

**AT BOTH ENDS OF THE LEASH: AN EXPLORATION OF THE MENTAL  
HEALTH IMPACT OF SERVICE DOGS IN CANADA**

A MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO  
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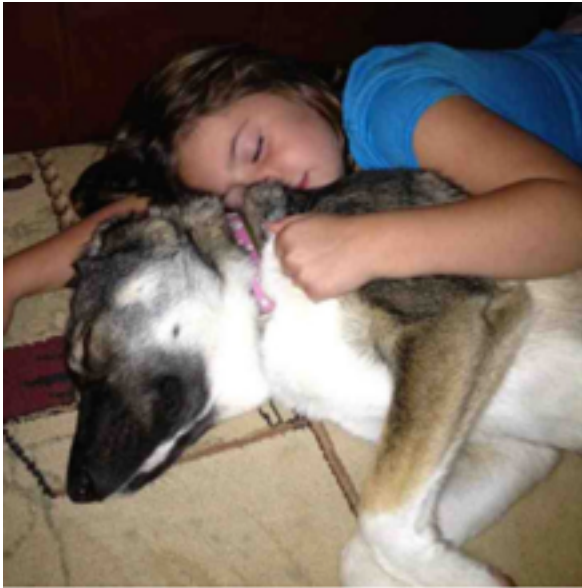
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### **ABSTRACT**

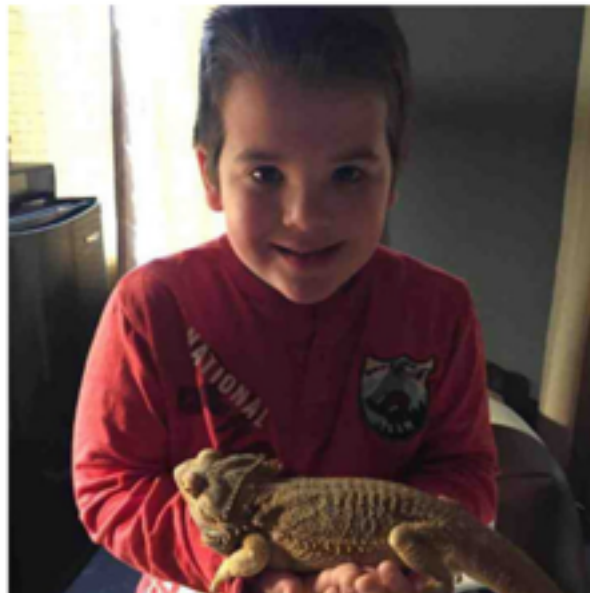
When studying the roles and experiences of a service dog team, it is imperative that the animal-human bond be considered in this process. As the demand and acknowledgement of service dogs for mental health and veterans with PTSD continues to grow, it is important that academic research be conducted in order to not only maximize the benefits to the human and reduce the attitudinal and systemic barriers faced by the service dog team, but also to ensure the well-being of the service dog themselves. This major research paper will show that although individuals who share their lives with service dogs experience many mental health benefits as a result of their partnership, they have to face various attitudinal and systemic barriers in exchange for that benefit. The objectives of the study were to: engage with four persons who share their lives with service dogs in order to discuss and reflect upon the mental health impact of the animal-human bond, to engage significant others view of the mental health impact of service dogs, to explore systemic and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with service dogs, to generate and disseminate current knowledge regarding the mental health benefits of human-animal bonding in general and service dogs and human companions more specifically, and lastly to influence national service dog acceptance and policy. Through conducting a literature review as well as a qualitative phenomenological study, which interviewed human companions who share their lives with service dogs and their significant others, five themes regarding the animal-human bond and mental health were uncovered: that the journey to obtaining a service dog is a lengthy and sometimes complex process; that overall having a service dog for mental health difficulties or PTSD can be a positive experience; that the bond of the dog and human in the service dog

team is quite strong, that there are indeed mental health benefits to being partnered with a service dog; and lastly in order to receive the benefits of having a service dog the teams must face some attitudinal and systemic barriers in exchange. The paper ends with a discussion on the areas of recommendations regarding service dog research and policy in Canada.



"There is this saying about kids that grow up with dogs and animals, how healthy they are physically and emotionally...this just says it all for me."

Marlene MacPherson



## **DEDICATION**

To Barkley for being there when I need it the most and for being my co-pilot in life.  
You are truly my inspiration.

To my parents Lorna and Bryan who provide unwavering support through lifes ups and downs  
and for helping to bring Barkley into my life.

To my brother Jeff for showing his love for me in the most peculiar ways.

To Elizabeth Baker from Thames Centre Service Dogs for introducing me to Barkley and  
training us to be the unstoppable team we are now.

To Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith for constantly quenching my thirst for knowledge and helping  
to bring this research to life.

To Dr. S who has seen me at my worst and seen me at my best but has always provided me with  
the courage to never give up.

To my Aunt Marlene and Nanny Paul who are not around to see the end of this research but who  
have helped me grow into the woman I am today. Rest in peace.

To Dakota, Matt and Scott. May you always follow your dreams and be surrounded by animals  
as you grow.

To Hilary, Sarah and Jess. As we grow up, we realize it is less important to have lots of friends,  
and more important to have real ones.

To my family and friends. I love you.

To Frank and Laurie Ferragine who created a work schedule for me conducive to changing the  
world.

To animal lovers everywhere. May your lives be filled with special animals who touch your  
heart.

Finally, to the animals who without speaking manage to fill our lives with great joy.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This research would not have been possible without the support of a few key people (and one special dog). I am glad that our paths crossed and I am so grateful for your help every step of the way.

To Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith for being my supervisor for this project and providing me with support on every aspect of this research.

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To those who were interviewed and the significant others who love them. You truly bring this research to life.

To Dr. Leesa Fawcett for being the second reader of this major research paper and to Katie Odell for her amazing editing skills.

To those from National Centre Service Dogs for introducing me to some of those who were interviewed in this research.

Finally to Barkley, whoever said that diamonds are a girls best friend...never owned a dog.

### TO BARKLEY

You will probably know more secrets about me than many of the people in my life. Not because I don't love them with all of my heart, but because I spend more of my quiet times with you.

You grow with me and accept me for who I am and allow me to take on my life goals and adventures.

As it doesn't matter to you where I am going, as long as you can come with me.

Unlike others you know when I need time to reflect, to be quiet, to take it all in. You sit there to lend support but let me come to my own conclusions.

Material stuff is not your thing.

You live in abundance that is not one of riches, but of understanding, respect, and love.

You are the only one that can hassle me that one extra time and not get in trouble. I can't get mad at you as I know it is for my own good.

Ten years of work may not be a lot in comparison to the expectations of the "real" world. But your service doesn't have a "punch out" time. Your job is one that never ends.

You tell me everyday not through words, but through your actions.

That even fetching paper from a fax machine can be exciting (seriously you would think you have seen a celebrity or won a million dollars or something).

Although many would worry about bringing a boy home to dad.

I cringe more when he meets you, because I know you will be extremely jealous (just try not to growl at him for me would ya?).

You know that you are like no one else.

But you are ok with that and live life on your own terms.

Any marketer would be happy to have you as a part of their strategic medium.

Because you bring more people through the doors than I think any flashy billboard could.

You're a big flirt and quite the ladies man.

But I know no matter what that I will always be your number one girl.

I find sometimes that you are misunderstood.

Because your large presence doesn't allow people to pass you easily (but really why would they want to?).

You make me laugh when you are mistaken to be apart of a stores decor.

I think I have seen some of the best high jumpers in human history because of this.

You are not like me in the sense that you like lots of accessories.  
Just one red bandana around your neck suits you best.

Throughout out time together you have been given more nicknames then I can count.  
But I think the name Barkley suits you best.

We've got a long journey ahead of us my friend.  
There is always places to go and people to see (lets hope you don't get sick of me because I could never get sick of you).

I am looking forward to the laughter that you will bring to my life.  
I'd like to thank you for being my teacher, my bodyguard, my healer but most importantly one of the biggest parts of my life!





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***“God said I need somebody strong enough to pull sled and find bombs, yet gentle enough to love babies and lead the blind. Somebody who will spend all day on a couch with a resting head and supportive eyes to lift the sprits of a broken heart, so God made a dog.”***

***~ Unknown***

## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES**

According to the *Centre for Addiction and Mental Health* (2012), in any given year one in five Canadians will experience a mental health or addiction problem. Along with this, mental illness is the leading cause of disability in Canada and creates a national economic burden of approximately fifty-one billion dollars each year (The Canadian Press, 2012). Sadly many Canadians do not receive the support they need which possibly contributes to the four thousand Canadian deaths by suicide each year (CAMH, 2012). Looking specifically at the subgroup of veterans, a Canadian government report titled *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and the Mental Health of Military Personnel and Veterans* (2013), states that at least thirty-percent of military personnel involved in combat operations are at a greater risk of suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major Depression during their lifetime (Rodrigue-Paré, p.9).

Global research efforts have thoroughly provided evidence that animals can play a significant role in the overall health of humans, along with their mental health significantly (see for example: Krause-Parello, 2008; Aydin et al., 2011; Melson, 2011 & Cusack, 1988).

Additionally research regarding service dogs and human mental health, is also vast (see for example: Kwong and Bartholomew, 2011; Esnayra, 2007; Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013 & Yount et al., 2013). Difficulty arises however from the fact that very little of this research provides a Canadian context. This makes it incredibly difficult for positive policy change to occur nationally and gives animal-human bond activists and academics little Canadian background to work from. This major research paper aims to combat this lack of Canadian

research by exploring the role that animals, and specifically service dogs, can have on their companions. It also explores a subgroup of service dogs dedicated to PTSD programs for veterans. Building on this knowledge, this research shall attempt to address the attitudinal, systemic and societal barriers restricting the expansion of animal-human bond programs aimed at mental health enhancement. This research on the animal-human bond in Canada will facilitate four key developments: connecting animals and humans together nationally in order to provide people with mental health support; encouraging a greater acceptance of service dogs in society; reducing systemic and attitudinal barriers; and further facilitate beneficial programs aimed at serving veterans with PTSD.

This paper will first begin by providing an overview of the state of service dog programs in Canada, by looking at each of the provinces and territories specifically. It will be clear to see from looking across Canada that there is a lack of uniformity when it comes to service dog programs and laws nationally, making policy efforts more difficult. A literature review exploring animal-human bond research to date will follow with a focus on five areas including: foundations and historical animal-human bond knowledge; the animal's role as it relates to human mental health; mental health service dogs; ethics regarding service dogs; and finally service dogs for Veterans with PTSD. Each of these topics will build upon each other in order to provide a comprehensive overview. Using qualitative research methods, this paper will conduct and analyze the interviews of four different people who share their lives with service dogs in different mental health and PTSD capacities. Each of these interviewees were also asked to get at least one significant other to comment on the relationships between themselves and their service dog. This will hopefully assist in developing an external context of these service dog and human

companion relationships. It is important to mention that one of these interviews will be of the researcher herself, as she personally has a service dog companion for mental health. Following this the findings will be presented including: the journey to obtaining a service dog; life with a service dog; the relationship and bond within service dog teams; service dogs impact on human mental health; the attitudinal and systemic barriers service dog teams often experience in exchange for these benefits; and lastly the role of service dogs according to the participants significant others. The paper will then provide a discussion concerning the findings specifically focusing on: the independence that service dogs facilitate for those with mental health struggles; the implications of service dogs for Veterans with PTSD; the Canadian context; the multifaceted roles, breeds, and sizes of service dogs; the emerging difficulty with fake service dogs; balancing competing interests; service dog teams right to privacy; the costs associated with service dogs; service dog ethics and responsibilities; and lastly a call for the development of a national standard for service dogs in Canada. Finally emerging questions and thoughts for future research will be presented. It is hoped that this paper will provide the background needed to jumpstart other research efforts on the topic.



***“The people of Canada have worked hard to build a country that opens its doors to include all, regardless of their differences; a country that respects all, regardless of their differences; a country that demands equality for all, regardless of their differences”***

***~ Paul Martin***

## **CHAPTER TWO- THE CURRENT STATE OF SERVICE DOG POLICY ACROSS CANADA**

Looking at policy in Canada regarding service dogs it is very unclear and inconsistent. As you will see in Appendix A there are some provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, and British Columbia who have outlined the regulation of service animals in a lot of detail. In opposition to this is the others who have clearly thought little about it and who only use the *Canadian Human Right Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as a way of regulating service dog teams. These provinces and territories do not have any legislation in place that speaks specifically to service dog teams. Appendix B also provides a visual illustration of service dog regulation across Canada. It is clear to see from this map that there are many large gaps that need to be filled if Canada plans on creating a consistent policy across the country. This pilot study and research will aim to provide some of the knowledge and background information necessary to ignite the creation of a national and universal service dog policy for Canada.

*“Animals are such agreeable friends, they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.”*  
~ George Eliot

### **CHAPTER THREE-LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 ANIMAL-HUMAN BOND**

Boris Levinson, one of the founding fathers of animal-human bond research and a former psychotherapist, predicted at *The First Canadian Symposium on Pets and Society* (1976) that by the year 2000,

“suffering from even greater feelings of alienation than those of which are already attacking our emotional health, future man will be compelled to turn to nature and the animal-world to recapture some sense of unity with a world that otherwise will seem chaotic and meaningless...Animals will become junior partners and friends, effecting a revolutionary transformation of man’s attitudes (Selhub & Logan, p.147).”

This quote is of utmost importance as it emphasizes the necessity for animal-human bonds. In particular the word ‘unity’ is essential to draw attention to as it suggests that animals and humans can together form a unique alliance and almost become connected as one. It is when this relationship is formed, that it works to provide either benefits or consequences for those involved. Since the animal-human bond is an interspecies relationship, it is possible that what a human may consider an enjoyable interaction, could be viewed by the animal as unpleasant, or vice-versa (Bokkers, 2006).

Along with Levinson, Konrad Lorenz (a famous ethologist) and Leo Bustad (founder of the Delta Society), are also considered pioneers in the study of the animal-human bond (Fine & Beck, 2010). Although the association between animals and humans has been documented since ancient literature (Fine & Beck, 2010) and existed for over a thousand years (AVMA, 2014), the term ‘human-animal bond’ was coined by Bustad during the establishment of the Delta Foundation in 1982 (Strimple,1991). As mentioned in *The Inevitable Bond: Examining Scientist-*

*Animal Interactions* (1992), many theorists have suggested that there is no universally accepted definition of the animal-human bond (Davis & Balfour). However despite this, most agree that the animal-human bond refers to the relationships resulting from an interaction of two different species (Anderson, 2008). There are a wide range of qualitative measures such as phenomenology, case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, naturalistic inquiry, and content analysis that have been used to study animal-human bonds in both the past and the present (Shen-Miller, 2011). Furthermore, the term anthrozoology is used to categorize any research that looks at the,

“connections, interactions, relationships, and bonds with animals (Anderson, 2008, p.19).”

