with autism and their use of language in their everyday lives. She discusses aspects of linguistic and socio-communicative abilities of children with autism and the important ways in which these children construct, understand and adhere to the practices and expectations of their social worlds through language. It is communication, she argues, that enables social engagement. The ability to learn and use language enables people to "develop the ability to speak…as a way of becoming

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[153] We first saw this with psychologist Levinson and his dog Jingles (1997:107-11), and again: as Carlisle (2014) described children with ASD in dog owning families as having greater social skills than children with ASD in non-dog owning families; O'Haire provides a good comprehensive list of literature also (2013:1614-5); and Anderson & Olsen (2006) in their qualitative study show that having a dog in a self-contained classroom enabled emotional stability, improved attitudes towards school, and facilitated learning lessons in responsibility, respect and empathy.

competent members of societies and that the development of cultural competence is accomplished through language" (Solomon 2008:154).[154]

In a later article, she elaborates this discussion, focussing upon children's communication and social engagement as a consequence of their assistance dogs. Using two case studies, Solomon describes how assistance dogs mediate the social engagement of children with ASD in relationships, interactions and activities. She thus illustrates how assistance dogs support children's communication, their experience of emotional connection with others, *and* their consequent participation in everyday life (Solomon, 2010). Dogs, she says,

> facilitate communication of children with autism by being easily readable intentional agents and supporting children's own agency and improvisation within and beyond structurally social actions … Such activities propel the children into contingent social behaviour…[which] they have a difficult time accomplishing with their human communicative partners. (Solomon, 2010:149)[155]

Equalling the thoughts of the parents in my fieldsite, it is a dog's non-humanness, Solomon says, which makes it easier for children with ASD to communicate and thus be more social.

> Dogs' highly anticipatory, unhurried, structurally simple and easy to interpret social actions may be generating a locally organized interactional ground against which the next move is easily projected and realized by children with autism…In these interactions, possibly for the first time, the child with autism interacts with a communicative partner whose social dispositions match his or her own. (Ibid.: 157)

Having these AA dogs in their lives also helps to improve motor skills (Smyth & Slevin 2010) and offers a sense of routine with children learning to stroke and groom their dog, picking up and

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[154] See also Solomon (2012) for further discussion of children with autism in activities with therapy dogs and other people, as well as Osch et al. (2004) who examines the abilities and limitations autistic children have in shaping their social life and cultural understanding.

[155] See also Berry et al.'s (2013) contribution: *Use of Assistance and Therapy Dogs for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Critical Review of the Current Evidence*.

throwing a ball, taking the lid off the dog's food container, putting the bowl on the floor, pouring the dog's food, and looking at their parent as the parent gives the dog the command. These actions help the child and dog to bond as well as improve simple skills and teach responsibility to the child. These examples, along with the ethnographic and academic discourse already mentioned, describe a child which, once provided with an assistance animal, is calmer, more easily identifiable as autistic (with a reduction in negative social judgement), and can gain improvement in language, communication and engagement with other humans and animals.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there are the three aspects of facilitation gained from working with an assistance dog: safety; independence; social facilitation; each a perpetual feature of human-animal relationships in this setting. Dividing the chapter into these three sections, I note that the AA dog programme highlights safety as a key marker of facilitation for the clients using these dogs. I argue that a physical triad forms as a result of the tethering between dog, parent and child, that differs from the physical dyad of human and guide dog. Yet like the triadic inter-dependence of human guide-dog and GD Association there is a triadic inter-dependence of family-AA dog and GD Association as well as the metaphorical dependence upon the procedures and policies of the GD Services staff and organisation as a whole.

Analysis of the second marker of facilitation (independence) offers further ethnographic evidence that there exists a triadic inter-dependence between client, dog and organisation. For guide dog users James, Tim, and Linda, independence was about not living in a "straight jacket" (Fieldnotes, 2011) and more about gaining confidence and autonomy. I argue that they each gained autonomy from experiencing their day-to-day activities with their chosen mobility tool – a dog. Yet this is only partial autonomy, due to their ongoing reliance upon the GD Services. I also emphasise here the heightened visibility that comes from strangers when using a mobility tool in public spaces. One's disability becomes more visible, which at times is a positive, and at other times negative – depending on individual perceptions of one's disability. Placing humans at the point of focus, the academic literature concurs with what I observed in the field, that the assistance animal is a tool

for human facilitation and its use results in distributed agency between humans and animals. While clients acknowledge that they are reliant upon others to gain this facilitation, for the organisation is a submerged concept.

The cross-species inter-dependence between the client, dog and organisation continues in the third marker of animal assistance – social facilitation. Now safely mobile and more independent from other's help, those who walk with a guide or AA dog are able to more easily conduct their daily lives in the manner in which they choose – one of the main aims of the organisation. I have provided ethnographic examples and other social science literature to argue that using a guide or AA dog can counterbalance the loneliness and marginalisation of life without an assistance animal, providing the opportunity to go places, do things, engage with others, and to develop and maintain relationships with increased social activity - returning them to a "sighted world" as Beck & Katcher argue (1996:147). While this can positively challenge others' perceptions of disability, such as when being identified as autistic instead of naughty,[156] it can however bring unwanted attention to a client – thrusting them into an informal ambassador or representative role.

What stands out through this discussion of facilitation is that while the client and dog balance their agency and decision-making abilities as they work together (as described in previous chapters), there is some misrecognition of the power relations between the organisation and clients. I argued that the GD Association's focus at this time was to provide dogs as utilitarian mobility tools for their clients, yet there is a fourth form of assistance provided by these dogs, one that undoubtedly contributes to the triadic inter-dependence of human animal relations: emotional facilitation. Abundant in the anthropological literature and observed in ethnographic examples of assistance animal users in this setting, it became obvious that this form of facilitation was particularly prevalent for clients and their families. However, the concept and importance of emotional inter-dependence is secondary for the GD Association to the aim of gaining safe, independent mobility and social inclusion.

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[156] For example, being identified as autistic by physically being linked to an identified, trained dog meant that parents and children felt they were not as ostracised in their community as they previously had been.

# Chapter Seven: Feelings, Emotions and Distributed Agency

As a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor and I were taking a trained and matched dog to be placed in her new home with a client I specifically asked about the dog's role:

> *Me:* *What roles will [guide dog] Coco have in [client] Rosemary's life do you think?*
>
> *Instructor:* *Well, her role, her primary role is to be a mobility aid. That's what a guide dog is, that is their number one role – is their being a mobility aid. On top of that then yes, they do provide companionship, comforts and all those other aspects that just having a dog entails.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

Foremost for the staff, dogs are considered a tool – a utility – for mobility. As the above quote shows, it is accepted that these dogs may provide companionship and emotional support, but these 'comforts' are an adjunct to the dog's primary role as a guide. Yet, haven spoken with clients and studied the academic literature of human-animal relations it is clear that safety, independence and social facilitation cannot be separated from emotional benefits and facilitation.

## Introduction

This chapter begins with an analysis of emotions and feelings expressed and experienced by volunteers, staff, clients and dogs. I argue that in this setting the GD Association's practices and policies place the dog primarily as a mobility tool, with emotional benefits considered an addition to the previously mentioned forms of facilitation, and so separates the experiences of emotion from mobility. However, as can be seen in the literature and my ethnography, emotional facilitation for clients unreservedly goes hand-in-hand with their mobility. Emotions are not independent from a person's safety, independence or social life and are in fact an integral aspect to their personal agency. Moreover, this disconnection between emotional facilitation and safe,

independent mobility is yet another anomaly of the human-animal relationship here because at times, client and dog emotions can be paramount and are sometimes viewed as problematic to service provision. I analyse the autonomy experienced by clients Kelly and Rosemary, and discuss how feelings and emotions can consequently impact a person's chances of being matched with and keeping an assistance animal – thus impacting their overall agency. Feelings and emotions between client, dog and organisation in this setting highlight yet another source of mutability and ambiguity of the human-animal relationship and reiterates the triadic inter-dependence that I argue throughout this thesis.

## Human and Animal Emotions and Feelings

Human and animal emotions in this setting are prolific and their variance is significant to the relationships that develop also. As bonds are established and transform, handlers and dogs embark on a journey incorporating a myriad of emotions. Unable to speak language to express their feelings, dogs in this setting have emotions attributed to them which are considered unique to each dog and fluctuate. Puppy-raisers and GD Services staff also express varying emotions from hope to frustration, and confusion to pride as they build and relinquish contact with the pups and dogs in training. However, by nature of building longer-lasting and more intricate relationships, GD Services clients experience a longer-term experience of emotion that ebbs and flows. These feelings and emotions impact the way a person feels about themselves and the world around them, and all are essential to service provision.