Individual theorists have also proposed some features that can assist in characterizing or qualifying this relationship. Lorenz explained, in similar spirit to the first quote from this section, that a wish to keep or interact with an animal often comes from yearning to be connected with nature (Fine & Beck, 2010, p.6). People have never lost this biological predisposition and show this by domesticating cats and dogs (two animals that humans most commonly form a bond with) (Anderson, 2008). The reason why humans are most likely to form a connection with dogs and cats is because they engage in behaviours that encourage social interaction, such as physical contact (Anderson, 2008). Famous biologist Edward O. Wilson (1984) termed this, “innate tendency to focus on life and life like processes” as Biophilia (p.1). In his later work in 1994, Wilson further explained that humans have a biological affinity,

“for other forms of life, an affiliation evoked, according to circumstances, by pleasure, or a sense of security, or even fascination blended with revulsion (p.360).”

Bustad further distinguishes this relationship by proposing that the term ‘bond’ was captured from studies of the infant-parent relationship (Fine & Beck, 2010). Although there are many parallels, the most important similarities he suggested, are the ingredients of love and friendship (Fine & Beck, 2010, p.6). Despite the fact that many do not agree that the animal-human relationship runs parallel to that of a human-human relationship,

“the general public uses the term both in its literal meaning and as a metaphor for the many roles that animals play in our lives (Fine & Beck, 2010, p.6).”

Tannenbaum (1995) suggested that the relationship between humans and animals needs to be reciprocal and should be voluntary. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association,

“the bond includes, but is not limited to emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment (AVMA, 2014).”

It is also important to mention that the relationships between animals and humans cannot be forced or it is not considered a bond (Tannenbaum, 1995). With this in mind, Russow (2002) also suggests that the animal-human relationship needs to be bi-directional and persistent. She explained that no bond is formed if the animal does not recognize the individual with whom they are supposed to be connecting with (Russow, 2002). Furthermore the relationship, she suggests, must also demonstrate trust on the animal’s part and increased nurturing and understanding of the animal’s needs on the part of the human (Russow, 2002). It is evident throughout the literature, that researchers cannot deny the mutual benefit and increased well-being that the bond between animals and humans ensues (Fine & Beck, 2010).

Cultural traditions intertwined in the animal-human bond are also critical in defining the relationship. Paying attention to trends in pet-keeping around the world and having an

understanding of how different cultures view animals is essential in understanding who has been impacted by the animal-human bond and how. Historical time is also essential as relationships between humans and animals has changed dramatically over time and will continue to change in the future (Melson, 2011). It is evident that pets are common in North America and other developed countries (Melson, 2011). In surveys performed on pet-keeping in the United States, the default role that individuals assigned to their pets was a member of the family (Melson, 2011). The cultural trope in this area also considers pets as extremely beneficial for children (Melson, 2011). This same belief was also evident in United Kingdom, Japan, and China (Melson, 2011). In these cultures,

“children and animals are thought to ‘go-together’. This assumption is reflected ubiquitously in children’s books and games and other cultural artifacts (Melson, 2011, p.14).”

Kidd and Kidd (1987), in relation to this, also found that as children grew older, their relationships with animals as adults included a tendency,

“to bond to the same species and breeds they loved as children and to reject species or breeds they were taught to, or learned to, fear and hate as children (p.144).”

In essence this means that how one interacts with various animals as a child, plays a large role in the strength of the bond they have with them as adults.

However, even though one racial background may consider the relationship positive, every culture is different and,

“has a complex set of codes or tropes about other species-animals to keep, animals to shun, animals to destroy as pets, animals to eat, animals forbidden to eat, animals to protect and, animals to love (Melson, 2011, p.27).”

In a study performed by Siegel (1995) which interviewed eight hundred and seventy-seven urban non-Latina/Latino White, Latina/Latino, African American, Asian, and ‘other’ adolescents

between the ages of twelve and seventeen, white adolescents were the most likely to have companion animals residing with them. This was followed by the Latinos/Latinas and those of Asian descent. According to the study, African Americans were the least likely to have domesticated animals in their home. When it came to discussing attachment, white youths rated their pets as significantly more important to them than Latina/Latino adolescents (Siegel, 1995). African American and Asian Youths on the other hand reported intermediate levels of attachment, but were not very different from any of the other groups studied (Siegel, 1995). This study is beneficial to the understanding of the animal-human bond as it expresses the differences in cultural attachment to companion animals, ultimately affecting the animal-human bond. Along with this, in another study titled *The Human-Animal Bond and Ethnic Diversity* (2006), Risley-Curtiss, Holley, and Shapard-Wolf wanted to explore the relationship between ethnicity and the animal-human bond further. The study employed five hundred and eighty-seven people to participate in a survey. Although the original survey contained one hundred and twenty-one questions, only thirty-seven questions that asked about pet ownership and beliefs were analyzed in this study (Risley-Curtiss, Holley, and Shapard-Wolf, 2006). The survey found that ninety-seven percent of all pet owners, regardless of race, believed that their pet was a member of the family. Those who were dog and cat owners also stated that their animal companions provided them with emotional support, unconditional love, and companionship (Risley-Curtiss, Holley, and Shapard-Wolf, 2006). American Indians were most likely to have companion animals (73.5%), followed by white people (65%), people of Hispanic/Spanish heritage (56.9%), African-Americans (40.9%), Pacific Islanders (40%), and Asians (37.5%). The researchers believed that these results should have a significant role on social work practice and suggested that individual

relationships with their companion animals be included in both their sessions and assessments (Risley-Curtiss, Holley, and Shapard-Wolf, 2006). In terms of the impact this study has on research of the animal-human bond, it shows that although one might benefit from relations with an animal, some cultural and racial backgrounds are not as exposed to companion animals as others which could increase or decrease the animal-human bond with these groups. A drawback of this study was that Latinas/Latinos were underrepresented and indigenous people were overrepresented which may have skewed the findings. However despite this, the results still are valuable in the study of the animal-human bond.

It is evident through reviewing the literature of this section that there has been a substantial amount of research done on the animal-human bond to date. Although not enough has been completed to universally create the definition of the animal-human bond, there is much information on the benefits and inconsistencies involved. The next portion of this literature review will delve into this bond further by exploring the relationships between animals and human mental health.

### **3.2 ANIMALS AND HUMAN MENTAL HEALTH**

It is evident from the last section of this literature review that animals and humans have an undeniable bond. Next, this portion of the review will explore how this bond plays a role in the mental health of humans. It will start generally with all animals but will also take the time to look at the bond between people and dogs specifically as Lorenz (2002) and others have noted that there is something special about dogs. The reason they believe this to be the case is because,

“since the dawn of post-diluvian age, (wo)man and dog have co-evolved, arguably domesticating each other (Aydin, Krueger, Fischer, Hahn, Kastenmuller, Frey & Fischer, 2011, p.449).”

This specific in-depth look at dogs will provide the foundational background needed for the sections following.

There are many areas of human mental health that association with animals can improve. These include reducing loneliness, anxiety, arousal, and stress, increasing social connection and attachment, as well as providing love and friendship and providing physical, social and emotional support. The remainder of this literature review will look at each of these areas further.

First, the reduction of loneliness is probably the most commonly mentioned benefit of interacting with animals presented in the literature. Research has demonstrated that if a person perceives themselves as excluded it increases their feelings of loneliness, reduces self-esteem, and leaves many reporting a loss of meaning in life (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Eisenberger, Lieberman & Williams, 2003; MacDonald and Leary, 2005; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2004). Interacting and living with animals, however, has been shown on countless occasions to counteract these feelings of loneliness and generally makes people less depressed (Katcher, 1981; McCulloch, 1984; Garrity et al., 1981; Zasloff & Kidd, 1994; Bryant, 1990; Calvert, 1989; Rossbach & Wilson, 1992; Wood, Giles-Corti & Bulsara, 2005; Antonacopoulos & Pychyl, 2010). Looking at specific groups, research has also shown that homeless children (Rew, 2000), community-living adults (Wood, Giles-Corti & Bulsara, 2005), and heart attack victims (Trauer, 1990), also report a reduction in loneliness when interacting with an animal. An example of this comes from *A Family Guide to Healthy Living-Coping with Stress* (1990) where Trauer mentions this about companion animals,

“pets can play a very useful part in the campaign against stress. For people living on their own, who might otherwise feel lonely, aimless, and isolated, they provide much-needed company, a sense of responsibility and a certain amount of exercise. Indeed, research has



shown that lonely heart attack victims with pets tend to live longer than those who do not have pets (Odendaal, 2002, p.76-77).”

In one study titled *The Mediating Effect of Pet Attachment Support Between Loneliness and General Health in Older Females Living in the Community*, Krause-Parello (2008) conducted an experiment that tested the relationship between loneliness and general health in one-hundred and fifty-nine older females. They reported in their literature review that since older adults experience greater losses than others in the community, due to their age, they are more susceptible to loneliness than others (Weiss, 1969). This study focused on older woman between the ages of fifty-five to eighty-four years old who owned a cat or a dog and resided in a pet friendly independent living housing community for older adults and/or participated in a senior citizen community centre. The results showed that indeed pet attachment support from a dog or a cat plays a role in the reduction of loneliness amongst this group (Krause-Parello, 2008) as women tend to counteract loneliness and stress by reaching out and caring for others, providing them with support and responsibilities (Taylor et al., 2000). In other words, caring for a dog or cat provided these women with the support and responsibility needed to buffer social exclusion (Krause-Parello, 2008).

Looking at dogs specifically, in “*Man’s Best Friend*”: *How the Presence of a Dog Reduces Mental Distress After Social Exclusion*, Aydin et al. (2011) conducted an experiment where they hypothesized that the presence of a dog would protect excluded individuals from a decrease in mental well-being. The researchers believed that it would be the general feelings of social acceptance that would play a key role in reducing loneliness. It turns out that their hypotheses were right and showed,

“that the mere presence of a dog is sufficient to decrease mental distress in individuals who experienced social exclusion. Socially excluded participants who worked in the laboratory while a dog was present reported higher levels of life satisfaction, perceived meaning in life, self-esteem, and general feelings of social acceptance compared with socially excluded participants who were not exposed to a dog (Aydin et al., 2001, p. 449).”

Although these results are significant on their own, what was particularly powerful was the fact that Lilli, the dog used in the study, appeared to provide a benefit despite no prior association with any of those involved in the experiment. This is different from many of the other results in the literature and provides a jumping off point for future research (Aydin et al., 2001).

Next we will turn to the ability of animals to reduce anxiety, arousal and stress. Melson (2011) when talking about children specifically said that,

“[watching] animals at peace may create a coupling of decreased arousal with sustained attention and alertness, opening the troubled child to new possibilities of learning and growth (Kruger & Serpell, 2010, p.37).”

This fact however is not just true for children. Many researchers also point out that adults often receive feelings of consolation and a reduction in stress while in the presence of an animal (Kidd & Kidd, 1999; Fritz et al., 1996; Allen et al., 1991; DeShriver and Riddick, 1990 & Wilson, 1991). A study by Gage and Anderson (1985), which included a sample of five-thousand and three adults, found that those who were attached to their pets handled stress better than those who did not (Gage & Anderson, 1985). Since those that suffer from anxiety often live in constant fear of an attack, they become, “anxiety-ridden about their anxiety” (Cusack, 1988). Pets become important in this sense as they provide individuals with something to take their mind off this fear (Cusack, 1988). Petting an animal also plays an important role in reducing stress in people that are relearning to experience physical closeness, such as those who have been abused. Llamas and

alpacas are often used in this way as they approach people cautiously and allow patients to slowly be able to accept physical closeness again (Prothmann & Fine, 2011).

Again, looking at dogs in particular, a study by Sebkova (1977) found that when measuring the anxiety levels of twenty individuals in two different environments (with and without a dog), subjects had much lower anxiety scores and fewer anxious mannerisms when the dog was in the room (Cusack, 1988). Another study by Baun et al. (1984) also showed the impact of dogs in reducing anxiety, arousal and stress. In this experiment individuals heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration was tested during three nine minute segments including: (1) petting one's own dog, (2) petting a strange dog, and (3) quiet reading (Cusack, 1988). Although the results showed that all of the segments resulted in lower blood pressure, the greatest decrease took place when the individuals were petting their own dog, showing that having a bond with a dog is a very important variable in these results (Cusack, 1988). Lastly, dogs have been shown to improve the effects of potentially stressful life-events such as grief and divorce (Folse et al., 1994; Garrity et al., 1989).

Next animals have the ability to increase social connection, which plays an important role in improving individuals mental health. Researchers suggest that animals have an ability to increase conversation between people (Fine, 2000; Levinson, 1969 & Kruger & Serpell, 2010). This allows people to break down the barriers that they might experience interacting with each other. Many people who have mental health problems often find it difficult to interact with others, so animals also help them to increase these social interactions (Prothmann & Fine, 2011). Those with disability have also been seen to benefit from animals as they provide a 'social

lubricant'. Often people do not know how to act around those with disabilities (Hart & Hart, 1987). Newby (1997) stated that,

“the presence of the pet seems to ‘normalize’ social situations, getting everyone through the ice-breaker state to the point where they can risk directly engaging with the unfamiliar person (p.180).”

In several studies conducted with college students, research tested how individuals were perceived in pictures both with and without a dog (Lockwood, 1983; Rossbach and Wilson, 1992 & Wells and Perrine, 2001). These studies showed that when people had a friendly animal in the picture they were perceived as happier, friendlier, wealthier, less threatening and more relaxed than when there was no dog present (Lockwood, 1983; Rossbach and Wilson, 1992 & Wells and Perrine, 2001). This helps to show the important role that dogs play in increasing interactions between people.

Animals can also provide love and friendship. In fact unconditional and non-judgmental love and affection are the most frequently mentioned benefits of pet ownership across the literature (Cusack, 1988). Cusack stated in *Pets and Mental Health* (1988) that,

“pets provide unconditional love and acceptance; they offer spontaneous affection and undying loyalty. They are a shoulder to cry on, a trusted confidante, a port in a storm. They are the temporary respite from our daily woes and an unending source of delight and surprise (p.9).”

McCulloch (1984) also states that,

“animals do not emphasize or force you to look at the deficits you may have (Cusack, 1988, p.5).”

This is what makes them such ideal love and friendship companions as people do not have to worry about an animal judging them like people often do. Along with this, intimacy with animals can be achieved instantly as individuals can express their love for an animal at times when doing

so for another person would be inappropriate (Cusack, 1988). People also thrive on consistency, but with human interaction consistency is often difficult. Pets help in this way as they,

“will not leave home to get married, to go to school, or to find new employment. The pet owner has a constant companion in every sense of the word (Cusack, 1988, p.15).”

When Smith (1983) studied pet dogs within families she found that dogs always make themselves accessible, which is often not possible with humans and highlights why we rely on them for love and friendship.

Before concluding, there is some of other research that is essential to the body of knowledge in this section. Bustad (1981) states that,

“the two times people need animals most in their lives are when they are very young and when they are very old (Cusack, 1988, p.91).”

The reason why this is believed to be is because these are two instances in ones life where they are particularly vulnerable. Researchers also believe that younger people experience dog companionship more strongly, because of greater openness to interspecies connection and greater flexibility in their lifestyles than generations prior to them (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). Women also tend to benefit from dog-companionship more than men across seven underlying dimensions. These include: symbiotic relationship, dog-oriented self-concept, anthropomorphism, activity/youth, boundaries, speciality purchases, and adaption (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). Those with a university education more often experience meaningful relationships with dogs as well and see their dogs as companions as opposed to pets to be owned (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008). Those who have purebreds and also spend more than two hours of quality time with their dogs daily have a greater attachment as well (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008).