### *Emotion and dogs*

During my data collection it was a daily occurrence that emotions and feelings were attributed to dogs on the basis of their behaviours. Specific and numerous in nature, some common terms used were: annoyed; bored; cautious; confused; embarrassed; and nervous. Yet contented, hungry, jealous, focussed, rewarded, sneaky, thirsty, tired, and disappointed – were perhaps the most often ascribed to the puppies and dogs (Fieldnotes 2011). What is important to note here is that these attributed emotions and feelings make possible the ability to be matched and work as part of a guide or AA dog team. For GD Services to not recognise and understand these dogs'

emotions would mean that it would not be possible for animals to facilitate humans in any manner.

> *A dog has feelings, and should not be just used for a tool – I hate [people] that just use their dog for a tool…all these dogs do is ask for love…dogs know if the client loves them or not, if a client just uses them as a machine the dog will still do what is asked of them because they know that that is the person that feeds them.* (Fieldnotes, 2012)

It is important to note that this client was not referring to any person in particular, she was suggesting that guide dog users across the world have varying emotional approaches to their dogs.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis I examined animal assessment and argued that GD Services attribute emotions such as "affection, aggressiveness, anxiousness, boredom, confidence, depression, determinedness, distraction, fragility, insecurity, self-consciousness, warmth, suspicion, trust and willingness" (GDA 2001:34) to dogs by means of observing and interpreting their behaviours, body language, and actions. These feelings and emotions ascribed to individual dogs in this setting led to an understanding of their propensity to work and thus their success or failure in their training programme or working team. Therefore, human interpretation of aggressive, anticipatory, apprehensive, un/interested, dis/obedient, distracted, fearful, nervous, resourceful, submissive, trusting, and un/willing emotions renders these dogs either useful as a mobility tool or not. Also, as argued in the introduction to this thesis, although the attribution of feelings and emotions to these animals is anthropomorphic, the volunteers, clients, and staff in this setting are simply unable to have the human-dog relationships that they do, without these understandings and descriptions of canine emotions. I therefore argue that in this setting, animal and human emotions are inextricably linked to being mobile, feeling safe and experiencing independence. Dog and human emotions form an integral part to the triadic inter-dependence that exists in these examples of assistance-animal facilitation. It follows then, that emotions and mobility are ever-changing and fundamentally fused.

*Emotions and Puppy-Raising*

In regard to puppy-raising, Chur-Hansen et al. (2015) describes the health psychology, experiences and impacts that occur for volunteer puppy-raisers.

> Participants reported more challenges than benefits in raising the puppies. Volunteering to be a guide dog puppy-raiser may not be the pleasant experience that is anticipated when community members first offer their services. (Ibid.:1)

This was a concept at times reiterated in my fieldwork also, however when asked during my time in the field, most puppy-raisers spoke of emotions such as joy from volunteering in this manner; taking pleasure in the belief that their contribution was noble and helpful, and that they loved the companionship the dogs provided them. As part of a questionnaire sent to all puppy-raisers I asked about the experience of puppy-raising and how it feels:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Question:* | *<u>Do you feel the experience of having a guide dog pup has changed you/impacted your life?</u>* |
| *Respondent:* | *Yes. It requires you to be a little more selfless* |
| *Respondent:* | *Yes it has I feel it has made me a better person* |
| *Respondent:* | *I have found it to be a very fulfilling and rewarding experience, … I have also found it very calming and positive as a chronic sufferer of PTSD, plus the presence of a dog in the house once again helps me to sleep more soundly, knowing that she would awake me if we had a human prowler during the night. Personally, I cannot think of too many negative aspects at all – mostly all positive.* |
| | |
| *Question:* | *<u>What is the best aspect about being with these animals?</u>* |
| *Respondent:* | *Knowing that the dog will help a person plus the pup giving you unconditional love* |
| *Respondent:* | *The companionship and well-being they give me personally, plus the knowledge you have a hand in raising a valuable animal who will* |

*give a lifetime of service and companionship to a handicapped human*

*Question:* *<u>Have there been any 'stand-out' experiences (good or bad) for you during your time with these animals?</u>*
*Respondent:* *Hearing that the dog I raised was going to a client and then to see her guide the person through a crowded room were both very rewarding and emotional experiences and ones I will never forget.*
*Respondent:* *[A bad experience] …saying good bye when it is time to hand them in.* (Fieldnotes, 2010)

For me personally, puppy-raising Jarvis was both a challenge and a delight. As examined in the first chapter of this thesis, I experienced depression, anxiousness and felt lonely having spent more than seven years without an animal in my day-to-day. Jarvis' arrival brought happiness, love, fun, structure and companionship into my life – which meant more emotional stability. Although they structured and confined my lifestyle, the GD Services rules and restrictions (in specific regard to teaching and training Jarvis) were somewhat comforting to me as I knew what was expected of me and I was not left in any confusion about how to do the tasks needed to raise him.

As I handed him back to the organisation for him to commence his training I experienced a sense of concern, emptiness, hope, pride and relief (Fieldnotes, 2011; see also Appendix H). I was so sad when I was told he had been diagnosed with a permanent hip condition, requiring ongoing health procedures and medications. It was said, as a result, he would not be progressing to any of the assistance animal roles, regardless of his good nature and willingness to learn. At times I felt I had wasted my time and efforts, with no one on the waiting list benefitting from all my hard work. It impacted my thoughts about undergoing the process again. However, after hearing that he had been bought by a young mother whose son experienced autism (yet did not fit the waiting list criteria for an AA dog), I was relieved that someone would experience his love, patience,

extensive training and goofy nature. Emotions for us as puppy-raisers were certainly varied and fluctuating as the process unfolded.

*Emotions and GD Services Staff*

Emotions for staff varied in all manner and intensity during the dogs' careers. Most commonly, the GD Service staff articulated excitement in the neo-natal period and optimism that a brood bitch would fall pregnant. There was widespread concern and vigilance as brood bitch Luna whelped and sadness when one of her pups died shortly after birth. Anticipation and intrigue were evident as the pups were growing and being observed in their postnatal/pre-puppy-raising weeks. Great care was taken to ensure the dogs' safety and health. During the puppy-raising months, staff carried out their tasks: collecting dogs from interstate flights; coordinating placements and training; problem solving development issues; liaising with veterinarians, local council offices and media; and conducting assessments and reviews for puppies and their raisers, all the while expressing a range of emotions. Fluctuating levels of excitement, anticipation, desire, wonder, anxiety, annoyance, delight, and happiness were emotions that I observed by all staff members as they attempted to produce suitable pups for future training and as they shifted relationships from one dog to the next (Fieldnotes, 2010 and 2011).

The dog trainers and orientation and mobility instructors equally experienced a multitude of emotions while conducting their work. They lived with the hope that they could get the 'best' out of the dogs during training as well as trust that they were doing the 'right thing' for people with vision impairment and families experiencing autism. During animal assessment and characterisation, frustration and annoyance laced with optimism were common, especially in regard to challenging cases – be it dogs, volunteers, clients or marketing personnel. Attentiveness, interest, concern and at times helplessness were attributed to this stage of human-animal relations. Hope and inspiration were predominant emotions felt by GD Services staff members during the process of matching; with satisfaction, delight and relief experienced when a successful human-animal bond and team developed. Disappointment, stoicism and at times confusion followed when a dog did not attain success in training, or when it was matched

incorrectly. Staff exuded triumph, surprise, and happiness when they saw that human and dog teams met or exceeded their expectations of working well together. I observed anguish by staff members when clients were not maintaining the animals' obedience, or diligence as a handler, especially when teams were experiencing negative mobility issues and other difficulties. However, pride and concern were perhaps the most consistent emotions exuded by staff as they delivered services (ibid.).

*Emotions and Clients*

Upon the occasion of my first formal interview with clients, the information initially given was in regard to the emotional journey of how and when they noticed, accepted, or gained a diagnosis regarding vision impairment or autism. This process incorporated sadness and emotions of grief such as anger, denial, fear, and acceptance of entering a cultural realm of disability, and this was also the antecedent of an emotional upheaval relating to the need to get external assistance by means of service provision. As already suggested in this thesis, emotions such as embarrassment, panic, desperation, and feelings of uselessness, disconnection, and isolation in regard to orientation and mobility led clients to make a choice to get a dog as a mobility tool. Being assessed, accepted and then trained with a dog most often caused contradictory emotions. Clients felt trepidatious, at times powerless, and nearly always hesitant about the process of receiving a dog – all while feeling hopeful, excited, and enthusiastic for the changes that were coming.

As explored in the previous chapter, after successful matching, Class and graduation processes, client and dog teams experienced facilitation in three distinct ways. With mobility made safer, increased independence, and social autonomy garnered, clients talked to me about their increased emotional strength. It became clear from my participant observation that for clients conducting everyday tasks and experiencing life as part of a human-animal team, happiness, confidence, and tenaciousness materialised. For the most part handlers felt upbeat, more relaxed, efficient and capable – emotionally facilitated by the opportunity to make their own choices and act upon them (Fieldnotes 2011). Yet, similar to the discussion of social facilitation

in Chapter Six, using an assistance dog did not always make life emotionally easier. Referring to a case of discrimination that reached court (between a client and a private business regarding access), one client told me about the “enormous emotional strain” (Fieldnotes, 2010) that he went through to reach justice. Others experienced heartbreaking emotions as their dogs had difficulty in undertaking tasks, were diagnosed with illnesses, came to their retirement, or passed away; “when you are faced with the prospect that your dog is not going to be there any more, that’s fairly like, well it’s like grieving for a person” (Fieldnotes, 2010).

Having retired her dog four months prior, Patricia chose to keep her dog in the home with her and *not* go onto the waiting list for a new one. She talked to me about how awful it felt to leave the house with her white cane instead of Saffie, her guide dog.

> *I don’t know that I’ll ever not feel the wrench of leaving her behind, which is why I’ve made the decision to just wait … [to have another dog] … Just because, I need time… Emotionally I know it’s different [the bond with a now retired dog], and intellectually I know it’s different, but it doesn’t feel different…it feels, like I’m leaving part of me behind.* (Fieldnotes, 2011)

There is countless research that depict these emotional difficulties (such as grief, guilt, and sadness) experienced during these stages of the human and assistance animal relationship. As the physical bond shifts or ends, every client told me that their emotional bond with their dogs always continues (even after something as awkward as choosing to relinquish them, or as final as death), and that these emotions were often *very* difficult to bear.[157] My ethnographic data collection proves that human emotions have a significant and indisputable bearing upon the relationship that occurs between a client and assistance dog as well as client agency – as will be discussed further in this chapter.

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[157] In addition to the material cited throughout this thesis (regarding the human emotional and psychological benefits of assistance animals) see: Kwong and Bartholomew (2011); Candea (2010); Flynn (2008); Wiggett (2006); Lorenz (2002); Archer (1997); Lagoni, Butler and Hetts (1994) for material relating to the negative emotions and process of detachment associated with the end of human-animal relationships.

## Separation of Emotions and Mobility

Speaking of assistance animals specifically, the academic literature demonstrates that human-animal relations incorporate more than just mobility and safety issues, but an array of emotional experiences also. Anthropologist DeMello (2012), describes the emotions of love and grief experienced when forming relationships and living with animals. She also refers to the emotions humans feel when working with animals during animal assisted activities (ibid.:194-235). Kruger et al. (2010) discuss the definitions and theoretical foundations of animal-assisted intervention in mental health. Tedeschi et al. (2010) describe the role of assistance animals in psychiatric services. Walsh (2009a:466-7) offers a discussion of the myriad of literature pertaining to health and mental health benefits of companion animals. Rabschutz (2007) discusses the effect of partnering with an assistance dog on self-esteem and social connectedness among persons with disabilities. Schneider (2003) poses some considerations for further research in regard to companion animals and mental health. Michalko (1999), Eames, (1994), Eames & Eames (2001), and Putnam (1997) offer first person accounts of the emotions involved in guide dog ownership. Barba (1995), in her critical review of human/companion animal relationship research offers a list of authors who have written on the topics of emotion and mental health also. Valentine, Kiddoo & LaFleur (1993) describe the emotional benefits between people with disabilities and their assistance animals, and finally Zee (1983) considering guide dogs specifically.

Wong (2006) provides findings that “support the notion that a guide dog can provide much more to a visually impaired person than just safe and efficient mobility” (2006: 44). In relation to guide and assistance dogs for the disabled, Lane et al. (1998) state that,

> receiving an assistance dog may confer benefits beyond those of increased independence and mobility…[The dogs can offer an] affectionate relationship extending beyond that of a working relationship… providing a sources of comfort and relief at times of stress or emotional upset...Most subjects had close, affectionate relationships with their dogs that extended beyond a working relationship, many recipients stating that their dog was at least as important as a friend and companion rather than just a working dog. (Lane et al. 1998:50-53)

In addition to this concept Din (2013), in her anthropological investigation of the relationship between humans and dogs, describes the human physical and emotional benefits as well as challenges of guide dog ownership. She speaks of informant Connor, a guide dog user describing how speed and independence are laced with emotions such as frustration, empowerment, and freedom. She argues, “Connor's circumstance perfectly illustrated an instance where the working dog helps the owner practically and simultaneously comforts the owner to emotional stability” (Din 2013:70-76). So why then does it appear that emotions are separated and placed second to mobility in this setting?

The majority of human-animal literature which specifically addresses humans’ use of assistance animals places a recipient’s mobility and emotions side by side. Yet for the staff of the GD Services department, the emotional or mental health benefits that clients gain from receiving an assistance dog are considered at best secondary to the utilitarian benefits which a trained assistance dog can bring. For those providing assistance animal services, emotions appear to be subservient to providing successful mobility, independence and social inclusion. Moreover, the emotions of how it feels to be a disabled person in the world is not the imperative factor of this service provision.

It is clear from previous chapters and the material above that the GD Association do consider the emotions of the client or animal in the process of providing trained assistance dogs. In the processes of assessment, matching and bonding that I describe in Chapter Four emotions are crucial to enabling the working team to function. Too little or too much anxiety from a dog for example, can render positive or negative responses – it can either be considered a great worker (able to channel the emotion and reach the destination quickly and effectively) or it can make it worthy of failure. Instead, what I am suggesting here is that the emotional benefits articulated as significant by the clients and which abound in the academic discussions on the topic do not drive the process of providing guide or AA dogs in this locale but are in fact submerged and put second to the previously discussed aspects of facilitation. As can be seen by the fieldnotes that I cited at the beginning of this chapter, there is a belief held by GD Service staff that it is not an assistant

dog's primary purpose to ensure emotional facilitation. The dog as a *mobility tool* drives the procedures and policies here, with emotional benefits ancillary – thus separating the experience of emotion from mobility. This separation can impact a client's agency: it reinforces the inter-dependence that exists between dogs, clients and the organisation.

The relationship between emotions and mobility is further demonstrated when looking at the lengthy-titled: International Guide Dog Federation Member Organisational Guide Dog Mobility Instructor Course Curriculum (2004).[158] This curriculum recognises that,

> Guide Dog Mobility Instructors now work with a broader range of clients than ever before. Some of these clients have complex needs and limitations that require the instructor to have additional professional skills. (Ibid.: 4)

In one module[159] of this 34-page curriculum, the 'module leader' (the person who is to deliver the training) is stated as needing to be a licensed psychologist and aims to teach the cadet instructors about a client's "grief and loss and to develop an appreciation of how a person's visual loss can affect their social network" (ibid*.:*29). The aim is stated no more comprehensively than to "explore the client psychological considerations prior, during and after guide dog training" (ibid*.*). Unfortunately however, during the twelve months of data collection I observed no such training either by a psychologist or other mental health professional for either the cadets in training to become instructors or the practicing, experienced, employees.[160] This again indicates the power that the organisation has over clients – on this occasion, considering emotions inferior to mobility. The positioning of mobility as more significant than feelings in this setting is in spite of the importance GD Services places upon a having a good emotional client and dog bond, notwithstanding the plethora of research that depicts the importance of emotions upon human-

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[158] This is a document used to teach staff how to train the animals.

[159] Entitled, *Psychological Considerations of Visual Impairment and Mobility and Effective Interpersonal Skills for the Guide Dog Instructor.*

[160] What is even more interesting to note, however, is that even when this international body states the importance of staff having mental health knowledge in order to qualify as cadets, the knowledge they are expected to have is all pertinent toward the dog being a tool for the client.

animal relations. I now examine academic material that relates to this example of triadic inter-dependence and provide ethnographic evidence which supports my assertion that feelings and emotions impact a client's autonomy.

In relation to guide dogs specifically, the academic literature demonstrates that human emotions are indeed of key importance in many of the stages of animal facilitation. Sociologist Sanders (1999a) describes the terror, anxiety and anticipation in the build-up to receiving a dog. The first meeting and consequent receiving of an assistance animal are equally emotion-filled. He explores the companionship, intimacy, comfort, and increase in confidence and self-esteem which follows for owners. Illustrated through ethnographic data collection, Sanders further describes the importance of emotions. Guide dog owners, "find their lives most changed by the impact of the assistance animal on their feelings about themselves" (Sanders 1999b:43). An interviewee offered, "I expected to have increased mobility, which I did. What I didn't expect was the dignity, the self-esteem, the increase in my overall outlook on life" (ibid.). The way it felt to be vision impaired for this interviewee shifted *because* of the positive emotions that using a dog as mobility aid brought them. Sanders' data describes the belief that the dog is an apparatus for mobility, but it is also one half of an "emotion[ally]-laden" relationship, which, although instigated first for the need of better mobility, in fact results in an overall feeling of being "complete" (ibid.:53). Similarly reflected in my data collection at GD Services, Sanders argues that although the dog is a tool, facilitation by means of mobility is actually not the only aspect of the inter-dependent relationship.