From the literature presented in this section it is clear to see that the bond between animals and humans plays a significant positive role in supporting human mental health. The next section will look at how this bond plays a role in the lives of service dog teams and their human companions.

### **3.3 SERVICE DOGS**

“She was a piece of me. She’s not just a dog, she’s not just a companion, she’s not just there to help you, she’s there through all the thick and thin of your life (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.421).”

This quote from the article *“Not Just a Dog”: An Attachment Perspective on Relationships with Assistance Dogs*, captures the attachment and bond that develops between a human companion and their service dog. By exploring the experiences of twenty-five human companions who lost an assistance dog due to retirement and death they were able to gain a deep understanding of the bond that developed over the life of the service dog (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). What makes this bond so unique is the fact that not only does the human rely on the dog for daily functioning, but the dog also relies on their human companion for daily care (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). This becomes what is referred to as a mutually reciprocal relationship where both the human and the dog rely on each other for companionship, assistance, and security (Irvin, 2014).

Going back to Kwong and Bartholomew (2011), their article explored service dog team relationships of all types from an attachment perspective first introduced by Bowlby in 1980. The researchers found that service dogs played a variety of important roles including acting as a ‘safe haven’, and providing a source of comfort and physical contact for their human companion (Kwong and Bartholomew, 2011). As one handler states,

“he was my sounding board. I cried on that dog’s shoulder more times than I can remember (Kwong and Bartholomew, 2011, p.426).”

Kwong and Bartholomew (2011) also found that the dogs provided a secure base for the individual. The key trait that a secure base provides is safety, while still encouraging confidence and exploration (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). As one human companion states,

“he made me more confident. He’s almost like a little suit of armour...Not that he was there to protect me, but I was invincible. I didn’t need protecting...I could go anywhere and do anything (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011).”

As you can see in this quote the individual possesses comfort however also knows that the dog is there to support them should they need it. This feeling of being watched and cared for, while at the same time promoting independence and a development of self is a key feature of the bond between service dogs and their partners. In the article one handler states,

“he was my friend, he was just there for me all the time. He was just so much of what I was all about...he was always there, he was always watching, but he seemed to know that I needed him (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.428).”

Many individuals also noted that they knew the attachment to their service dog was strong because they experienced separation anxiety when the dog was not present. They remarked that although they were understanding at the beginning about people not wanting the service dog present for various reasons, they later decided that they would not accept this anymore and that both themselves and their service dog came together or not at all. An individual states,

“We come in a pair, the four-legged version of my other half...The dog’s part of my life and my world and if you can’t accept that, then sayonara (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.428)!”

Caregiving is also an essential aspect of this bond. Many individuals reported that caregiving gave them a sense of purpose in life and enjoyed the fact that they were needed (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). Many also stated that in some instances the dog was their surrogate child and they were very in tune to their dog's emotions (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). As one respondent states,

“Oh I love it. I brush them out everyday...It's a mutual thing that dogs can give me what I need as far as being a working dog and I reciprocate because I love them to pieces. I reciprocate because I know J loves to be brushed so it's a give-give situation (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.429).

Lastly, the grief that one experiences over the loss of a service dog also shows how attached service dogs and their human companions become for each other. Many felt that they had lost a close relationship and often compared it to the loss of a significant other as one participant states,

“his death hit me harder...(crying)... than anyone's, even my parents. He was always there (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.430).”

Although many experienced extreme guilt and depression they knew in the end that it was the right decision to put their dog down as they did not want them to suffer any longer,

“When I had to put him to sleep, he wouldn't play, he was real lethargic...And I could see everything in his eyes. It was just like, “Mom it's time to say good-bye” (crying). And I knew that I was doing the right thing because he was in pain, he was hurting. And I wasn't going to prolong that (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011, p.431).”

Service dogs also benefit their human companions health as often the dog gives the individual and acquaintance something to focus on during conversations (Tedeschi, Fine & Helgeson, 2010; Eddy, Hart & Boltz, 1988). When a service dog is not present the focus often becomes centered around the individuals disability (Tedeschi, Fine & Helgeson, 2010; Eddy, Hart & Boltz, 1988). With the person being able to show their control over the service dog, as



well as giving both of the individuals something to talk about, the individual is presented with greater feelings of control and mental well-being (Tedeschi, Fine & Helgeson, 2010; Eddy, Hart & Boltz, 1988).

Esnayra (2007) stated in her article *Help From Man's Best Friend: Psychiatric Service Dogs are Helping Consumers Deal with the Symptoms of Mental Illness* that,

“with greater frequency, mental health patients are presenting at emergency rooms, hospitals, and clinics with a service dog in tow. These are psychiatric service dogs, specially trained to partner 24/7 with persons living with severe mental health disabilities (p.30).”

Whether people refer to them as ‘psychiatric service dogs’ or ‘mental health service dogs’ they are becoming extremely popular in assisting those with mental illness. Like other service dog partnerships the intensity of the bond between the dog and its human companion plays an extremely important role (Esnayra, 2007). This bond is essential as the time spent together allows the dog to be aware of both usual and unusual patterns and behaviours in the human (Esnayra, 2007). When these behaviours are abnormal and manifestations of mental illness become apparent in an individual, these service dogs can provide a unique signal or alert that makes their human companion aware of the circumstances before they become overwhelming (Esnayra, 2007). What is incredibly fascinating about these partnerships is the fact that often service dogs are able to alert their human before they are aware of their symptoms, making them ideal for early intervention (Esnayra, 2007). This is also extremely beneficial as mental illness can sometimes impair a persons thoughts (Esnayra, 2007). As one individual states,

“when my dog alerts, I am given an opportunity to act on the information long before the development of symptoms that would otherwise require inpatient care (Esnayra, 2007, p.30).”

Dogs are also often trained on particular tasks that would be beneficial for their individual person. Some examples of these include a person training his dog to lie on top of him, providing warmth from the cold sweat and chills that accompany a panic attack (Esnayra, 2007). Another example of this is when individuals can call their dog to sit beside them so that they can stroke them. This patting behaviour redirects the person from common compulsions to bolt, self-injure, or participate in obsessive compulsions like checking door locks (Esnayra, 2007). Psychiatric/mental health service dogs can also perform such tasks as reminding the individual to take their medication at the appropriate time (Esnayra, 2007). It is clear from this literature that service dogs have become more than just something to help those who are blind or hard of hearing, they can now assist in a wide range of functions, including those related to mental health.

### **3.4 ETHICS REGARDING SERVICE DOGS**

It is also important to take into account the welfare and ethical considerations involved in the partnership between a service dog and their human companion. As stated by Irvin (2014),

“it is critical that we remember that though the relationship is interdependent, the assistance dog is not there by its own choice. We humans have a responsibility to ensure that the bond with an assistance dog is mutually beneficial (p.66).”

Wenthold and Savage explored the welfare considerations of service dogs in their article *Ethical Issues with Service Animals* (2007). In this article the authors cited the managing of expectations and the workload of the service dog, attending to the physical and psychological needs of the dog, and anticipating separation through retirement or death as the key ethical issues when speaking about service dogs. On top of that they also regarded the primary ethical issue with service animals to be,

“the tension between using the dog to achieve patient or client goals (beneficence) and monitoring the welfare of the dog (non-maleficence) (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.70).”

The reason they believe this is of utmost importance is because,

“the dog does not have autonomy to choose to be a service animal (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.70).”

Psychologically Wenthold and Savage (2007) explained that dogs, like other pack animals, rely on consistency and that this consistency must be met by their human partners. In order to do this the service dog must have complete confidence in their human partner and receive uniformity in the behaviours and signals used to interact with them (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.70). Part of this consistency also must derive from the bonding time with the service dog facilitated by their human partners which can be done,

“through the practice of commands, grooming, and spending time ‘off-duty’ together (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.71).”

They mentioned that the ‘off-duty’ bonding is extremely important, as the companionship that a service dog receives during this time is much different from the companionship that they receive when they are ‘on-duty’ (Wenthold & Savage, 2007). Wenthold and Savage also stated that it was essential that the demands of a service dog be reasonable and appropriate, as failure to do so can result in injury to the dog or the people near the dog (2007). In order to reduce the chances of the service dog becoming ‘overtaxed’, they suggested that a break between activities is extremely important. They also stated that it is essential to recognize,

“what a dog would consider a break as opposed to what a person considers a break (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.72).”

Breaks on a small scale, such as relieving themselves in between activities, as well as larger scale breaks such as weekend hikes, long walks, and breaks ‘off-leash’ are essential in order to create good psychological and physical health for the service dogs (Wenthold & Savage, 2007).

Bonding also plays an important role in this as,

“if a facilitator or handler notices panting, shedding, or hesitation, it is a sign that the service dog is experiencing stress and needs a break (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.72).”

This means that the service dog’s human partner must be in-tune to their needs and be able to recognize moments of differentiation that may signal being ‘over-taxed’.

Ethics and welfare considerations related to service dogs are also extremely important because,

“the number of years that a service dog is able to work is directly related to the physical and psychological well-being of the service dog (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.73).”

Wenthold and Savage (2007) explained that many service dog agencies expect a working life of between a six to ten year work life for service dog. Since the majority of service dogs enter the workforce around two years old, they may be expected to work until the ages of eight to twelve years. It is ideal that the human partner matched with the service dog, keep them in their retired life, as this also promotes the consistency that animals require psychologically. However if it is not possible it should be guaranteed that the service dog agency provide a home for the retired service dog (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.73).

Although it is rare that a service dog loses their handler, due to either an inability to keep them or through death, it is important to know that when a loss occurs in the life of a service dog,

“the dog may exhibit signs of grief in the form of depression or withdrawal. As with humans, time and understanding may help the dog through this grieving process. During this time, it is important for a service dog to feel secure and successful (Wenthold & Savage, 2007, p.73).”

Even though it was mentioned prior that human companions may experience extreme grief in the loss of their service dog, it is also important to look at it from the other side as well to ensure the welfare of the dog is met.

Lastly, many researchers when speaking about the ethics of service dogs, refer to the ‘five freedoms’ from the *Farm Animal Welfare Committee* (2009) available in Appendix C, the *Assistance Dogs International* ‘Ethics for Service Dogs’ (2014), and the *Assistance Dogs International* ‘Standards for Assistance Dogs Partners’ (2014) which are available in Appendix D and Appendix E.

This section has provided an overview of the tenants involved in a relationship between a service-dog and their human companion. It is evident that much of the research from the previous concepts of this literature review can be applied to this relationship to develop a better understanding of the mental health benefits of the human-animal relationship.

### **3.5 DOGS AND VETERANS WITH PTSD**

A veteran states,

“Spot’s my partner, I love him. We’ve been through so much together. I’ve spent days and nights with this dog and it’s a very strong bond (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013, p.602).”

This excerpt shows again the role of the animal-human bond and mental health, in this case for veterans with PTSD. It was estimated in 2004 that over a half a million veterans were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Magruder et al., 2004), making it the most common psychological illness affecting the military (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). However, they believe this number has probably increased since then (Magruder et al., 2004). Although researchers believe that PTSD has been around for many years, it was after the Vietnam War that practitioners began to diagnose soldiers with the disorder (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). PTSD is often associated with symptoms caused by a traumatic event(s), in this case war, and tends to involve persistent hyperarousal (Stern et al., 2013). People with PTSD

often avoid any activities which remind them of the traumatic events which causes them to become socially estranged, have extreme fear, harm themselves and/or their family, develop irritability which can be detrimental to close relationships, have a low sexual intimacy, substance abuse problems, and nightmare flashbacks (Stern et al., 2013; Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). Dogs are often considered a good partner for military veterans because they allow people to slowly be reintroduced to close relationships (Stern et al., 2013).

There are many studies which show the benefit that canines have on veterans with PTSD. One particular study conducted by Stern et al. (2013) investigated thirty male and female military veterans who had expressed that a dog assisted them with their symptoms (Stern et al., 2013). In the surveys involved with this experiment respondents said that since adopting a dog they felt significant improvement in many areas such as reduced calmness, loneliness, depression, and worried less about both themselves and their families safety (Stern et al., 2013). They also had greater feelings of security at night and found that having to take their dogs for a walk at the same time everyday helped to improve their sleep-wake cycle (Stern et al., 2013). Some other things that veterans mentioned about their canine companion were that their dogs loved them even when they were grumpy and allowed veterans to express their feelings without criticism (Stern et al., 2013). Another study by Taylor, Edwards & Pooley (2013) also found similar perspectives in their content analysis of veterans, reporters, and social media responders accounts of PTSD in military personnel. First looking at the words of veterans they state,

“The veterans relayed that since adopting their dog they had bonded so closely with it that now the animal seemed able to sense their mental anguish and need for reassurance. So much so that their dog during daylight hours would ground them by providing the physical comfort of pressing their body against them, and/or pawing them. Then at night time, when they were beset by flashbacks, their dog would sense the onset of their night terrors, and would relieve their painful memories by nudging them awake

and staying with them until the memories receded (Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013, p.596).”

Similar symptoms also arise in other reports from veterans like this one,

“You can’t see PTSD but it is always there...I fight it the best I can, but I’m always on guard in a crowded environment, always hypervigilant, uncomfortable of the unknown (Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013, p.600).”

Another account,

“In Iraq we were told: ‘Never go anywhere without your battle buddy to watch your back.’ That’s exactly what he does for me (Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013, p.600).”

What is interesting about these results is that common themes have emerged not only across this section but also across other prior sections of this literature review. This helps to affirm the repeated benefit of canines in the role of human mental health.

A report by Ritchie and Amaker (2012) states,

“when my husband returned from Iraq, he was a jerk. Since we got our dog, we have reunited as a family (p.7).”

This excerpt is interesting as it also shows the role that dogs are playing in the lives of military families. In a report by Chumley (2012) it states,

“Pets are bona fide members of the military family, even perhaps assisting with military family transfers or service member deployments as the pet is seen as a stabilizing factor for children of military families. It has also been shown that for a married couple without children, the attachment level to a pet can be very high, implicating a “surrogate” child relationship with animals (p.18).”

It is clear through excerpts such as this that service/companion dogs impact not only their human companion or those with whom they share a primary bond with, but also families dealing with the trauma of their loved ones PTSD.

Along with companion dogs, service dog’s are becoming more popular amongst veterans.

As one reporter states,

“to avoid the stigma many veterans are turning to alternative treatments like yoga, acupuncture, herbal remedies and massage therapy. None have proved more popular than service dogs (Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013, p.604).”

The reason why service dogs are so helpful to veterans is because, while they are training them and when they become partners, they need to focus on the present (the dog’s point of view). (Yount et al., 2013). Also training a service dog can help to re-integrate the soldier into daily life, which is often difficult for those with PTSD (Yount et al., 2013). Although there are many tasks that service dogs for PTSD can perform this is just a couple of the most commonly mentioned in the literature.

Again, it is important to look at the ethical concerns that could occur as the result of companion or service dog use amongst veterans. It states in Taylor, Edwards & Pooley (2013),

“concerns have been raised that there may be some symptoms of PTSD that dogs cannot handle and still remain mentally healthy themselves. For example, dogs may react with fear or anger if they witness their owners’ acts of uncontrolled violence. Similarly, a dog may pick up on their owner’s hypervigilance and then become hypervigilant themselves (p.607).”

This again just outlines the importance of ensuring the well-being of both ends of the leash including the individual and the dog.

It is evident, like in the sections prior, that dogs play an essential role in human mental health. More research on the topic would help to develop a better understanding on the role of dogs for veterans with PTSD.

This literature review explored animal-human bond literature and research to date and focused on five areas including: foundations and historical animal-human bond knowledge; the animal’s role as it relates to mental health; mental health service dogs; ethics regarding service



dogs, and finally service dogs for veterans with PTSD. It was clear to see how each of these topics built upon each other in order to provide a comprehensive overview.

*“Research is creating new knowledge.”*

*~Neil Armstrong*

## **CHAPTER FOUR-METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will outline the design of my pilot study, including the theoretical frameworks designed for its execution. I will also discuss the ethical considerations that were involved in this research and the two methods in which data was collected. At the end of this chapter, a discussion regarding data collection and analysis will be discussed in the context of being a participant researcher.

### **4.2 WHY A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY?**

I chose to frame this research study as both a qualitative and phenomenological one, as I wanted the participants to feel that they could share their stories and what was of utmost importance to them, without the constricting nature of other study methods. Doing a phenomenological study also provided me the opportunity to allow the findings to come from the participants narratives as I interviewed them. This was beneficial as the narratives were creating the frame of my findings, as opposed to trying to be ‘fit’ under planned and pre-determined categories. This method allowed me to hear the participants stories and their truths.

A large reason why I also chose to do a qualitative phenomenological study is because I wanted the participants to share with me their strategies for improving the acceptance and well-being of service dogs in society. I want my research to be a part of a positive change for service dogs and their human companions and to hopefully be a factor in creating a national policy and Canadian service dog standard. By listening to their suggestions, as well as building on my own, I was able to think of advocacy initiatives that really stood true to the service dog teams that

were experiencing them. I believe that there is value in being a participant researcher (see 4.9) and wanted to become immersed in their stories, as well as provide my own in order to provide a thorough understanding of service dog team experiences in Canada.

#### **4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

This research is rooted in rich narratives of service dog teams and the significant others that support them. As qualitative research proposes, this study sought to build from the real-life experiences of the participants. The qualitative efforts of this study allowed the results to stand true and be backed with real emotions and feelings.

#### **4.4 PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

Edmund Husserl (1917), who established the school of phenomenology once said,

“Natural objects, for example, must be experienced before any theorizing about them can occur. Experiencing is consciousness that intuits something and values it to be actual; experiencing is intrinsically characterized as consciousness of the natural object in question and of it as the original: there is consciousness of the original as being there ‘in person’ (The European Graduate School, 2012).”

This excerpt is from Husserl’s book *Pure Phenomenology* (1917) and captures the true essence and intentions of phenomenological research. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method which seeks to describe the ‘lived experience’ of a phenomenon (Walters, 2015). In this form of inquiry participants describe their lived ‘phenomenal’ experience by gathering research through such methods as: interviews, written oral self-reports, and aesthetic expressions (e.g. art, narratives, or poetry) (Walters, 2015).

The aim of the phenomenological researcher is to invite participants to describe their experience(s) of an event, activity, or way of life. In the case of this study, it is the experiences, mental health impact, and the bond the participants share with their mental health or PTSD service dog. According to Walters (2015), in order to improve the validity and reliability of the

results, it is important that the researcher not direct or focus the conversation in any particular way. This is why open-ended questioning was used in all data collection. Researchers using phenomenological approaches must encourage their participants to give the full context of their experience(s) and speak to such factors as: thoughts, feelings, images, sensations, situations, and memories. Follow-up questions from the researcher are permitted, but must be carefully pinpointed in order to discourage the researchers thoughts and aims on the participant (Walters, 2015).

No matter which method of collecting information, the phenomenological researcher's focus is on the *meaning* of the narratives (Walters, 2015). There are two types of themes in phenomenological research, including collective themes and individual themes (Walters, 2015). Collective themes are the similar ideas and commonalities which occur across the group of research participants. Individual themes on the other hand, are unique or distinct to one or few of the individual participants (Walter, 2015).

#### **4.5 INTERDISCIPLINARY ANIMAL-HUMAN BOND RESEARCH PRINCIPLES**

Research on the animal-human bond will forever be interdisciplinary in nature and ideas on the subject can be drawn from anthropology, environmental studies, philosophy, literature, religion, veterinary medicine, nursing, and social work (Blazina, Boyraz, and Shen-Miller, 2012). This way of looking at animal-human bond research is beneficial as it allows researchers to see the big picture of their research and interpret it from multiple vantage points (Blazina, Boyraz, and Shen-Miller, 2012).

The animal-human bond can be seen on individual, interpersonal, cultural, cross-cultural levels, which is important to its interdisciplinary nature (Blazina, Boyraz, and Shen-Miller,

2012). These four factors are important in phenomenology research design as they provide the foundation with which individuals build their experiences of the animal-human bond. The interrelationships that occur across these layers of context are also extremely important as each has the potential to stimulate change or impact within other levels of the model, see Figure 1.0. For example changes in local policies could stimulate discussion and efforts on a provincial, regional, national, or international level.



Figure 1.0- The Conceptual Model of the Human-Animal Bond (Blazina, Boyraz, and Shen-Miller, 2012)

#### **4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the *Office of Research Ethics* at York University. The factors of consent involved with the interviewees and significant others was also outlined in this ethical proposal. A certificate of approval was issued at this time, allowing the researcher to proceed with her research (See Appendix F).

Study participants for the one on one interviews were drawn from recommendations from the *National Service Dog* organization and the university community. The researcher also was a

member of this interview group as she fit the specifications of the population criteria. In some cases an informational package was sent out as a way to inform the potential participants about the research. Prior to participating in a one on one interview participants were provided with a copy of the questions that would be asked in the interview as well as were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Consent forms were signed and collected before the interview process began.

Those who filled out the significant other questionnaires were selected by the interviewees themselves. It was recommended by the researcher that the individual(s) selected had a good understanding of their relationship with their service dog. When consent forms were signed, the significant others involved in this process were emailed a copy of the questions, filled them out at their leisure, and then returned them to the researcher. In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used.

#### **4.7 DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection for this research occurred in two different formats. One format was in an interview with the human in the service animal team. The others were of the significant others of these service dog teams. The objectives of the study were to engage four persons who share their lives with service dogs in order to discuss and reflect upon the mental health impact of the animal-human bond, to engage significant others view on the mental health impact of service dogs, to explore systemic and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with service dogs, to generate and disseminate current knowledge regarding the mental health benefits of animal-human bonding in general and service dogs and human companions more specifically, and lastly to influence national service dog acceptance and policy.

### **ONE TO ONE INTERVIEWS**

Working in conjunction with the researcher, each participant was invited to choose a site for their interview that worked best for them. Two of the participants chose their home and one of the participants chose their personal office at their workplace. The participant researcher responded to the interview questions privately in a person reflection, which she completed at a local library. The interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to an hour and a half, depending on the individual. Each interview, except for the one completed by the participant researcher, which was typed right onto the question sheet, was audio recorded. Following the interviews I personally transcribed them all. As a participant researcher I was able to establish trust as I had experienced some of the same systemic and attitudinal barriers that they had experienced. I also did my best to make sure that the participants felt comfortable speaking with me and ensured that they had the ability to drive the interview.

### **SIGNIFICANT OTHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

Working in conjunction with the one to one interviewees, a two-question survey was provided to their significant others through email. The intent of this survey was to explore how those external to the service dog team viewed the relationship between the dog and the human. The significant other filled their answers in directly on the sheet, at their own leisure, then sent those responses directly back to the researcher through email. It is important to note that not all participants were able to find a significant other who could fill out the survey.

### **4.8 QUESTIONS**

The goal of the one to one interview was engage four persons who share their lives with service dogs in order to discuss and reflect upon the mental health impact of the animal-human bond. The significant other questionnaire had the goal of engaging significant others views on

the mental health impact of service dogs. A copy of the recruiting poster and questions sent to participants is available in Appendix G.

### **ONE TO ONE INTERVIEWS**

The open-ended questions for the one on one interviews were as follows:

- a. Tell me about your journey to obtaining a service dog.
- b. What is life like now with your service dog? What has changed and how?
- c. Can you describe to me your relationships with your service dog? Would you consider it a bond? Explain.
- d. Do you feel your service dog impacts your mental health? If so, how? Do you have a particular story that would show this?
- e. Have you experienced any systemic or attitudinal barriers in public, school, work, family, friends? What needs to change for people sharing their lives with service dogs?

### **SIGNIFICANT OTHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

The open-ended questions for the significant other questionnaires were as follows:

- a. Do you feel *participant's* service dog impacts his/her mental health? Explain/Elaborate.
- b. Are you aware of any attitudinal, systemic, or societal barriers that *service dog handlers name* has faced because of having a service dog? Please explain/elaborate.

### **4.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

For the one to one interviews each were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Following that the researcher read through each of the interviews separately and wrote down key words or thoughts that stood out to her when she was reviewing them. She then took these key words and thoughts and by looking across all the interviews started to layout common themes or ideas. She also looked for places of individual differentiation from each other the interviews, which would be described as an individual theme in phenomenological studies. Collective themes were determined by looking across all participants to find areas of commonality.



#### **4.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCHER BEING A PARTICIPANT**

My experience being a participant researcher was indeed a fulfilling one. The reason this was the case was because it allowed me to look at my relationship with my service dog companion Barkley on a whole and reflect upon our experiences together. It also provided me with the opportunity to look back on some of the attitudinal and systemic barriers that Barkley and I have faced over the years and include my thoughts on what I feel needs to be changed in order to increase service dog acceptance in Canada.

Being a participant researcher is also a rewarding and affirming one as it puts me on the same level as the participants. This puts me in a position, not as someone looking in on their lives, but rather as someone who has experiences similar to their own. When reviewing the interviews it also helped me to contextualize the participant responses, as I was able to truly put myself in the participants situation.

*“Every once in awhile a dog enters your life and changes everything.”*

*~ Unknown*

## **CHAPTER FIVE-FINDINGS**

*“Dogs have a way of finding the people who need them, filling an emptiness we don’t even know we have.”*

*~ Thom Jones*

### **5.1 JOURNEY TO OBTAINING A SERVICE DOG**

Interviews with the four participants revealed that their journeys to obtaining a service dog were for the most part extremely similar. An open-ended prompt asked the interviewees,

*“Tell me about your journey to obtaining a service dog.”*

The four key areas that the interviewees responded with included: the large amount of research that went into beginning their service dog journey, the approval and recommendation that was required from the medical community, the long process involved in training, and the support that they received either from the service dog agency and/or their family and friends throughout the process.

The large amount of research that went into each of the handlers journeys to obtaining a service dog was one of the key findings. When interviewing the participants, all of them mentioned that they engaged in a lot of research, mostly online, regarding the current state of service dogs for mental health and/or psychiatric purposes. Although every single participant mentioned that research was involved, each of the participants approached this task differently. Some of the participants, such as Marlene who now has a whippet named Stan, went into the research knowing that she was interested in obtaining a service dog. She explained,

*“I looked up through the literature to look at kinda what the general state was in terms of knowledge about animal/human relationships across...like the idea of service and I found that if you trained your own dog from a young age, you could have a very good bond. Especially if it was around some of the stuff I was experiencing.” (Marlene)*

This is different from other participants such as Pauline, a Canadian veteran with a brown lab named Lady, who ‘stumbled across’ service dogs for veterans with PTSD, while searching for a definition of this form of mental illness. She responded,

“I looked it up on the internet and on the site for National Service Dogs was a definition for PTSD. I can’t remember what it was now and I went wow and they had just started a program supplying vets with service dogs.” (Pauline)

Another key finding mentioned by the participants, in regards to this section, was the fact that getting a service dog required approval or assistance from the medical community. As Marie, one of the participants with a standard poodle psychiatric service dog named Barkley stated,

“I had to get a note from my doctor (psychiatrist) which said that the use of a service dog would benefit me to begin the process.” (Marie)

The next commonality that was brought to the forefront across all the participant experiences was the long process involved in training both themselves and their service dog. Marlene sums up her training with her service dog Stan,

“All the stuff we do together. You know we’ve been through a lot.” (Marlene)

Although the process was difficult, the participants mentioned that they had support not only from the trainers and agencies themselves, but also from certain friends and family. Marie mentioned that her parents was willing to do whatever it took to get a service dog for her. In fact her mom used a metaphor of an elephant to explain this determination,

“If you needed a service elephant to get better we would have found a way to get it.”  
(Marie’s Mother)

Bryan and Pauline, married veterans who share their lives with a service dog Lady, said they also were extremely grateful for the support that they received from the service dog agency *National Service Dogs (NSD)* of Canada,

“The thing is that once you acknowledge it and then you got a team behind you and that’s what I like about NSD as opposed to other service dogs that I have seen. Like they are acutely aware of our situation and do everything they can to help us through it.” (Pauline)

Overall the participants said that although the journey was difficult and required a lot of work, they were happy that they went through the process. As Marie mentioned,

“The process in itself was very beneficial for me because it gave me something to look forward to, while I was going through this difficult time.” (Marie)



*Image 1.0-Stan as a puppy*

*“A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself.”*

*~ Josh Billings*

## **5.2 LIFE WITH A SERVICE DOG**

After providing an overview of their journey to obtaining a service dog, the interviewees were then asked the open-ended question,

*“What is life like now with your service dog? What has changed and how?”*

Overwhelmingly all of the participants mentioned that their service dog allowed them to transition back into the public and into a more ‘normal’ routine. Along with this participants also mentioned the intuitive nature of the dog and how they had not had something that was so in tune to their needs prior. Lastly, they expressed that their service dog opened up dialogue and interaction with others.