> Most essentially, the dog is a "tool" that functions to assist the visually impaired owner in moving through his or her daily life. Dependence on the animal's abilities, together with the almost constant interaction between the guide and the user,

> imbues this relationship with an intensity and emotional strength that significantly sets it apart from "ordinary" human associations with dogs. (Sanders 1999a:39)

Burrows et al. (2008) also describe the additional emotional role of an AA dog once it had been placed:

> The role of [AA dogs] despite the initial training…appears to be varied once the dogs are placed. The dogs are exclusively trained to stop the child from bolting by serving as a tethered control mechanism and are also trained to stay calm and secure in chaotic situations. However it was clear that many other secondary benefits emerged from the placement of these dogs in families of children with autism. (Burrows, Adams & Millman 2008a:56)

Lambert, offers *Some Thoughts About Acquiring and Learning to Use a Guide Dog* (1990). Himself vision impaired, this paper is written from his personal experience and understandings of other Guide Dog users.[161] His aim, he says, is to help users and service providers "understand better the psychological problems and joys of obtaining and using a dog guide" (ibid. "Introduction," para. 6). Again, coinciding with so much of the human-animal relations literature, Lambert describes emotions as intrinsic to the experience of using a guide dog and his overall autonomy as a disabled person and hence this should therefore be of paramount concern to the staff members providing such a service.

Recounting his personal disgruntled acceptance of the need to use a dog for mobility, one of Lambert's greatest concerns was "the sense that…dog users appeared to be almost abjectly "beholden" to their dog-guide…schools" (ibid. para. 2). There is a similar connotation in this guide dog school. As the GD Services contract in this setting states, the assistance dog forever remains the property of the organisation until they decide otherwise – usually upon retirement, failing a training programme or after money has been exchanged due to another reason. Guide and AA dog clients here sign a contract that allows their dog to be removed from them at any given point.

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[161] Lambert is an associate professor of the Sensory Deficits Programme in the psychology department of Concordia University, Canada.

This situates clients in a state of vulnerability and reaffirms their dependence upon the organisation, their policies, procedures and decision making.

Lambert decided to train his own dog guide because training his *own* dog meant it could never be taken back or away from him. "From 1957 through 1979 [he] worked successfully and happily with a German shepherd and a Golden retriever that [he] had trained for [his] own use and companionship" (ibid. para. 4). He describes a guide dog user's emotions as a "vital part in determining the success or failure of the person-dog traveling team" and while this is partially implied through staff emphasis upon bond as key to a successful working relationship, the emotional aspects of bond are downplayed, as demonstrated in Chapter Five.

Lambert (1990, "Trials and Joys of Studenthood" para. 2&3) describes the varied emotions he and others had felt as a result of being dependent upon an institutional environment (the GD School, its policies, and the process of Class) "in order to retain mobility an atmosphere of "pass or fail" [is] created" (ibid.: para.1). The client "is closely regimented, rule-bound and socially constrained, generally cannot enjoy a before-dinner cocktail or freely invite a friend to visit for an hour after dinner. The "instructor," … who is there to assist … supervise[s] the student's life." (ibid: para 3). Clients "may feel burdened by having to be strong, mature, sociable, and efficient every moment of the day" (ibid*.:* para1) in order to be successful at gaining the mobility aid they desire. He then goes on to depict the challenges and adjustments to all areas of life (not just mobility) and the emotional consequences that occur once the graduated team returns home.[162] Not surprisingly perhaps, in my fieldsite there were numerous clients who told me that they did what they had to do – be the person they needed to be – in order to effectively get through the 'red tape' to receive another dog. This separating of emotion and mobility leaves GD Services clients in a fragile position. It can affect their feelings and actions as a person with a disability and thus ultimately their autonomy.

[162] Again, in consensus with many of the clients in this setting and Michalko's experience (1999:84-124).

Lambert's paper is founded on the importance of staff having increased understanding of and giving better attention to "the benefits of dog guide use and the needs of dog guide users" (ibid., "Conclusion" para. 7) – meaning that staff take into consideration client's emotions and feelings *as well as* their mobility needs.

> Although the…staff at dog guide training centres [are] always cordial and sympathetic to the problems of students, they rarely are able to help students cope with significant emotional concerns". (Ibid.)

He suggests, given that emotions are integral to the success or failure of a working team, that staff should be trained in mental health aspects of service provision, or that a psychologist or social worker should be made available. Fundamentally, there should be a firm awareness of the importance of, and a professional ability to coalesce a client's emotions alongside mobility in their service provision. While this specific attention and commitment to emotion is not the case in this setting, it does not mean that client autonomy does not occur – it means that yet again it is distributed.

## Emotions and Agency

### *Kelly and Lady*

For guide dog user Kelly, emotion unquestionably goes hand in hand with mobility. I asked her what her dog Lady means to her:

> *Lady is definitely a mobility aid and a means of getting places but for me she means a whole lot more than that. Because I live on my own she has become my world. I don't totally rely [just] on her, but she is someone to talk to, she is like my baby, because I don't have any kids. She is a friend and she mothers me when my depression is bad. She comes and sits near me, she worries about me and she keeps me focused and at times I am emotionally reliant on [her]… I know that it does hurt a lot when you have to retire your dog. But I also know it is a realistic thing. And there is going to come a time when I am going to have to move on and get another dog and I'll probably love that one just as much.*
>
> *I do find if I go out with a cane more often than not I'm ignored whereas if the dog is with me it is more likely for someone to come up and talk to me…[but] I don't*

> *take Lady out to have someone come and talk to me, I take her out because she is a better mobility aid for me than a cane. It is less stressful and because I enjoy her company. I like her being with me. I like us walking down the street together. It gives me such buzz to walk down the street with her and to talk to her. I don't feel like an isolated person. I [don't] feel invisible…I have come along in leaps and bounds since I had Lady…Lady has given me confidence*. (Fieldnotes, 2011)

The time came when Lady was put on restricted duties due to her slowing guide work, old age, and a few health issues. Kelly was only offered a white cane 'refresher' appointment with Vision Services despite the staff knowing, unmistakeably, how acute her depression could get (as observed and noted during meeting matching Kelly and Lady), and that Lady was a major emotional support to her. Apart from a sense of genuine yet somewhat rudimentary sympathy a suggestion was made that she should go to a counsellor, but Kelly was neither offered nor provided with any other emotional support. Kelly's depressive and dependent emotions were problematic for the GD Services team. Although her emotions were not the primary focus of concern when she was reassessed to go on the waiting list, they impacted which dog would be chosen for her. Instead of first emotionally facilitating Kelly, it was believed that whichever dog was chosen for her would need to 'cope' with these emotions. Within a month, she was matched with new dog Ginger, yet restricted finances meant she was unable to keep her retired dog at home with her – this decision filled Kelly with anguish and guilt. She was permitted the autonomy to choose to return Lady to the organisation or have her rehomed by someone she knew. She chose the latter – a friend who lived a long distance away but still in Kelly's home town.

I was there with Kelly when it came time for her to say goodbye to Lady and it was an emotionally charged experience. She opened the doors to me in floods of tears and told me that weeks of sadness and anguish had proceeded that day. She felt that her agency and emotional strength were dependent on Lady's presence. Sadly, no clear or specific emotional support in terms of service provision was offered to Kelly during or after this time. However, with acceptance, affection and motivation new dog Ginger arrived with great expectations and hope for the future. Regrettably this match was unsuccessful. Ginger was not the right dog to be able to cope with Kelly's emotions. He was removed from Kelly and returned to the Association and Kelly returned to the waiting list for another match. Left at the mercy of the decisions made by GD Services staff,

and without a dog, Kelly's mental health plummeted, her dependence upon others increased and she felt sad and apprehensive. Anticipating that she would be matched with another dog soon, she left Lady living where she was, so as not to upset her with changes and the inevitable 'saying goodbye' again when the next dog arrived. This duration of time on the waiting list, without a dog, was excruciating for Kelly.

Seven months passed with Kelly 'dog-less' and reliant upon a white cane. Anguished without a dog, Kelly finally gave up and organised for Lady to return to her home. Remarkably, more than 18 months went by before Kelly decided to apply for a guide dog with another service provider. GD Services staff said that it was not due to Kelly's emotional diagnoses that she was not matched with a dog during this time, but because they had so few successful dogs coming through the programme that would have been suitable to cope with her specific needs it was more difficult to match her. If emotions and mobility were considered as important as each other and catered for better, this may not have been the outcome. However, ultimately as a result of Kelly's emotional needs there was no match for her. Kelly accepted this to be true, reasonable and agonising. While it was an outcome that she would have not chosen for herself, she was able to practice her agency by choosing to have her retired dog Lady back home and in her possession. Kelly's agency at this time was distributed between herself and the organisation, dependent on the removal of the dog, independent by choosing a different service provider.

*Rosemary and Coco*

With a hand gently rubbing Coco's ear, Rosemary tells me, "I just don't know what I'd do without her. She's always there, someone to talk to" (Fieldnotes, 2011). Rosemary brushes Coco every day and proudly takes her to the shops across the road. "They all know her. They don't know me, but they all know her" (ibid.). This example of the companionship and emotional support that guide dog Coco provided for client Rosemary was actually cause for concern for the GD Services staff. Two staff members informally told me that it was very frustrating to see Rosemary incorrectly use her residual vision when working Coco, resulting in a tendency to override Coco's directions and decisions – something they believed would completely undo the dog's training. They knew

Rosemary had strong emotions and feelings of companionship for Coco and they both told me that Rosemary was using the dog for companionship more than mobility – something that needed to be 'dealt with'.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Staff Member:* | *So if you [as an instructor] have any suspicions and inclinations that someone's wanting more the companionship over actually the mobility aid of a guide dog then that needs to be addressed, and that is done through training … and then monitored as well.* |
| *Me:* | *Do you think there is risk of that with Rosemary?* |
| *Staff Member:* | *[Hesitation] Um, I've seen some things that make me question [this point] and I've had quite frank conversations with [Rosemary] about [Coco] as a mobility aid and that is what she is for. So yeah, I have been addressing it and I will plug away at it. [Rosemary] is making a conscious effort.* (Fieldnotes, 2010) |

Soon after Rosemary was graduated with her guide dog, Coco began to put on a substantial amount of weight. GD Services had concern about Rosemary's so-called unsuitable need for companionship over mobility, as well as Coco's extreme weight gain which I was told jeopardised her skills as a guide dog. This weight gain was in direct breach of the GD Services contract that Rosemary signed and agreed to uphold. "She's just got those eyes that you can't say no to" (Fieldnotes, 2011) said Rosemary in regard to her husband's love and weakness for giving Coco food treats. The GD Service staff told Rosemary that they would first allow Coco to remain at home to lose the weight. She was expected to change the dog's diet and stop her husband from slyly feeding her biscuits. Moreover, in an attempt to strictly control the situation Rosemary was to then take the dog to the veterinarian once a week for a weigh-in with the data being directly sent through to the GD Services office from the vets. I was told by staff that if Coco did not lose the weight she would not be able to do her 'best work' and her ongoing health would be at risk. Her weight loss was paramount to her health and ability to function as a guide. So, although there was concern for Rosemary's 'inappropriate' dependency, it was Coco's ability as a mobility aid that drove these practices. Rosemary was warned that if Coco did not lose a certain amount of weight per week, the dog would be removed from her home and given to a staff member for them to manage the weight loss. In essence Coco's utilitarian need (her primary purpose) would

be in jeopardy if she did not lose weight. Her emotional purpose for Rosemary was not an influencing factor in this action.

A month later, Coco had not lost more than a kilo. Staff told me that this would eventually kill Coco and that they had given Rosemary every opportunity to control the situation, to do what was needed to be done, but she could not follow through. At this point, Rosemary's emotions and need for companionship were unabashedly considered secondary to the organisation's decision to remove Coco from her home – for the ultimate safety of the dog – I was told. Rosemary said that she understood why the dog was removed and that she knew it was important for Coco to lose the weight. Rosemary had no choice but to comply, and Coco was gone for approximately eight weeks. Although Rosemary's emotions were recognised by the team as sad and lonely, she was offered no specific emotional support or means to ease the situation. Rosemary told me she hated every minute of her being separated from Coco, that she was a 'part' of her, and it felt awful to not have her by her side. This is deep inter-dependency between a client and their dog, which echoes the physical dyadic dependence that is fundamental to human-animal relationships.

Eventually Coco was returned home, only to have the weight go back on again. Again, she was removed by the GD Services staff for the weight to be lost. When it became clear that Coco would only end up putting the weight back on yet again, the GD Services made a decision which actually put Rosemary's emotion ahead of her mobility. Coco was retired and all the guiding equipment removed from the home so as to ensure that she was not used in a working capacity. They did not need to make this decision – alternatively, they could have removed Coco and matched her to another client, but they did not – they allowed Rosemary to have Coco in her life. Rosemary exercised her autonomy by not relinquishing Coco to a friend or family member (as Kelly chose to do) nor did she relinquish Coco back to the organisation, instead she chose to take on financial, physical and emotional custody of her. Great sadness and guilt ensued for Rosemary. She was acutely aware of how much time, money, effort, and love went into these dogs becoming qualified. Yet, as concerned as she was that Coco was retired and would not be able to facilitate her mobility (accompany her to and on the bus, over to the shops, to appointments and so forth),

Rosemary was tremendously relieved, delighted and happy that she was able to keep Coco at home with her. Ultimately, Rosemary's emotional needs were met – which, although was not the plan for the GD Service team, it was Rosemary's primary desire. What also become clear here is that the GD Association could have chosen to remove Coco and match her with a new client – she was after all a successfully trained guide dog. Yet despite offering little emotional support to clients and emotion being secondary to facilitation, this choice demonstrates an awareness of the importance of client emotions by the GD Services staff. Nonetheless, the decision to retire Coco enforced by the GD Services team also demonstrates their ongoing agency in decision making.

## Conclusion

While I did observe staff acknowledging and empathising with clients experiencing a range of emotions in relation to receiving, working, retiring, and grieving an assistance animal, a senior team member told me "it [service provision] is about physical need, not emotional want" (Fieldnotes, 2011). Furthermore, all non-mobility needs were dealt with as an adjunct to all mobility requirements and were managed by the people who train the dogs (mobility instructors) with no specific education provided. There was no one person in the department hired or assigned for the emotional or psychological needs of the clients and it is my understanding that during the entire time of my data collection there was no one in the department who had specific psychological, psychiatric, or general mental health training specific to client assessment, matching, or service provision. Certainly, no consulting psychologist or other mental health professional was brought in to provide pertinent knowledge of this topic.

I have analysed the cases of the clients Kelly and Rosemary, and discussed how one's feelings and emotions can impact a person's chances of being matched with and keeping an assistance animal. The above examples of feelings and emotions between client, dog and organisation in this setting highlight yet another source of mutability and ambiguity of the human-animal relationship and reiterates the triadic inter-dependence that I have argued throughout this thesis. I have argued that emotions were a fundamental aspect of facilitation for clients rather than just being an adjunct to mobility and yet, whilst supported in the literature, emotion at GD Services was *not* a

driving factor in regard to providing animal assistance. What is important to note however, is that this focus upon mobility does not imply a complete lack of client autonomy; instead it means that agency is distributed across dog, client and organisation.

This discounting of emotional facilitation as integral to the client, is indicative of the GD Services department's understanding of an assistance dog as primarily a utilitarian tool and highlights a contrast between literature and organisational practice. In addition, I have demonstrated that emotions are not independent from a person's safety, independence or social inclusion: they are in fact a part of their personal agency, regardless of whether they are submerged by the processes of the organisation or not.

# Conclusion

Disabilities such as blindness and autism are considered a sensory interruption from the 'norm' and a hindrance that needs to be resolved. In untilising evidence of how people in my fieldsite think and feel about, and make use of assistance dogs, this thesis seeks to advance the academic understanding of: how the relationships between humans and animals is understood; how senses are referred to, made use of, and valued in the context of disability and animal assistance; and finally, how people's everyday lives are facilitated by these animals. In this setting, it is a taken for granted understanding that animals can and do assist humans to resolve various issues. At the GD Association staff, clients, volunteers and family members build relationships with puppies being raised, dogs being trained, and graduated guide, AA and PaT dogs. The expectations of and ways that these humans and animals are thought about here shapes the service provision that then frames the human-animal relationship in this setting. This thesis has highlighted three distinct aspects that emerge from these cross-species interactions: human and animal agency; a triadic form of inter-dependence between the organisation, clients and dogs; and discrepancy between service provision and experience of crucial emotions.