Transitioning back into the public and into a more normal routine was one of the key themes that cut across this section of the findings. Although each of the participants experienced this outcome in different ways, it is still evident that this was an overarching theme. Marie explains the difficulty of transitions and how having Barkley has helped her cope,

*“Since transitions can be difficult for people like myself, having Barkley by my side made appearing in public much easier.” (Marie)*

Marlene also spoke of similar circumstances when she mentioned how Stan helped her get back from her sabbatical into her role as a full-time professor,

*“I don’t know how I did it without him. Basically I really don’t. I don’t think I could have come back from my sabbatical without him, you know? And come into this role and teaching and that hectic, overwhelming kinda realm of the university.” (Marlene)*

Marlene, also mentioned the intuitive nature of Stan in her interview,

*“He is so intuitive. So he will come up if I need him to and he will lie across my legs, across my chest and he just seems to know when to do it.” (Marlene)*

Along the same lines, it was also mentioned by the handlers that their service dog provided them with a topic of conversation. Marie mentioned in her interview,

“I found that Barkley provided me with a topic of conversation. People also approached me more because they were curious about Barkley. Some of my friendships were made as a result of first talking about Barkley.” (Marie)

Bryan also mentioned how Lady promotes a positive reaction from other people,

“It’s the reaction of other people I think to our dog, that makes me feel good.” ~ Bryan

Overall it is clear the having a service dog has changed the lives of their human companions in many ways. Pauline sums this up nicely when talking about her husband Bryan and herself,

“They asked us one time, what differences in our lives before and after, and I said it’s brought laughter. It’s brought laughter. and they asked Bryan what was the biggest thing changed in him. And he said it brought back the feeling of responsibility.” (Pauline)

***“The bond with a dog is as lasting as the ties of this earth can ever be.”***

***~ Konrad Lorenz***

### **5.3 THE RELATIONSHIP AND BOND**

The bond between the participants and their service dogs was also expressed through the following question that sought to prompt discussion on this unique relationship,

*“Can you describe to me your relationship with your service dog. Would you consider it to be a bond? Explain.”*

Although it was evident that the bond was present between every handler and their service dog, what varied was the different ways each individual expressed it. Pauline summed it up perfectly when she said,

“Dogs and people are bonded in an unique way.” (Pauline)

In this prompt many of the interviewees shared past experiences as a way of showing the bond that they had between themselves and their service dog. Marie shares this story,

“I remember this one time I had gotten out of the car and ran in the house, leaving Barkley outside to go to the bathroom with my dad. I also left my backpack on the grass when I went inside. I guess Barkley didn’t notice that I had gone inside and when he couldn’t find me, he decided to sit beside my backpack until I returned. My dad figured that although Barkley didn’t know where I was at the time that eventually I would have to come back for my backpack and so that would be a good place to stay. If this doesn’t show a bond, I don’t know what does.” (Marie)

Marlene also used the metaphor of ‘glue’ to show how both herself and her service dog Stan are bonded. She also shared this story,

“I take forever to get ready. He knows me so well now that he’ll just lay on the couch like until I’ve gone back and forth. It’s been 40 minutes, I’m still not ready to go out the door and he’s patiently waiting. And when I get his stuff together he knows, he comes into the kitchen and he just puts his head into his stuff and we’re ready to go.” (Marlene)

Bryan also states that it is the responsibility of caring for Lady that has created the bond between him and his service dog,

“It’s a welcomed bond, it’s not an obligation at all. You know? There is obligations here of course, we accept those obligations with pride.” (Bryan)

Although it is clear that all of these bonds have developed in different ways, each human companion with no hesitation expressed that indeed there was a bond between themselves and their service dog.



*Image 2.0- Barkley on Duty*

*“When a dog is in your life, there is always a reason to laugh.”*

*~ Unknown*

#### **5.4 IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH**

There are many mental health benefits that emerged from this study spanning from feelings of goodness, to re-integration into public, and night terror relief. Table one shows the mental health benefits that the interviewees mentioned during their one on one interview. The prompt for this section was as follows,

*“Do you feel your service dog impacts your mental health? If so, how? Do you have a particular story that would show this?”*



**Table One: Mental Health Benefits of Service Dog Presence**

Night Terror Relief	Reduce Stress
Create Positive and Non-Threatening Discussion Amongst Married Couple	Responsibility/Being Accountable for Something/Purpose/Importance
Laughter	Makes You Feel Proud
Release Tension	Gets You Out of Your Head
Opened Participant Up	Grounds/Brings Back to the Present/ Mindfulness
Increase Socialization	Eliminating Binge Drinking
Feelings of Goodness	Something to Look Forward To
Can Be Yourself	Hope
Re-Direct Focus	Loyalty
Reduced Loneliness	Made More Approachable
Making Transitions More Bearable	Predictability
Acceptance	Re-Integration Into Public
Appreciation of Intuitiveness	Just Having Him/Her Around

Although every single one of the benefits listed were not experienced by every individual, it is still a good testament to the many ways that having a service dog can improve a human's mental health. Throughout the interviews, although there were many significant examples presented, there were a few that really stood out. In this passage Pauline is speaking about her husband Bryan and their martial relationship,

“So for 50 years we were very quiet, trying not to kill each other. And then the very first day we had the dog I came down the hall here and I heard him in there giggling. Giggling with the dog. And I was almost shocked. I couldn't understand, who is that?” (Pauline)

The couple explained that their marital relationship was strained as a result of both of their PTSD symptoms. Laughter and happiness was brought up countless times in Pauline and Bryan's interview, showing how important this partial benefit of having Lady present was for them.

Participants also mentioned that it was their service dog's 'stay-power' that provided them with comfort. Marie explains,

"As people left my life because of my mental illness, I knew that Barkley was not going to leave me, no matter what happened." (Marie)

***"Heroes don't wear capes. They wear dog tags."***

*~Unknown*

### **5.5 THE SERVICE DOG AND PTSD**

Before moving on to the next section on attitudinal and systemic barriers, it is also important to present how individuals with PTSD specifically benefit from having service dogs in their lives. Pauline explains the trauma of PTSD and how Lady helps her to cope with those difficulties,

"Because what she does is, the minute I see her, touch her, feel her, because with PTSD you're in your our head. There is no outside world. So all the trauma that's inside. And you live in there. You hang around in there. Mistreat yourself in there. And just the act of touching her, grounds you into the present. And bring you zoom, out of the nightmare, out of the trauma, whatever and you're right there. And that's her job to bring me back to the present." (Pauline)

Pauline also mentioned the following about her husband Bryan saying,

"He just withdraws, he goes inside, he shuts up, he doesn't do anything and Lady will come and she will drop a toy on his lap, or take him out for a walk." (Pauline)

The table and the quotes above provide a good spotlight on the countless mental health benefits that people can derive from their service dog, both for mental health reasons and specifically with those for PTSD.



*Image 3.0- Newspaper of Event that Pauline and Bryan were Involved In and Lady*

***“When I look into the eyes of an animal, I do not see an animal. I see a living being. A friend. A soul.”***

***~ A. D. Williams***

## **5.6 ATTITUDINAL/SYSTEMIC BARRIERS**

Lastly, there are many attitudinal/systemic barriers that the service dog teams from this study experience regularly including: lack of privacy, forced disclosure, and dating difficulties.

Table two shows the various attitudinal/systemic barriers that service dog handlers and their significant others mentioned in their respective interviews. The prompt for this section was as follows,

*“Have you experienced any systemic or attitudinal barriers in public, school, work, family, friends? What needs to change for people sharing their lives with service dogs?”*

**Table Two: Attitudinal/Systemic Barriers Experienced by Persons with Service Dogs**

Lack of Privacy	Work/Career
Picture Taking	Staring/Unwanted Public Attention
Rude/Inappropriate Behaviour From Public/ Others	Tormented
Friends/Family Concerned with Handlers Appearance with Service Dog	Asked to Leave a Public Location
Dating Difficulties	Forced Disclosure
Cultural Barriers	Lack of Public Education on Various Uses
Acceptance	Preconceived Notions
Extra Costs to Stay in Hotel	

The type of barrier and the amount of times this barrier occurred for that participant varied across each service dog and their human companion.

Amongst the interviewees, the experience of being forced to disclose their mental health concerns and lack privacy came up amongst the biggest concerns. Marlene expresses her dissatisfaction with the questioning that she experiences when in a public place,

“People are always asking what’s he for? And I’m like...do you want to tell your entire medical history? Because I’ll listen. Then I’ll tell you why I have him. Right? But not until you disclose first.” (Marlene)

Marie also talked about the attitudinal barriers from some of her family and friends were not only a shock but posed a significant challenge for her,

“The people that I thought would be accepting of my journey to get Barkley, like my grandparents, aunt, former boyfriend, and friends were not as open to it as I thought that they would be.” (Marie)

A lack of education of the public was also a point brought up by many of the participants and their significant others. Since service dogs have in history of most often being used for the blind, handlers like Marie explain that people are often confused as they do not know that mental health/psychiatric service dogs are available,

“People don’t understand why I would have a service dog because I am not blind.”  
(Marie)

The quote above provides an excellent leeway into the various changes that service dog companions and their significant others have suggested as a way to improve and gain more acceptance in society. Some of the points that were mentioned in this regard were the fact that more knowledge needs to be disseminated amongst the public about the various uses of service dogs in society and what they do for their human companions. Many who participated in this study believed that this would go a long way in encouraging acceptance of service dogs and in this case mental health/psychiatric service dogs. It was also mentioned that having more service dogs around would also improve acceptance, as people would be more conditioned to seeing them present in society. Reducing the cost of service dogs for people and in the case of veterans, having support from Veterans Affairs, was presented as a way to improve acceptance in society. Lastly, those involved in this research also suggested that having a national policy and tighter standards when it comes to service dogs is also important. This is the case not only in terms of the human, but also for the well-being of the dogs. Pauline explains,

“There is a dog in the mix, that dog has to be just as safe as the person does. And I like the standards that they have to meet, there is a whole bunch of criteria they have to meet before giving us a dog, and then we have to pass the test, you know everyone needs those. You can’t just go around giving out dogs. There has to be a rhyme and reason.” (Pauline)

It is evident from the excerpts and table above that service dogs and their human companions still face tremendous attitudinal and systemic barriers in society. There also appears to be many interventions that need to be put in place in order to improve acceptance and well-being of service dogs and their human companions.

*“The journey of life is sweeter, when traveled with a dog.”*

*~ Unknown*

### **5.7 SERVICE DOGS ACCORDING TO SIGNIFICANT OTHERS**

Another portion of this research aimed to explore the roles that service dogs play in the participants lives, according to their significant others. In a survey, sent to the participants significant others through email, they were asked to comment not only on the benefits that they witnessed regarding service dog teams, but also the attitudinal, systemic, or societal barriers that they noticed.

Although there were many interesting ideas brought up by the participants significant others. There were a few that really stood out as significant. One particular response from Bryan and Pauline’s daughter explained that the unconditional acceptance that Lady offers her parents is something she was incredibly grateful for,

“Lady offers the both of them the opportunity to laugh, live in the moment and, offer a sense of forgiveness and unconditional acceptance. For this, I am most eternally grateful.” (Lorna)

Also like the service dog teams mentioned themselves above, there is a lack of public education regarding the roles and reasons for service dogs. Hilary, Marie’s friend explains,

“People automatically assume that there is something ‘wrong’ with Marie because she has a service dog. People are not informed nor educated about service dogs and thus have this negative stigma towards service dogs and their owners.” (Hilary)

Another significant other of Marie's also spoke to how a lack of public education became a barrier at work,

“When booking a talk, I explained that she would be bringing her service dog along and they said we wouldn't be able to stay for lunch because a member had an allergy to dogs.” (Emily)

It is clear from the findings presented above that there are many significant benefits associated with being paired with a service dog. But, as will be explored in the discussion, service dog teams are forced to overcome attitudinal and systemic barriers in order to gain these benefits.



*Image 4.0- Barkley Outside Enjoying the Day*

***“It is the intuitive power of animals that can help us heal hurts, lessen stress, feed needs, and express our caring side.”***

***~ Marty Becker***

## **CHAPTER SIX-DISCUSSION**

This research has indeed demonstrated that there are many mental health benefits associated with animal-human bonding and pairing those facing mental health challenges with service dogs. Although most pet owners will agree that they derive benefit from their pet(s), this research aimed to take a closer look at what the tangible and deeper *mental health benefits* were associated with a human who shares their life with a service dog. Through looking at service dogs as a way of creating independence; the unbreakable bond in service dog teams; the implications of service dogs for veterans with PTSD; the Canadian context; the multifaceted role of service dogs; variation in the size and shape of service dogs; the problem with service dog fraud; balancing competing rights; the right to privacy; costs associated with service dogs; a call for the development of a national standard and service dog ethics and responsibilities we can see how this research can play a role in the everyday lives of service teams in Canada.

***“You’ll never walk alone because I will always be with you...Love Your Dog.”***

***~ Unknown***

### **6.1 SERVICE DOGS AS A PASSPORT TO LIFE**

#### ***Creating Independence and Providing Assistance for those with Mental Illnesses***

First, was the sense of independence and purpose that service dogs brought to the participants lives. The participants interviewed for this pilot study, as well as many examples found in a substantive body of literature, explained that they would not be able to participate in daily life to the extent that they do, without their service dog. In the literature, a study by Kwong and Bartholomew (2011) spoke to the topic of independence, when they found that service dogs acted as a secure base for their human partners as they explored their independence. In this case



service dogs can be seen as a ‘passport to life’ as they provide the ability to engage in an independent and productive lifestyle that those without a psychiatric service dog or a service dog for mental health may not be able to.

*“Some of my best friends...Never say a word.”*

*~Unknown*

## **6.2 THE UNBREAKABLE BOND**

### ***The Bond Present in Service Dog Teams***

The intuitiveness of service dogs, not only shown in this research but in previous studies, is also of utmost importance when speaking to the deeper mental health benefits associated with an individual being partnered with a service dog. Participants in this study, as well as those in past literature, demonstrate that the bond the one develops with their service dog is rooted in a deep understanding of each other. In the literature, the study by Fine and Beck (2010), also spoke to the bond as a result of the ingredients of love and friendship. Although many pet owners may say that they know their pet ‘like the back of their hand’ there is something different that occurs between a service dog and their human companion. The difference in this bond, according to this research, is a result of the amount of time and the many experiences that service dogs teams have gone through together. This experience and time expands well out of the realm of a person and their pet and shows that indeed having a service dog to assist with mental illness can provide a way of life difficult to achieve without one.



*Image 5.0- Stan Out on the Town*

*“When it’s too hard to look back and you’re too afraid to look ahead, look right beside you and I’ll be there.”*

*~ Unknown*

### **6.3 WOUNDED WARRIORS**

#### ***The Implications of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD***

A pilot study by Veterans Affairs Canada, scheduled to start in the Spring of 2015, which will pair fifty veterans with service dogs, will aim to provide research on the benefits associated with service dogs for PTSD and the veterans they are paired with (Segal, 2015). It is through this study that the Canadian Government hopes to uncover not only the therapeutic benefits of service dogs, but also provide backing for a future national unifying service dog policy (Segal, 2015). The Veterans Affairs Minister Erin O’Toole told *CBC* that they are also going to explore,

“does the service animal help the underlying psychiatric condition or mental condition? Or is it helping their anxiety? Which is a good thing, but is it actually treating the underlying operational stress? (Segal, 2015)”

It is a hope that the research presented here will provide background to that pilot project as indeed it has shown that service dogs for PTSD do not just ease veterans anxiety, but also help to treat the underlying operational stress that they face.

First, one example of this could be the ability of a service dog to bring families back together and save marriages. This has been shown in this study through the participants as well as in the literature review through the research of Ritche and Amaker (2012) and Chumley (2012). The service dog, who is continually working to help the veteran with their PTSD to confront his/her condition head on allows the veteran to live a more normal life and therefore be involved in family activities and routines. Without a service dog for persons living with PTSD to assist them with night terrors and assisting with a sleep routine, helping them to feel confident in public, and encouraging mindfulness, many veterans would not be able to be apart of their families daily routines, which has been shown to increase the dissolution of families. With a service dog helping them to deal with the symptoms of their PTSD, they are able to live a 'normal life' and provide for their families in ways they were not likely able to before. A service dog allows a veteran to not only focus on the symptoms associated with their PTSD, but also to look outside of themselves and be apart of the bigger picture.