*Agency and the Coming Together of Human and Animal*

As argued in Chapters Two and Four, dogs' actions and behaviours are interpreted and judged by humans, and are then attributed with choice and agency. Agency is most valued when dogs act in accordance with the requirements of a successful assistance animal – following commands, and importantly, overriding a handler when appropriate, to enable safe mobility for someone with vision impairment or anchoring a bolting child. I have therefore argued that dogs here both have and do not have agency.

Human agency is examined during this thesis, noting throughout contradictions between the agency and facilitation of clients' lives versus the control held by the GD Association and while in the first chapter I discuss the hegemony that the GS Services had over puppy-raisers, the focus throughout was upon the attribution of agency to assistance animal users. As argued in Chapters

Three and Six, by learning to engage their senses in specific ways and by engaging with a dog, people with vision impairment and children with autism become able to maintain safer orientation and mobility, along with more independence and social facilitation. This enables further decision-making and autonomy. Clients develop and demonstrate personal autonomy by choosing to use an assistance dog (as opposed to a cane or sight guide), receiving the facilitation that comes from dogs as mobility tools, and by exercising their choice of service provider. However, this client agency is only partial – as we saw with Olivia in Chapter Five who, was failed by the unsuccessful match with guide dog Princess. Olivia was then left reliant upon the processes and polices of the organisation, and the staff's decisions and actions.

The coming together of humans and animals, and the nature of human-animal relationship was an ongoing aspect of this thesis. Chapter One depicted the tightly structured and fun experience of puppy-raising Jarvis as we developed our unique relationship and bond. Chapter Two described the connection between staff and dogs as they trained and established which role (if any) the juvenile canines would have. Chapter Three examined the importance of human and animal senses in regard to human-animal relationships. Chapter Four focussed upon the complex tasks of bringing together fully trained dogs and clients through the process of assessment, matching and Class. Chapter Five examined the bonding and attachments between dogs and clients to establish successful teams, and finally, Chapters Six and Seven analysed the physical and emotional benefits and challenges of dog and handler working together as a team.

By examining these experiences and processes of humans and animals coming together not only do I contribute to a substantial gap in the anthropological literature, I also illustrate key findings. In this setting dogs in particular are seen as having both inherent and mutable characteristics, with tension between the two. Humans – whether staff of the GD Association or clients – are in relationships shaped by power and agency, as are humans and dogs. Codified and rational methods of service provision take little account of those aspects which are fluid and in tension at

times. From this, a triadic inter-dependence emerges which propels both service provision and human-animal relations.

### *Cross-species Inter-dependence*

My argument of inter-dependence between dogs, handlers and the organisation is maintained throughout the thesis. All the chapters of my thesis incorporate the *dogs'* dependence upon people during their career and consequent various human-animal relations. Dogs here are dependent on humans to organise veterinarians for inoculations and other health care, corporate sponsors and other financial donations for food, toys and equipment. They depend upon puppy-raisers, home-boarders, trainers and clients to provide them with mental and physical stimulation, shelter, safety and emotional support. Moreover, as pack animals, dogs in this setting are also reliant upon humans for structuring their environment and status within that pack.

Chapter Three focuses upon the needs of people with disabilities, and, as sensory impairment at the GD Association is believed to equate to a lack of mobility and autonomy, clients are dependent upon their residual functioning senses and others, such as family members and friends, to conduct their everyday lives. I further examine the concept of inter-dependence when discussing the need to choose service provision and to learn to walk with a canine mobility aid to accommodate this sensorial lack. The joint interaction that comes from walking together as a team provides not only the physical and emotional communications essential to bonding and 'good' work (examined in Chapter Five), but also the forms of human facilitation described in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Four illustrates that clients are dependent not only upon the dog that they work with, but also volunteers and the organisational staff. For without: permission to be placed on the waiting list; having successfully raised and trained dogs available; gaining access to orientation and mobility training; being provided the appropriate match; and then being deemed a successful team, clients would not be able to develop any form of assistance dog relationship at the GD Services. I therefore reiterate throughout this thesis that client autonomy is linked to not only cross-species, inter-dependence with a dog, but on the organisation also. This

dependence and the power relations it rests upon go largely unrecognised by the Association itself.

As the client is reliant upon the dog, volunteers and staff, so too the GD Association is dependent upon the dogs, staff members, clients and volunteers in return. Without each and all of them it would be impossible to provide assistance animals as mobility tools and thus for the GD Services to exist. Without GD Services staff, this not-for-profit organisation would be unable to breed, train, assess, match and support guide and AA dogs in the community. Without volunteers providing their time for puppy-raising, home-boarding, hands-on assistance with new born pups, raising funds and ongoing administration tasks there would be no dogs in a position to be trained. Further, without clients and dogs, there would be no employment for mobility instructors, dog trainers, and cadets, or for the puppy-raising coordinator and their team of trainers and veterinary nurses. The GD Services team manager, leaders and administration staff are also dependent upon people with sensory loss and these assistance dogs not only for gainful employment, but for opportunities such as training and education, work place relationships, and satisfaction in their choice of working role in the community. Cross-species inter-dependence makes possible all of the human-animal interactions and relationships that occur in this setting.

*Emotions*

As I drew this thesis to a close, I provided an examination of emotions as crucial to facilitation, however, they were also considered throughout each chapter of this thesis. Every stage of animal career and human-dog relationship that I observed and encountered during my data collection incorporated feelings and emotions, which I have illustrated. In Chapters Two and Four I explored the example of animal anxiety and how it can impact the assessment of a dog as well as the working team (either positively or negatively). Chapter Five also considered canine emotion in regard to the degree of emotional bond that develops between human and animal. The point to note here is that these emotions are attributed by humans, and without these attributed

emotions it would not be possible for a dog to be trained and matched to any person. Animal emotion, while anthropomorphic, is essential to the human-animal relationships here.

During the 12 months and 11 weeks that I puppy-raised Jarvis, I experienced numerous and fluctuating emotions as I anticipated, raised, and said goodbye to my gorgeous, golden boy. I told of other puppy-raisers' feelings: their personal fulfilment from volunteering for such a cause; the companionship and facilitation that they themselves gained from being with and having the dog in their day-to-day; and their delight at seeing the dog they raised actively working with a client. I also argue that the GD Services staff expressed emotions daily in regard to animals they engaged with. During the dogs' career, polarising and persistent emotions were expressed while staff bred, nurtured, trained, assessed, matched, and supported these animals in their working lives and retirement – building, transferring and breaking bonds as they went. However, it was the emotions of GD Service clients that were prominent in this research and thesis.

During the distinct stages that a client experienced an animal's career, I argued that people with vision impairment and families experiencing autism felt an assortment and variability of emotions, with perhaps hope and grief being the two most commonly raised. Emotions were paramount to human-animal bonding and the working relationship (be it a good or bad outcome). However, for clients, emotions were not only present in relation to the engagement they had with their dogs. Their experience and perceptions of being considered disabled were equally as emotive. Throughout this thesis it becomes clear that emotions directly impacted the way a person felt about themselves, their vision impairment or their child's autism, their manner of being in the world, and thus their agency.

However, while emotions were clearly paramount in the literature and to clients, I argue that they are downplayed by the GD Services department – disconnected from safety, independence and social facilitation. By arguing that the GD Services place dogs primarily as mobility tools, with emotional benefits considered supplementary, I maintain this disassociation is yet another indispensable, irresolvable aspect of the human-animal relationship. While the submerging of

emotional facilitation for mobility occurs here, I argue however in Chapters Four and Five that client emotions can at times be problematic and prominent, impacting a person's chances of being matched with and keeping an assistance animal. This separation of emotion from mobility yet again sees clients gain only partial agency – reliant upon the organisation's structures and decisions to maintain their autonomy – clearly a point of tension. I contend that at the time of data collection, this GD School did not pay adequate attention to the power they held, and their impact upon client's emotions and consequent autonomy.

While the positive and negative aspects of human facilitation by assistance dogs was discussed at length in Chapter Six, there are three specific implications which result from the organisation's submerging of human (particularly client) feelings and emotions. When emotions are considered a hindrance to providing an assistance dog – such as too much or too little – the implications are that a client either will not receive a matched dog or that there is a very long wait for one. There was no specific matching that occurred during my data collection specific to facilitating client feelings. Indeed, if there was any focus upon emotion during matching it was in regard to the dogs' emotional capacity to cope. There were emotional and negative consequences for clients who, when without their guide dog their feelings were effectively considered irrelevant to their service provision. For example, Olivia, Kelly and James garnered no referrals for psychological or counselling services, or any ongoing emotional support from the GD Services team *despite* the substantial impact that having their dog retired or died caused.

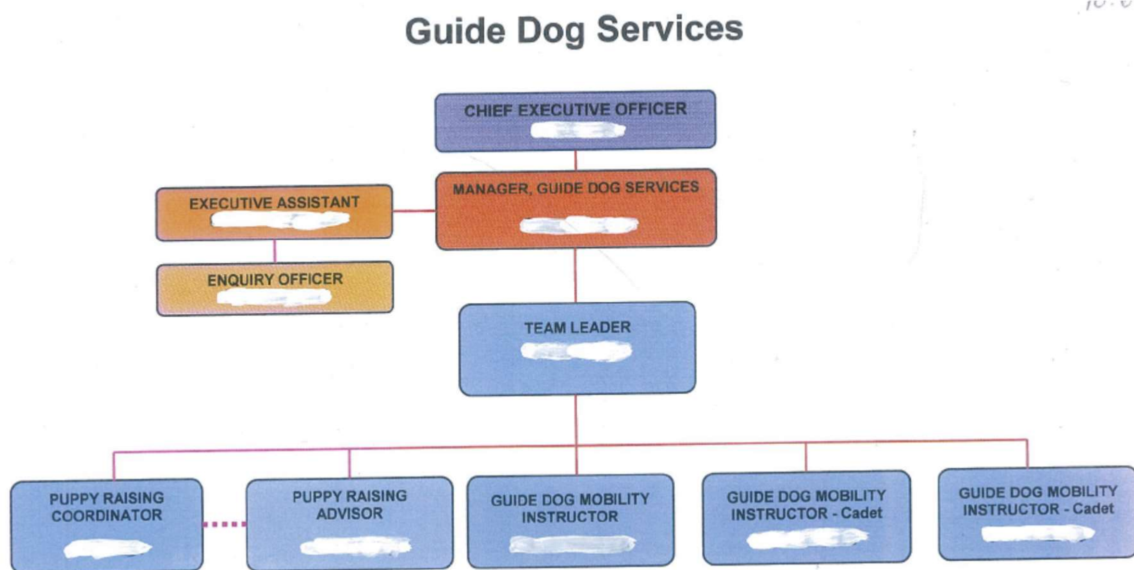
This ethnographic research has established that the human-animal relationships in this setting are dynamic and evolving; framed by many external factors. Not only do dogs simultaneously have and not have agency, clients gain safety, independence, social and emotional facilitation by means of partial autonomy. This partial autonomy is in the form of inter-dependence between dogs, clients, volunteers and the organisation, resulting in distributed agency across people and

dogs. Human and animal agency in this setting is at times partial, other times attributed, yet always distributed and framed by human control.

This thesis contributes to the discussion of animal choice and agency, particularly through the unique concept of animals choosing their career and a distribution of agency between human and animal actors. I also offer important anthropological insights into the complex matching and bonding process between clients and assistance dogs and the assumption of fixed and mutable characteristics that underpin the assessment process of humans and animals. Most importantly, I anthropologically contribute to the discussion of physical and emotional benefits that animals can bring humans and how these are shaped by power relations largely submerged in policies and practices. More research needs to be taken in this direction – looking beyond the structured working relationship that I observed in my data collection. By considering and analysing social thought and behaviours in other types of unique and worthy human-dog connections, increased understanding of need, legitimacy, and access, regarding human-animal relationships could be achieved.

# Appendices

Appendix A: The GD Services Hierarchy.




(Fieldnotes, 2010)

# Appendix B: The Discovery Centre.

(GDA 2010-2016)

(GDA, 2010-2016)

(Exhibition Studios 2016)

## Appendix C: A 'mind-fold'.

A form of blindfold which creates a complete black sensation which often inevitably unsettles the wearer's balance and sense of direction also.

(Bruce 2016)

Appendix D: Medical Clearance Certificate.

MEDICAL REPORT REGARDING THE CLIENT
*(This form is to be completed by a Medical Practitioner)*

Name: ........................ Date of Birth: ........................

Address: ........................ Pension No: ........................

State: ........ Postcode: ........ Medicare No: ........................

**1. Vision:** (a) Cause of Visual Impairment (diagnostic) ........................

(b) Duration of Visual Impairment: ........................

(c) Prognosis: ........................

**2. Hearing:** Is hearing impaired? Right: ........ Left: ........

Does client wear hearing aid(s)? Yes........ No........

**3. Diabetes:** Is the client a diabetic? Yes........ No........
(if yes, please complete attached form)

**MEDICAL HISTORY:** Has the client at any time suffered from any of the following?

**(a) CARDIO VASCULAR SYSTEM**
(i) Angina pectoris, palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, hypertension, ankle swelling, or heart complaint?
........................

(ii) Peripheral vascular disease, intermittent claudication, varicose veins, ulcers?
........................

**(b) RESPIRATORY SYSTEM**
Asthma, bronchitis, chronic cough, pleurisy, or any other lung complaint?
........................

**(c) MUSCULAR-LOCOMOTOR SYSTEM**
Spinal complaints, arthritis, bunions, foot ailments?
........................

**(d) CNS - NEUROLOGICAL SYSTEM**

(i) C.V.A.? L/R........ Date of Incident: ........

Hemiplegia, hemianopia, T.I.As........................

Type: ........ Date of last attack: ........

How severe: ........ How often: ........

(ii) Fits of any kind, attacks of unconsciousness, epilepsy?........................

Specialist contact: ........................

(iii)Balance or sensory loss?........................

**(e) PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE:**
Does the client have any behavioural or psychological difficulties, which may have a bearing upon t training?

Please comment: ........................

**(f)** Has the client had any recent surgery? YES/NO If YES, please state nature of surgery: ........................

*G:\Guide Dog Services\CLIENTS\Interview and assessment\Medical Report Re Client - SA Appendix M.doc*

(g) Is the client on a special diet? YES/NO If YES, please specify:...........................................

.............................................................................................................................

(h) Is the client subject to any allergic conditions? YES/NO If YES, please specify:...........................

.............................................................................................................................

(i) Is the client on any medication? (YES)/NO If YES please specify:

| NAME: | DOSAGE: | FREQUENCY: | SIDE EFFECTS: |
|---|---|---|---|
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

(j) Please indicate the maximum exercise tolerance from the range below (TICK)

(A) ☐ Short periods of exercise (5-10 minutes) in or around the home, with rest as required.

(B) ☐ Walks in the local and adjacent areas (up to 1-11/2 hours) with rest as required.

(C) ☑ Walking in a range of areas (up to 3 hours), with rest as required.

Other/Comment:.............................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

**EXAMINATION:**

1. (a) Height:.........................................cms (b) Weight:.........................................kgs
2. (a) Is breathing normal and regular in character?...........................................................
   (b) Is there any abnormality of the respiratory system to palpitation, percussion, or auscultation. If so, please give particulars:...........................................................................
   .............................................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................................
3. (a) What is rate of pulse?.........................................(b) Is pulse regular?.............................
   (c) What is blood pressure?.........................................(d) Is there any peripheral oedema?..........
   (e) Are pedal pulses present?.........................................(f) Do you consider vascular system to be healthy?.........
4. Are there any signs of disease of nervous or muscular systems?..............................................
   .............................................................................................................................

**SUMMARY:**
Are there any special considerations either revealed by the foregoing history and examination or are you aware of any other issues which require our consideration in delivery of a mobility training programme?..........

.............................................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S NAME:......................................................... (PLEASE PRINT)

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S SIGNATURE:.........................................................

ADDRESS:.............................................................................................................

.........................................................POSTCODE:.........................................

TELEPHONE NO: (..........)..................................DATE:.........................................



(Fieldnotes, 2011)

## Appendix E: "Canine Temperamental and Behavioural Analysis".

### CANINE TEMPERAMENTAL AND BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS – Page One

Name: George

| Speed | Code | Sex | Breed | Sire | Ready | Ass Start | Qualified |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | MALE | LABRADOR | | | 06/03/06 | |

| Trainer | Status | Desexed | Colour | Dam | Matching | Trg Start | Date WD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | YES | BLACK | | | | 10/03/06 |

| Location | DOB | Size | Breeder | Side | Dog ID No. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SA | 06/12/04 | LARGE | TASMANIA | | 9045i00 |

Sponsorship

Spd Control

Tension

Spend (Walks)

Leash Relieve

Description of Dog (Puppy Development)

Description of Dog 5 Walk Assessment

Very high levels of anxiety, strong dog distraction, unresponsive to handlers.