Another example of this is the common urge of some of those with PTSD to binge drink, as a way to ease the mind of its underlying symptoms (Stern et al., 2013; Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). It has been demonstrated however, by some of the participants in this study, that a service dog for PTSD can soothe the urge to binge drink and enable a slow re-entry into a life without alcohol.

Although it is evident that there are mental health benefits associated with having a service dog, this study has shown that often in exchange for these benefits service dogs and their human companions have to face many systemic and attitudinal barriers. The next sections of this discussion will both look at the various barriers that participants in this study experienced, as well as draw from recent news reports across Canada to show other difficulties that service dogs and their human companions experience. The intent of this section of the discussion is to provide a broader context with which to understand the experiences of the service dog teams across Canada in order to generate suitable guidelines for future research and advocacy work that will help reduce the barriers for service dog teams.



*Image 6.0- She's a Lady*

***“Dogs are more necessary to the welfare of a country than Wall Street or the railroads.”***  
***~ Unknown***

#### **6.4 THE CANADIAN CONTEXT**

##### ***The Best and Worst Places to Live with a Service Dog Across the Country***

An integral part of this research is providing a Canadian context regarding the benefits and barriers associated with having a mental health service dog. At the beginning of this paper readers were introduced to the current state of service dog policy in Canada. If you look at this report it would seem on paper that the province of Alberta should be used as a blueprint for creating consistent policy Canada-wide. However, although they seem to have the most framework in place legislation wise, a recent study by *Courageous Companions* that was released in December 2014 would suggest otherwise.

Data was collected over eighteen months from over three hundred service dog human companions across Canada (Platt, 2014). The results stand in stark opposition to the policy that appears to be in place, as Calgary was named the worst city to live with service dogs according to the participants (Platt, 2014). In Calgary, service dog teams were asked to leave ninety-percent of the retailers and businesses they tried to enter. In fact according to George Leonard who is the *Courageous Companions* founder, when they were in Calgary participants,

“were denied service twenty places in a row-we even got kicked out of a club, and we were there with the Stampeders (Platt, 2014).”

Other cities ranked amongst the worst to live with a service dog included: Ottawa (with an eighty-percent denial rate of the retailers and businesses they tried to enter), Saskatoon (sixty-percent denial rate), Brandon (fifty-nine percent denial rate), and Moncton (fifty-eight percent denial rate) (Platt, 2014). It was not all bad though as ranked among the best cities in Canada to live with a service dog included: Winnipeg (with an only five-percent denial rate), Toronto (with

a thirty-percent denial rate), Vancouver (with a thirty-two percent denial rate), Montreal (thirty-three percent denial rate), and Quebec (thirty-four percent denial rate) (Platt, 2014).

Comparing this to the state of service dog policy across Canada, presented at the beginning of this paper, it is interesting to see the large gap in denial rate between the two best cities to live in with a service dog: Winnipeg and Toronto. It could be suggested that the reason Winnipeg has only a five-percent denial rate is because Manitoba has the steepest fines when it comes to discrimination against service dogs which range anywhere from five-thousand dollars to ten-thousand dollars. This is much different from the proposed 'blue-print' province of Alberta whose charges can be as low as three-hundred dollars.

Comparing the results of this survey to the study conducted by *Courageous Companions*, policy makers and researchers should ponder whether the key to service dog acceptance is in the fines or if there are other factors involved in these results. It appears that this should be a top priority as it could be the key to increased service dog acceptance across Canada; something requested by all the interviewees in this study.

***“Ever wonder where you’d end up if you took your dog for a walk and never once pulled back on the leash?”***

***~ Robert Brault***

## **6.5 NOT JUST FOR ‘THE BLIND’ ANYMORE**

### ***Service Dog Roles are Multifaceted***

This research specifically interviewed individuals about the mental health benefits of sharing one’s life with service dogs. This is outside the realm of society’s common understanding of the role of service dogs, as in the past service dogs often have only been paired with people with visual or hearing difficulties. According to *Service Dogs International*, service dogs are now used for everything from balance issues, to autism, to seizure alert and response, low blood sugar

alerts, as an assistant to those with power and manual wheelchairs, and much more. The service dog world is becoming more multifaceted and with that needs to come a growing awareness of the public about the many uses of service dogs in society.

In Marie's interview, the young woman that is partnered with service dog Barkley, she spoke to this issue in her daily travels,

"I have been tormented in stores on countless occasions and have been asked to leave. I think that the reason why this happens is because people don't understand why I would have a service dog because I am not blind." ~ Marie

While it is quite evident that this is frustrating on an individual level for Marie, unfortunately this reaction is all too commonplace in Canadian society. In fact a recent article published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* titled, *Commission Tackles Issue of Service Dogs: Calls for Public Awareness after Feedback* speaks to the influx of incident reports that the *Manitoba Human Rights Commission* has been receiving in regards to service dogs (Welch, 2015). It was stated in the article that,

"Even today, barriers still exist for individuals who are blind and/or deaf and use service animals," wrote the commission. "It appears, however, that it is individuals with invisible disabilities using service animals who currently experience significant barriers and whose rights are not well-understood by employers, service providers and landlords (Welch, 2015)."

*The Manitoba Human Rights Commission* stated that the issue of service dogs and their acceptance into the community is of utmost importance to them, as there is currently about ten complaints involving service dogs working their way through the commission process (Welch, 2015). Along with this, staffers also report that they get calls at least once a week from people asking for information regarding service animals and their rights in public places (Welch, 2015).

One particular story that is mentioned in the article speaks about Mackenzie Lough, a Winnipeg teenager, who has recently spoken out about the harassment that she sometimes receives when she brings her officially trained Pomeranian service dog (unnamed) into public locations. She is frustrated by the fact that although the dog is a trained service dog, that she has still been dismissed from public places many a time or treated unfairly. What people do not understand, even though they cannot see Lough's 'disability', is that she relies on her service dog to manage her anxiety, depression, social phobia, as well as to detect when she has forgotten to take her medication or may be about to self harm. In other words, Lough's service dog is of upmost importance to her (Welch, 2015). Commission chairwoman Yvonne Peters who has a visual impairment and has had a service dog (unnamed) for decades stated that in the case of stories like this,

“We have not done enough education in this province, and all of Canada, about the fact that the role of service dogs has really expanded (Welch, 2015).”

Another story which speaks to this issue, was mentioned in this article as well. It tells the story of Ian White, a veteran who has a service dog named Shilo, to assist him with PTSD. On Remembrance Day, wearing his medals and attending a ceremony, he was approached by a gentleman that said, “You're not blind, you don't need that dog (Welch, 2015).” Although Shilo had her vest on with the words ‘Service Dog’ scrolled across it White said,

“because he didn't see any physical injuries, he didn't think I needed her (Welch, 2015).”

In order to combat this, the Commission suggested that more public awareness, which could include a television and radio ad campaign, is needed to start confronting the barriers that those with service dogs face in Canada. The report also recommends that Winnipeg establish a working group on the issue of service dogs, which could work towards creating some kind of

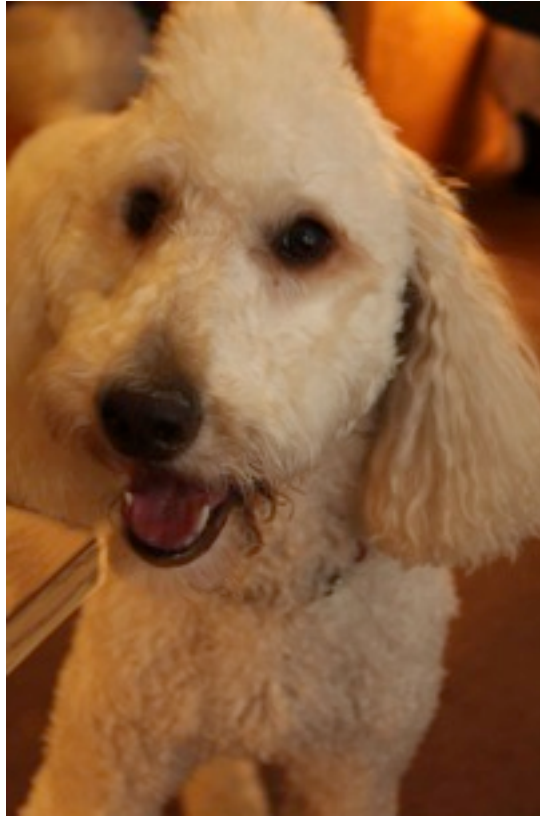


certification or standardized identification that would help business owners make proper decisions when service dog teams enter their establishment (Welch, 2015). Scott Jocelyn the Executive Director of the *Manitoba Restaurant and Food Services Association* also spoke to the commission stating that,

“restaurant owners and staff want clear rules they can rely on when mediating between customers, especially if the animal isn't an officially certified service dog but still important to a person with anxiety or depression as a source of comfort and support (Welch, 2015).”

He said that it, “can be complicated to know the right thing to do” (Welch, 2015) and that staff feel uncomfortable about making decisions on whether customers are legitimate when they say that they require the help of a service animal.

After reviewing the Report of the *Manitoba Human Rights Commission*, their work on service dogs and disability brings issues to the table that do not only impact Manitoba, but all of the provinces and territories across Canada. Future cross-Canada research should view the work of this group as a blueprint for their future provincial and national efforts. Appendix H provides an initial outline which could help to create inclusive public access for service dog teams. The work aims to provide information that could be distributed and taught to businesses across Canada, as requested by Jocelyn above, in order to increase public access for service dog teams. More work is needed to be done on this document, but it provides a good starting point for creating more inclusive public places.



*Image 7.0-Barkley the Service Dog*

*“My little dog...A heartbeat at my feet.”*

*~ Unknown*

### **6.6 ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

#### ***Service Dogs Come in Many Different Shapes and Sizes***

The research presented in this paper has clearly shown that when it comes to service dogs, ‘one size does not fit all.’ In fact, each of those that were interviewed for this study had varying breeds and sizes of service dogs which included: A Lab, a Whippet, and a Standard Poodle. Although a point of similarity across these three dogs is that they are all trained to assist with mental health difficulties from anxiety to PTSD, what differentiates them is that they are not all the same size or breed. In fact, two of the dogs do not conform to what is considered uniform in regards to service dogs. In previous years, Golden Retrievers, Labs, and German Shepard's often filled these roles. As the previous section of this discussion highlighted, the benefits for

service dogs are multifaceted, this is also true of service dog breeds. Future research would benefit from a breakdown of service dog breed types by percentage in Canada, as a way of showing and informing the public about the various breeds of service dogs.

A recent Canadian news story speaks to barriers associated with having a non-traditional breed or size of service dog. In an article titled *Service Dogs a Target for Abuse Despite Users' Disabilities* (2014) by Adam Walsh for *CBC*, he discusses the common difficulties that arise when service dog handlers and their dogs enter into public places. In the article the story of Nicole Bannister from St. John's, Newfoundland was told. Bannister has a little black toy poodle named Angel who sits at the base of her wheelchair in order to assist her with seizures. One day when Bannister was in a local *Walmart* a cashier said to her, "excuse me you are not allowed a dog in here (Walsh, 2014)." Like all service dog teams who have faced this multiple times before, she calmly responded, "but it's a service dog (Walsh, 2014)." It was at that moment that the cashier looked at Angel she said, "that dog is too small to be a service dog (Walsh, 2014)." Although the dog was accepted as a service dog after Bannister showed the cashier Angel's service dog tags and complained to a manager, she still left horrified and embarrassed by the way she had been treated.

Stories like Bannister's are all too common and show the importance of educating the public about not only the various roles of service dogs, but also the different breeds and sizes that fulfill this important societal role. In fact, *Service Dog Central* reports that breeds of service dogs can be as multifaceted (2009) (see table three below). Future research and advocacy should point their efforts towards developing education programs that teach the public about service dog diversity as a way to reduce the barriers that service dogs and their handlers face in society.

**Table Three: Multifaceted Breeds of Service Dogs**

<b>Breeds of Service Dogs</b>
Mastiffs
Chihuahuas
Corgis
Cocker Spaniels
German Shepherds
Labradors
Golden Retrievers
Bully Breeds
Dobermans
Rottweilers
Standard Poodles
Whippets

*“What a beautiful world it would be if people had hearts like dogs.”*

*~ Unknown*

### **6.7 SPOTTING FAKES**

#### ***The Problem with Passing Off a Pet for a Service Dog***

In March 2015 articles such as, *B.C. Service-Animal Owners to Require License as Family Pets Increasingly Passed off as Guide Dogs*, arose in the media. These articles, like the one mentioned above, spoke to the new provincial law in British Columbia which declares that fake service dogs will not be tolerated. In this new system according to the article,

“The Guide Dog & Service Dog Act, which had its second reading in the B.C. legislature Monday, would provide the province’s guide-dog owners with government-issued identification, similar to a driver’s license (Hopper, 2015).”

Currently in B.C., like other provinces across the country, wallet-cards issued by certified service and guide dog facilities, are being abused. Pet owners, wanting to bring their dogs into public places, to stay in hotels, fly in airplanes with them free of charge, etc. have turned to buying service dog vests and fake service dog identification (Hopper, 2015). What pet owners do not realize is that by putting fraudulent vests and using fake service dog identification, they are undermining the training that real service dogs go through in order to become certified. Along with this they are also not *respecting* the meaning and status of the vest that the service dog community has worked so hard to achieve. Fake service dogs are also giving real service dogs a bad name as often family pets will defecate in public, misbehave, get in fights with other non-service dogs, and will bark continually. Even though pet owners often look at certified service dogs and think ‘why not my dog?’, they don’t realize the ramifications they are creating and the barriers they are posing for real service dogs and their handlers in society (Hopper, 2015).

Although British Columbia has chosen to take action on this issue, it is now time that other provinces and territories across the country create laws for the same reasons. It is also important that future research and advocacy efforts focus on educating the public about the problems they are creating when they try to pass off their pet as a registered service dog.



Image 8.0- Fake Service Dogs (Courtesy of [www.anythingpawsable.com](http://www.anythingpawsable.com))

*“I believe the day is coming when doctors will sometimes ‘prescribe’ pets instead of pills...What pill gives so much love, makes one feel safe, stimulates laughter, encourages regular exercise, and makes a person feel needed?”*

*~ Leo Bustad*

## **6.8 WHO WINS?**

### ***Balancing Competing Rights***

During the time this research was conducted, one of the interviewees Marie, experienced a problem in a work/study position at her university which really brought to the forefront the issue of *balancing competing rights*. In this instance, Marie accepted a work/study position at the university in the Communications department transcribing interviews for a professor. The professor knew when she hired Marie that she had a hypo-allergenic service dog which accompanied her during her daily travels for medical reasons. The problem first arose however, when Marie was asked by another co-worker to vacuum up after her service dog following her shift. The co-worker explained that the professor had asked for her to tell Marie as she said she would experience an allergic reaction. Although Marie was startled by the request, Marie vacuumed up the area as the professor requested of her. Marie thought as long as she did not sit in the same room again, the problem would not arise in the future. However this was unfortunately not the case. During the next shift the professor came into a different room that Marie was sitting in and in front of other students, started to get mad at Marie for being in this other room with her service dog. When Marie said she did not know about this, the professor did not believe her and continued to explain that without windows she would suffer from an allergic attack and requested that Marie vacuum up the area immediately. Marie started to cry as she had never experienced this in her other work/study job on campus and was embarrassed by the way the professor was acting in the situation and when she tried to explain that she did not just bring

her dog around just for the sake of companionship, but for medical reasons, the professor fought back with, “well I have a medical reason too. I have allergies.”