Specific Concerns during Puppy Development (toileting, family)

Description of Dog 20 Walk Assessment

Description of Dog (Kennels)

Description of Dog (Training / Pre Matching

Specific Behaviour (Kennels) mixing/grooming behaviour, etc

Description of Best Possible Match (Workload, Environment, Type)

**HEALTH**

| Skin | |
|---|---|
| Hips Score | |
| Hip Comment | |
| Elbow Score | |
| Elbow Comment | |
| Pads | |
| Hearing | |
| Eyes | |
| Gastro-Intestinal | |
| Dietary Needs | |
| Heart | |
| Urinary | |
| Other Health | |

## TEMPERAMENTAL SCORES AND COMMENTS – Page two

| Name | --------------------------------- | Ner | 5 | N Agg | 5 | PAgg | 5 | Code | | Trainer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SS | 5 | I Agg | 5 | | | Matching | | | |

**Work Rate**

| Initiative | | | Concentration | | | Confidence | | | Self Interest | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 4 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Willingness Han | | | Willingness Wk | | | Consistency | | | Work Load | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Excitability | | | Conscience | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | | | | | | |

5 walk – George has lower concentration due to his food distraction levels.

20 walk – Concentration levels have slowly started to improve.

**Social Behaviour**

| Home Behav | | | Social Behav | | | Affection Sk | | | Attention Sk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |

Good home behaviour. Appears gentle with children despite size. Can scavenge off floor in home.

| Sep Anxiety | | | Maturity | | | Aloofness | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |

**Coping**

| Anxiety (Gen) | | | Anxiety (Sp) | | | Anxiety (Int) | | | Anxiety (Acc) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Adaptability | | | Stress | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | | | | | | |
| Suspicion (Gen) | | | Suspicion (Sp) | | | Suspicion (Int) | | | Suspicion (RR) | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 6 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |

5 walk - George showed suspicion to the bronze pig statues in the mall. His recovery was moderate.

**Sensitivities**

| Mental Sens | | | Sub/Dom (Dogs) | | | Sub/Dom (People) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | | | |
| Hearing Sen+ | | | Hearing Sens- | | | Body Sen+ | | | Body Sens- | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Visual Sen+ | | | Visual Sens- | | | Olfactory Sen+ | | | Olfactory Sen- | | |
| 5 | 6 | | 5 | 5 | | 7 | 6 | | 5 | 5 | |

5 walk - George has shown moderate to strong scenting during assessment, requiring leash control.

20 walk – George scenting levels have decreased slightly during training.

**Distraction**

| Dog+ | | | Dog- | | | Cat+ | | | Cat- | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 6 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | | | 5 | | |
| People+ | | | People- | | | Other+ | | | Other- | | |
| 5 | 6 | | 5 | 5 | | | | | | | |
| Bir+ | | | Bird- | | | Food+ | | | Food- | | |
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 7 | 7 | | 5 | 5 | |

George has strong food distraction throughout assessment, requiring leash corrections. His dog distraction levels are controllable and his recovery is good. He shows a positive interest in people especially children.

**Aggressions**

| Dog | | | Cat | | | Human | | | Food | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Bone | | | Bowl | | | Object | | | Territory | | |

No aggressions seen.

| 5 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|

| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Predatory

| 5 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|

***NB Please Indicate if Aggression is Dom/App/Prot***

| Trainability | | | Reliability | | | Matchability | | | Health (Longevity) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 4 | 4 | |

| Role Acceptability | | | Handler Transferability | | | Temperament Suitability | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |

Health lower due to poor hip score?

(Fieldnotes, 2011)

## Appendix F: “Guide Dog Contract”.

The contract between Guide Dogs Association and the client.

# GUIDE DOG CONTRACT

This is a contract between the Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and Northern Territory Incorporated (hereinafter referred to as the “Guide Dogs SA.NT”) and (hereinafter referred to as the “client”).

1. THE GUIDE DOGS SA.NT AGREES TO:

(a) Provide the client with a trained guide dog, named ; Guide dog number (hereinafter referred to as the “guide dog”), at no cost to the client.

(b) Supply the client with initial equipment issue and identification, as deemed necessary by the Guide Dogs SA.NT, at no cost to the client. All equipment and identification remains the property of the Guide Dogs SA.NT.

(c) Provide replacement body piece, harness handle, leash and identification where such equipment is returned to the Guide Dogs SA.NT as no longer serviceable due to normal wear and tear.

(d) Provide the client with follow-up and aftercare training to meet the individual needs of the unit (unit referring to the client and the guide dog).

(e) Provide financial assistance with veterinary costs outside of routine veterinary examinations or vaccinations.

2. THE CLIENT AGREES TO:

(a) Take good and proper care of the guide dog at all times; including meeting all routine costs relating to the feeding, health and welfare of the guide dog.

(b) Carry out at all times the instructions of authorised Guide Dogs SA.NT personnel in relation to the care, training and use of the guide dog.

(c) Guide dog client services, including orientation, are to be provided by the Guide Dogs SA.NT only and not by another dog guide service.

(d) Give the Guide Dogs SA.NT all facilities to inspect the guide dog.

(e) Not part with the guide dog without the consent of the Guide Dogs SA.NT.

(f) Immediately notify the Guide Dogs SA.NT of the loss or straying of the guide dog.

(g) Immediately notify the Guide Dogs SA.NT of any attack by another dog or member of the public.

(h) Not lend the guide dog to any person for the purpose of using it as a guide, or in a manner likely to be detrimental to the guide dog's work, or for any other purpose that is unlawful.

(i) Not use the guide dog for any purposes of fund raising, advertising or public demonstration (including dog shows) without the **express permission** of the Guide Dogs SA.NT.

(j) Not use the guide dog for any form of personal solicitation.

(k) Comply with all legislation, local by-laws and regulations relating to the keeping of dogs (including RSPCA).

(l) Ensure the guide dog is examined by a registered veterinary surgeon each six months for the purpose of assessing its general health and, when necessary, provide annual vaccination. A report from the veterinary surgeon is to be provided to the Guide Dogs SA.NT immediately after each visit.

(m) Not permit the guide dog to be operated upon or to undergo treatment, except on the advice of, and under the supervision of, a registered veterinary surgeon, and to advise the Guide Dogs SA.NT immediately of any such operation or treatment.

(n) If the dog should die, to notify the Guide Dogs SA.NT immediately and to forward a certificate from a registered veterinary surgeon as to the cause of death.

(o) To be responsible for any damage or injury caused by the guide dog, whilst in possession or under the control of the client.

(p) To notify the Guide Dogs SA.NT immediately upon any change of address of either the client or the guide dog.

3. All equipment issued remains the property of the Guide Dogs SA.NT and can only be altered or replaced by the Guide Dogs SA.NT. All equipment must be returned, upon retirement of the guide dog or on request by the Guide Dogs SA.NT.

4. In the event of any breach of the terms and conditions outlined in clause 2. a – p, the Guide Dogs SA.NT reserves the right to retire the dog and withdraw all equipment from the client.

5. The Guide Dogs SA.NT reserves the right to retire the dog, withdraw all equipment and negotiate the withdrawal of the dog in the following circumstances:

- Where the working or social behaviour of the guide dog or the client is unsafe and likely to result in damage or injury to the unit, or to any person, animal or property.
- Where the guide dog is not being fully utilised for the purpose for which it was intended.
- Where serious illness or death, as certified by a registered medical practitioner, prevents the client from continuing to successfully continue working the guide dog.
- Where deliberate or inadvertent cruelty, abuse or mistreatment of the guide dog's physical or mental wellbeing is suspected, the dog will be retired immediately and all equipment withdrawn. The matter will be referred to the RSPCA for investigation. If such treatment is proven and the RSPCA exercises its legal responsibility by withdrawing the guide dog, the guide dog shall be immediately returned to the care of the Guide Dogs SA.NT.
- Where the guide dog is used or participates with the guide dog handler in unlawful activities.

6. The guide dog shall remain with the client, during the client's lifetime, subject to the terms and conditions stated above.

7. The client hereby acknowledges that, despite the guide dog having been trained to a standard prescribed by the Guide Dogs SA.NT, the guide dog may behave in an uncharacteristic and/or unpredictable manner due to the inherent nature of animals. The client agrees that the Guide Dogs SA.NT shall not be liable to the client (except to the extent excluded by law) for any accident, loss, damage, cost or expenses, including consequential loss, as a result of the actions, fitness or capability of the guide dog.

I hereby agree to abide by the terms and conditions as set out in this contract.

DATED the ________________day of ________________, in the year____.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and Northern Territory Incorporated by:

Name:________________________________ Signature_________________

Title:____________________________________________________________

Address: 251 Morphett Street, Adelaide, 5000.

SIGNED by the client:

Name:________________________________ Signature_________________

IN THE PRESENCE OF:

Name: _______________________________ Signature_________________

Address: _______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

(Fieldnotes, 2011: emphasis original)

## Appendix G: Triadic Link between AA dog, Child and Handler

The triadic physical link between AA dog, child and handler via a working jacket, lead and safety belt.

(GDA, 2010-2016).

# Appendix H: Jarvis and Me

Proud as can be at the end of our time together.

(Fieldnotes, 2011).

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