Hearing this story really illuminates the issue of service dogs and the need to balance competing rights. In a situation like the one above, whose medical condition trumps the other? Does Marie’s mental health struggles trump the professors allergies or vice versa? Does the fact that Marie’s service dog is hypo-allergenic make a difference? And do all service dogs need to be? It is also important to ponder whether the same situation would have occurred if Marie has a visible ‘disability’. In *The Manitoba Service Animal Public Consultation Report*, which was mentioned in a previous discussion section and published February 2015, the issue of balancing rights was of upmost priority to the committee. They stated that,

“Participants identified the issue of competing rights. Many participants gave examples of situations in which other competing needs should be considered against the right of service dog user to access. For example: the need to manage allergies and fear of dogs; the need to prepare the premises (workplace or otherwise) for a service animal user; the need for information about the extent of care and control the service animal user has over the animal; the need to be sure an animal meets the definition of service animal when service animal identification and harnesses are available online; and the fear of opening the floodgates on the “me too” factor (“If he can have a dog in here why can’t I?”) Participants identified that accessing these needs can present challenges to enabling a clear right of access service animal users (Welch, 2015).”

This issue is of extreme importance as there are countless stories concerning the issue of balancing competing rights in regards to service dogs.

Interestingly, allergies are at the forefront of balancing competing rights in regards to service dogs. In fact, many airlines in Canada have been faced with this issue in recent years. In a recent article titled *Air Canada Cuts Allergy Accommodations* (Nath, 2015) explains that, according to a recent decision by the *Canadian Federal Court of Appeal*, *Air Canada* will no longer have to provide special accommodations for those with dog allergies. The *Canadian*

*Transportation Agency* made it a mandate in 2013, that requires a five-seat buffer zone between pets/service dogs and those with severe canine allergies. This ruling also said that if someone had dog allergies and the plane did not have a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter or provide completely uncirculated fresh air, dogs would be banned from that flight (Nath, 2015). However in February 2015 *Air Canada* suggested that these regulations, “cause discrimination against those with service dogs (Nath, 2015).” Although this seems like a ‘win’ for the service dog community, it is statements from Asthma organizations like this that bring up the issue of competing rights,

“we are disappointed that Air Canada decided to put the needs of pets and their owners over the health and safety of passengers with a severe allergic disability (Nath, 2015).”

This ruling will now be put to the *Canadian Medical Association* to see if it is justified. It appears that the *Canadian Medical Association* wants to go half way between competing interests and recommends, “a ban on all pets, except for certified service animals, traveling inside the aircraft cabin on all Canadian passenger planes (Nath, 2015).” With issues such as this coming up everyday, it is a must for future research and activists to explore the implications of these decisions in order to help decision makers determine which interests overrule others.

Another example of competing rights, in relation to service dogs, was outlined in a news story published by *CBC News* in Nova Scotia on May 16, 2014. The story titled *Landlord of veteran with service dog defends no-dog policy*, accounts a story of veteran David Peavy who was given an eviction notice by his landlord K.J. Gandhi because Norm, the service dog that assists him with his PTSD, violated the building’s no-dog policy. Gandhi claimed that two-thirds of the residents in the building did not want a dog to live there and said that the no-dog policy was the main attraction of the building (CBC News, 2014). Peavy was given a 15 day extension



until the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission* looked into the case further. However the landlord stated that during this time, temporary accommodations would only be granted as long as Norm did not go into common areas, hallways, outdoor premises, or in the elevator in the presence of other tenants. It was also stipulated that the dog must not defecate on the premises. However, according to Wayne MacKay a human rights expert,

“Those are high demand restrictions on the dog. Is that demand so high that it is not accommodating and allowing him to live there in a reasonable fashion (CBC News, 2014)?”

This story also highlights the common difficulty that service dog teams have getting a dog-friendly property rental and the common procedure to include a service animal as an entity of no pets policies. The current British Columbia endeavour, mentioned above, which requires service-animal companions to have a license to reduce fake service and guide dogs, is also doing work to ensure that guide dogs and service dogs can continue to live with their owners, even after retirement, regardless if they live in a pet free residence or not (Hopper, 2015). It is clear to see from the information above that not having a place to live is a tremendous barrier for service dog handlers and is one that should be continued to be addressed in future advocacy and research work.

Along with the issues mentioned above, some of the other examples of competing rights issues include: whether or not to permit a service animal into a hospital room, clinic, or cafeteria regardless of whether or not other public health legislation would exclude them from doing so; whether or not taxi drivers and companies should consider in advance the policies and procedures that they will use to provide the service dog and their human companion alternative transportation; and like Bryan from this research personally experienced, whether or not hotels

and motels should charge an additional damage deposit or a cleaning fee when they stay with their service dogs. It is these issues that show why balancing competing interests should be at the forefront of future research and activist work, as recent headlines, stories, and policy efforts like the ones stated above, are becoming extremely important for the daily routines of service dogs and their human companions.

***“Dogs...do not ruin their sleep working about how to keep the objects they have, and to obtain the objects they have not. There is nothing of value they have to bequeath except their love and faith.”***

~ Eugene O’Neill

## **6.9 COMING OUT**

### ***The Right to Privacy***

The right to privacy was an important challenge mentioned by the participants in this study. Marlene who has a service dog named Stan mentioned the following in her interview,

“I’m out now, right at someone with a service dog? I can’t hide anymore. So people are always asking what’s he for? And I’m like...do you want to tell me your entire medical history? Because I’ll listen. Then I’ll tell you why I have him. Right? But not until you disclose first.” ~ Marlene

Lorna also mentioned this about privacy in regards to her father Bryan in her interview,

“Having Lady wear a vest, tells those who do not know him, part of his psychological story which, he may or may not be willing to share with others.” ~Lorna

It is well noted across the service dog community that service dog teams do not want to disclose their medical information and would like a reduction in the number of questions asked about themselves and their service dog in the public. Although it is not well known by the public, legally business owners and other public institutions do not have the right to ask about a service dog handlers medical information, or why they receive the assistance of a service dog. The only piece of information that business owners and other public institutions have the right to ask for is a proof of certification from a registered service dog training organization.

An article that was published in *Everyday Feminism* by Sara Whitestone in March 2015 titled *Service Dogs 101: Three Things Every Feminist Should Know About Service Dogs and Their Owners*, really put the issue of privacy in perspective. In the article, Whitestone stated that confronting a service dog team and asking them to ‘prove it’ or explain why they have a service dog is being “ableist, invasive, and discriminatory (Whitestone, 2015).” Whitestone said that although asking about someone’s service dog may seem like a nice way to start a conversation,

“non-disabled privilege often gets in the way of us connecting with others on a personal level. We immediately notice the differences between us and want to do something “nice” to compensate for them...Just as you shouldn’t acknowledge someone’s wheelchair before their humanity, you shouldn’t ask about or bring attention to the service dog (Whitestone, 2015).”

According to Whitestone, the best way to become an ally for service dog teams is to respect their boundaries and self- agency. Many service dog agencies started to use vests as a way of establishing clear boundaries for the service dog team. Although this may seem like common knowledge, this research clearly demonstrates that respect for the service dog vest in society has been dismantled. People no longer respect service dog team’s and view the vest as an opening to ask questions, as opposed to a symbol of personal space.

With these thoughts in mind, in order to develop better standards and awareness regarding one’s right to privacy, perhaps future research should compare the process of coming out for members of the LGBTQ community to those with service dogs, especially service dogs teams who are stigmatized or have invisible illnesses. It is through this process that perhaps better strategies and matters of public education could be brought to the forefront.



*Image*

*9.0-Lady on Duty*

*“If I had a dollar for every time my dog made me smile, I would be a millionaire.”*

*~ Unknown*

## **6.10 HOW MUCH IS THAT DOGGIE IN THE WINDOW?**

### ***Costs Associated with Service Dogs***

The costs associated with having a service dog was another important finding that emerged in this study. Marie one of the participants from the study said,

“I realized that in Canada there was not a lot of places where you could obtain a service dog and that if you could it would be an extremely long wait time. I also learned that getting a service dog would be quite costly.” ~ Marie

With for-profit and non-profit service dog agencies competing in Canada, the issue regarding accessibility based on socioeconomic status became apparent, not only in this study, but in other previous research as well. Whitehorse (2015) also spoke to the issue of the costs of service dogs

by saying, “as feminists, we must continue to support disabled people to make the best choice for themselves – regardless of socioeconomic status.” Research that looks into these barriers, as well as policy efforts that develop strategies to assist with funding, are of extreme importance for those with disabilities in Canada who wish to partner with a service dog. Research which also looks at the factors associated with obtaining funding should also be explored because as Marie stated in her interview,

“It was very hard for me to ask for money for my service dog because of my age and the circumstances.” ~ Marie

What she is speaking to here, is the fact that most local fundraisers for service dogs are for children, which made community fundraising an inaccessible way for her to raise money for Barkley. Along with this, mental illness is a touchy topic that both herself and her family did not want to broadcast to her small town.

When it comes to the costs of service dogs for veterans with PTSD, the barriers in regards to funding have become more tough as the *Royal Canadian Legion* in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, are putting funding on hold until more strict service dog standards are put in place. In the article *Legions Pause Funding PTSD Service Dogs Over Training Concerns* by Segal from *CBC*, Medric Cousineau who works to pair veterans with service dogs in Halifax stated,

“The service dog market right now, in a lot of cases it's like the Wild West and there's not a lot of regulation out there (Segal, 2015).”

The need for a national standard for service dogs in Canada, see 6.11, should be of upmost concern for service dog activists and researchers as without this funding many veterans will not have access to service dogs which can assist them in their experiences of PTSD. Future research

should also look into the varying experiences of service dog teams based on the handlers age and condition in order to discover and combat marginalized communities within the service dog world.

*“Animals are reliable, many full of love, predictable in their affections, predictable in their actions, grateful and loyal. Difficult standards for people to live up to.”*

*~ Alfred A. Montopert*

## **6.11 SETTING THE BAR**

### *A Call for the Development of a National Standard For Service Dogs in Canada*

As with many other activists, service dog teams, academics, and service dog training organizations, this research study calls for a national standard for service dogs in Canada. This standard would regulate service dog organizations and create a universal accreditation process. As mentioned above, fake service dogs are becoming an increasingly pertinent issue, which makes this standardization process even more important. Also with service dog teams facing many systemic and attitudinal barriers, due to a lack of public education about their roles, a national standard would create a platform for an easier and more universal dissemination of knowledge.

Playing a large role in this process is the *Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB)*.

The current status on designation number CGSB-193.1 regarding service dogs is proceeding to development. The scope of this project is as follows,

“There is a basis which is common to all service dogs, and service dog teams, independent of the final specialized applications for which they may be employed. This standard will identify the various aspects of this basis, and establish measurable levels of attainment which can then be used to ensure consumer confidence in the services being provided. This standard is applicable to all Canadian, including military and non-military (CGSB, 2015).”

This study will continue to follow this CGSB development and provide further research which will contribute to a goal of a universal, national policy.

**“You do not own a dog, you have a dog...And he has you.”  
~ Unknown**

## **6.12 AT THE OTHER END OF THE LEASH**

### ***Service Dog Ethics and Responsibilities***

An issue that is often overlooked in service dog research are the implications for the service dog themselves. We currently live in a society which thrives on speciesism, which refers to the process of humans considering the lives and interests of animals as insignificant because they are of a different, and assumedly lesser species than humans (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The problem with this is that it fails to account that animals are beings who also have rights, feelings, needs, emotions, preferences, desires, and their own individual personalities. Although the benefits of service dogs for those with health struggles and PTSD are of importance, it is equally essential to protect the well-being and mental health of the service dogs. In this research Bryan, a veteran paired with a service dog for PTSD named Lady spoke about this issue,

“Because there is a dog in the mix, that dog has to be just as safe as the person does. And I like the standards that they have to meet, there is a whole bunch of criteria they have to meet before giving us a dog, and then we have to pass the test, you know everyone needs those? You can’t just go around giving out dogs. There has to be a rhyme and reason.”  
~Bryan

This notion is supported by the research presented in the literature review by Taylor, Edwards and Pooley (2013) as they spoke about the well-being of PTSD service dogs and Irvin (2014) who was quoted as saying,

“it is critical that we remember that though the relationship is interdependent, the assistance dog is not there by its own choice. We humans have a responsibility to ensure that the bond with an assistance dog is mutually beneficial (p.66).”

Also referring to the *Five Freedoms of Animals* in Appendix C (FAWC, 2009), *Ethics for Service Dogs* in Appendix D (ADI, 2014, p.2), and *Standards for Assistance Dog Partners* in Appendix

E (ADI, 2014, p.15) provides a good foundation for the issues concerning the welfare and ethics of service dogs.

An article titled *Sometimes, service animals need servicing* which was published on March 30, 2015 by the *University of Florida* also spoke on this concern. The article explained that the *University of Florida's* animal hospital will be offering free eye screenings and heart examinations to service animals on May 8 as a part of the *America College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists National Service Dog Eye Exam Event* (UF, 2015). As Caryn Plummer, an assistant professor and board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist at the *University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine* stated,

“Healthy eyes and vision are critical for a service animal to be able to perform to the best of its ability. Regular screening may help detect problems early that are potentially sight- or comfort-threatening, so that intervention may be possible (UF, 2015).”

It is with great hope that events such as these start to take place in Canada as well, so that the health needs of service dogs, can become just as important as their human companions, or perhaps more so. Future research could also turn to labour relations literature as a method of reference for the ethics of service dogs. In essence, we must consider what the experience is like for the dog, because simply put, they matter.





## Just A Dog

From time to time people tell me, "Lighten up, it's just a dog," or, "That's a lot of money for just a dog." They don't understand the distance traveled, time spent, or costs involved for "Just a dog." Some of my proudest moments have come about with "Just a dog." Many hours have passed with my only company being "Just a dog," and not once have I felt slighted. Some of my saddest moments were brought about by "Just a dog." In those days of darkness, the gentle touch of "Just a dog" provided comfort and purpose to overcome the day.

If you, too, think its "Just a dog," you will probably understand phrases like "Just a friend," "Just a sunrise," or "Just a promise." "Just a dog" brings into my life the very essence of friendship, trust, and pure unbridled joy. "Just a dog" brings out the compassion and patience that makes me a better person. Because of "Just a dog" I will rise early, take long walks and look longingly to the future.

For me and folks like me, it's not "Just a dog." It's an embodiment of all the hopes and dreams of the future, the fond memories of the past, and the pure joy of the moment. "Just a dog" brings out what's good in me and diverts my thoughts away from myself and the worries of the day.

I hope that someday people can understand it's not "Just a dog." It's the thing that gives me humanity and keeps me from being "Just a man or woman."

So the next time you hear the phrase "Just a dog," smile, because they "Just Don't Understand."

- Author Unknown

*Image 10.0- Just A Dog*

*“People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones that do.”*

*~ Steve Jobs*

## **CHAPTER SEVEN-CONCLUSIONS & QUESTIONS EMERGING**

This major research paper aimed to combat the lack of Canadian research by exploring the role that animals, and specifically service dogs, can have on mental health of their human companions. It also explores a subgroup of service dogs dedicated to PTSD programs for veterans. Building on this knowledge, this research addressed the attitudinal, systemic, and societal barriers restricting the expansion of animal-human bond programs aimed at mental health enhancement. It is with great hope that this research on the animal-human bond in Canada will facilitate three key developments; connecting animals and humans together nationally in order to provide people with mental health support; encourage greater acceptance of service dogs in society and reducing systemic barriers; and will further facilitate beneficial programs serving veterans suffering with PTSD.

### **7.1 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH**

Despite the many beneficial findings of this report, there are many limitations associated with it. For one only those who are caucasian and from Ontario were interviewed for this study. As well of the four people interviewed, only one of them was a male. Along with this is also the fact that there was a small sample size associated with this research. In regards to the interviews, limitations could have occurred as the participants moods, experiences, and feelings of the day could have prohibited them from providing a clear and concise picture of their life with a service dog. In regards to the significant other surveys, having them complete them on their own time

and send them in, did not allow the researcher to perhaps better clarify their answers. Also every participant was not able to find a significant other to complete that part of the research.

Future studies should try to expand the sample size not only by including more people, but also seeking to find individuals out of the confining constrictions declared above. A more equal representation of males, females, and transgender/homosexual individuals would allow this research to have a wider applicability and interviewing the significant others could lead to more clarified responses. Ensuring that every participant finds a significant other to complete that part of the research would also allow for a more well-rounded view of the individuals life with his/her service dog.

## **7.2 BUILDING A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND PTSD SERVICE DOG TEAMS**

Along with the suggestion of a unifying national service dog policy across Canada, this research has provided the foundation needed to make beneficial changes for the future of both Mental health and PTSD service dog teams. These suggested changes proposed below, are intended to provide a starting point for the many activities that could facilitate necessary change for the Canadian service dog community.

Although school boards such as the Waterloo District School Board have allowed service dogs into their schools, creating a more inclusive and accessible education system for all, there is still much to be done across Canada to allow school boards to more smoothly integrate needed service dogs into the classroom. Along with elementary schools and high schools, universities and colleges across Canada should also develop policies and a framework as a way of more

inclusively accepting service dogs on campus. Factors such as residence living, classroom behaviour, and inclusion in extracurricular activities should be at the forefront of these policies.

Companies across Canada need to develop or improve their policies for handling service dogs who enter into their establishment. These policies should include information for addressing non-supportive customers and address the issue of competing rights. Signs stating, “service dogs welcome” for businesses to put in their entranceway should also be provided to companies who pass the standards associated with an accessible and welcoming space for service dog teams (see Appendix I for example).

Lastly, and possibly most pressing, is the need for a shift in the hegemonic language used when referring to service dogs. More often than not, the human being involved in the service dog team is privileged, and this is most evident in the omnipresent term human-animal bond. I suggest a shift to the animal-human bond as it may signal others to notice the un-questioned privileging of humans over dogs by virtue of word order. Another shift in language that is long overdue is implying humans own animals. Using any language that implies, “owning an animal, pet, or service dog” should be removed in order to promote a society where living things are not to be owned, but an equal member of (in this case) a team with mutual benefit. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenological philosopher stated,

“the relation of the human and animality is not a hierarchical relation, but lateral, and overcoming that does not abolish kinship.” ~Maurice Merleau-Ponty



IMG 11.0

The End is Only  
the Beginning

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A-SERVICE DOG POLICY ACROSS CANADA

#### **CANADA WIDE LEGISLATION AND POLICY**

##### **R.S.C.,1985,c.H-6- Canadian Human Rights Act**

#### **Purpose of Act**

The purpose of this Act is to extend the laws in Canada to give effect, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, to the principle that all individuals should have an opportunity equal to other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, **disability** or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

#### **Discriminatory Practices**

##### **(1) Denial of good, service, facility or accommodation**

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of goods, services, facilities or accommodation customarily available to the general public

- (a) to deny, or to deny access to, any such good, service, facility or accommodation to any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

##### **(2) Denial of commercial premises or residential accommodation**

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of commercial premises or residential accommodation

- (a) to deny occupancy of such premises or accommodation to any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

##### **(3) Employment**

It is discriminatory practice, directly or indirectly,

- (a) to refuse to employ or continue to employ any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

## Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

### Section Fifteen

(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law with discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or **mental or physical disability**.

## ALBERTA

### Key Definitions in Regards to this Act

- **Disabled Person** means any individual who has any degree of disability except blindness or visual impairment that is dependent on a service dog.
- **Service Dog** means a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.

### Prohibited Discriminatory Practices

(1) No person, directly or indirectly, alone or with another, by himself or herself or by the interposition of another, shall

- a) deny to any person the accommodation, services or facilities available in any place to which the public is customarily admitted, or
- b) discriminate against any person with respect to the accommodation, services or facilities available in any place to which the public is customarily admitted or the charges for use of them,

for the reason that the person is a disabled person accompanied by a service dog or a certified dog-trainer accompanied by a dog in training.

(2) No person, directly or indirectly, alone or with another, by himself or herself or by the interposition of another, shall

- a) deny to any person occupancy of any self-contained dwelling unit, or
- b) discriminate against any person with respect to any term or condition of occupancy of any self-contained dwelling unit,

for the reason that the person is a disabled person keeping or customarily accompanied by a service dog.

(3) Nothing in this section shall be construed to entitle

- a) a disabled person to require any accommodation, service or facility in respect of the service dog other than the right to be accompanied by the service dog, or
- b) a certified dog-trainer to require any accommodation, service or facility in respect of a service dog in training other than the right to be accompanied by the dog in training.

- (4) This section does not apply if the disabled person does not control the behaviour of the service dog or the certified dog-trainer does not control the behaviour of the dog in training.

### **Identification of Service Dogs**

- (1) The Minister, or a person designated by the Minister in writing, may, on application, issue to a disabled person an identification card identifying the disabled person and that person's service dog.
- (2) An identification card issued under subsection (1) is proof, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the disabled person that person's service dog identified in it are qualified for the purposes of this act.
- (3) Any person whom an identification card is issued under subsection (1) shall, on request of the Minister or the person designated to the Minister, surrender the person's identification card for amendment or cancellation.

### **Regulations**

The Minister may make regulations respecting qualifications for service dogs.

### **Offences and Fines**

- (1) A person who contravenes section 3 is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding \$3,000.00.
- (2) A person who contravenes section 4(3) or who, not being a disabled person, purports to be a disabled person for the purpose of claiming the benefit of this Act is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding \$300.

## **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

### **Key Definitions in Regards to this Act**

**-Guide Animal** means a guide animal

- a) prescribed under section 8, or  
 b) for which a certificate has been issued under section 7  
 if that animal is used by a person designated by the minister for the purposes of this act;

**-Person with a Disability** means a person who is apparently blind or otherwise disabled and is dependent on a guide animal or white cane.

### **Rights with a Guide Animal**

- (1) A person with a disability accompanied by a guide animal has the same rights, privileges and obligations as a person not accompanied by an animal.
- (2) In particular, a person with a disability accompanied by a guide animal may, in the same manner as would a person not accompanied by an animal, enter and use an accommodation, conveyance, eating place, lodging place or any other place to which the public is invited or has access so long as the guide animal is

- a) prevented from occupying a seat in a public conveyance or eating place, and
- b) held by a leash or harness.

Rights must not interfere with the exercise of a right or privilege under the above section or charge a fee for a guide animal accompanying a person with a disability.

### **Tenancy Rights**

(1) A person must not

- a) deny to a person with a disability a rental unit or manufactured home site advertised or otherwise represented as available for occupancy by a tenant, or
- b) impose a term or condition on a person with a disability for the tenancy of a rental unit or manufactured home site if that term or condition discriminates

because of the disability or because the person with the disability intends to keep a guide animal in a rental unit or manufactured home site.

*Note: This does not apply if the advertisement or representation specifies occupancy of the rental unit may entail sharing, sleeping, bathroom or cooking facilities in the space with a person from another family).*

### **Certificates**

(1) A person with a disability may apply to the minister for a certificate to use as evidence of the *Rights with a Guide Animals* section above applies.

(2) The minister must issue a certificate under subsection (1) if the minister is satisfied that the animal to be used is a guide animal.

(3) A person to whom a certificate under this section is issued must surrender the certificate to the minister and the certificate is void if the minister is satisfied that the guide animal for which the certificate was issued has died, become permanently disabled, ceased to render the services to which the certificate relates or is not qualified as a guide animal.

### **Power to Make Regulations**

(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations referred to in section 41 of the Interpretation Act.

(2) Without limiting subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations as follows:

- a) specifying those animals or classes of animal that are guide animals;
- b) specifying the conditions that must be met for an animal to become or to continue to be a guide animal.

### **Offence and Penalty**

(1) A person who contravenes this act commits an offence.

(2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable on conviction to a fine of not more than \$200.

## **MANITOBA**

### **C.C.S.M. c. S90- The Service Animals Protection Act**

(Assented to October 8, 2009- Current as of October 13, 2009)

#### **Key Definitions in Regards to this Act**

- **Service Animal** means an animal

- (a) trained to be used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability;
- (b) trained to be used by a peace officer in execution of his or her duties; or
- (c) trained to be used by a person who is authorized by a peace officer to assist peace officers in their duties.

#### **Offence 1- Person Interfering with a Service Animal**

-No person shall touch, feed, impede or interfere with a service animal, without lawful excuse or authority.

#### **Offence 2- Person allowing Animal to Interfere with Service Animal**

-No person who owns an animal or has possession or control of an animal shall allow that animal to touch, impede or interfere with a service animal, without lawful excuse or authority.

#### **Penalty**

-A person who contravenes the offences above is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction

- a) for a first offence, to a fine not more than \$5,000.
- b) for a second or subsequent offence, to a fine of not more than \$10,000.

#### **Animal Obedience Training**

If a justice finds a person guilty of an offence under *allowing animal to interfere with a service dog* the justice may, in a probation order and in addition to any other penalty, prescribe that the person attend animal obedience training with the animal that touched, impeded or interfered with a service animal.

#### **Compensation Order**

In addition to the penalty laid out in the *Penalty* section above, the justice who convicts the person may order that the person pay compensation to the owner of the service



animal, or any other person, for loss or damage suffered by the owner or other person as a consequence of the offence, in an amount that the court may determine.

**APPENDIX B-VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF SERVICE DOG POLICY ACROSS CANADA**



 = Service Dog Legislation in Place

**APPENDIX C-FIVE FREEDOMS OF ANIMALS**



**APPENDIX D-ETHICS FOR SERVICE DOGS**

- 1) An Assistance dog must be temperamentally screened for emotional soundness and working ability.
- 2) An assistance dog must be physically screen for the highest degree of good health and physical soundness.
- 3) An assistance dog must be technically and analytically trained for maximum control and for the specialized tasks he/she is asked to perform.
- 4) An assistance dog must be trained using humane training method providing for the physical and emotional safety of the dog.
- 5) An assistance dog must be permitted to learn at his/her own individual pace and not be placed in service before reaching adequate physical and emotional maturity.
- 6) An assistance dog must be matched to best suit the client's needs, abilities, and lifestyle.
- 7) An assistance dog must be placed with a client able to interact with him/her.
- 8) An assistance dog must be placed with a client able to provide for the dog's emotional, physical and financial needs.
- 9) An assistance dog must be placed with a client able to provide a stable and secure living environment.
- 10) An assistance dog must be placed with a client who expresses a desire for increased independence and/or an improvement in the quality of his/her life through the use of an assistance dog.
- 10) An ADI member organization will accept responsibility for its dogs in the event of a graduate's death or incapacity to provide proper care.
- 11) An ADI member organization will not train, place, or certify dogs with any aggressive behaviour. An assistance dog may not be trained in any way for guard or protection duty. Non-aggressive barking as a trained behaviour will be acceptable in appropriate situations.

(Assistance Dogs International, 2014, p.2)

## **APPENDIX E- STANDARDS FOR ASSISTANCE DOG PARTNERS**

The assistance dog partners will agree to the following partner responsibilities:

- 1) Treat the dog with appreciation and respect.
- 2) Practice obedience regularly.
- 3) Practice the dog's skills regularly.
- 4) Maintain the dog's proper behaviour in public and at home.
- 5) Carry proper identification and be aware of all applicable laws pertaining to assistance dogs.
- 6) Keep the dog well groomed and well cared for.
- 7) Practice preventative health care for the dog.
- 8) Obtain annual health checks and vaccinations for the dog.
- 9) Abide by all leash and license laws.
- 10) Follow the training program's requirements for progress reports and medical evaluations.
- 11) Arrange for the prompt clean-up of dog's waste.

(Assistance Dogs International, 2014, p.13)

**APPENDIX F-ETHICAL APPROVAL****Memo**

To: Devon MacPherson, LAPS - Individualized Studies supervised by C. van Daaen-Smith cvandaal@yorku.ca

From: Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics

Issue Date: Wed Nov 05 2014

Expiry Date: Thu Nov 05 2015

**RE: Understanding Service Dogs Impact on Mental Health  
Certificate #: e2014 - 322**

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LL.M.  
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,  
Office of Research Ethics

**RESEARCH ETHICS: PROCEDURES to ENSURE ONGOING COMPLIANCE**

Upon receipt of an ethics approval certificate, researchers are reminded that they are required to ensure that the following measures are undertaken so as to ensure on-going compliance with Senate and TCPS ethics guidelines:

1. **RENEWALS:** Research Ethics Approval certificates are subject to annual renewal.
  - a. Researchers will be reminded by ORE, in advance of certificate expiry, that the certificate must be renewed
    - i. Researchers have 2 weeks to comply to a reminder notice;
    - ii. If researchers do not respond within 2 weeks, a final reminder will be forwarded. Researchers have one week to respond to the final notice;
  - b. **Failure to renew an ethics approval certificate or (to notify ORE that no further research involving human participants will be undertaken) may result in suspension of research cost fund and access to research funds may be suspended/withheld ;**
2. **AMENDMENTS:** Amendments must be reviewed and approved **PRIOR** to undertaking/making the proposed amendments to an approved ethics protocol;
3. **END OF PROJECT:** ORE must be notified when a project is complete;
4. **ADVERSE EVENTS:** Adverse events must be reported to ORE as soon as possible;
5. **AUDIT:**
  - a. More than minimal risk research may be subject to an audit as per TCPS guidelines;
  - b. A spot sample of minimal risk research may be subject to an audit as per TCPS guidelines.

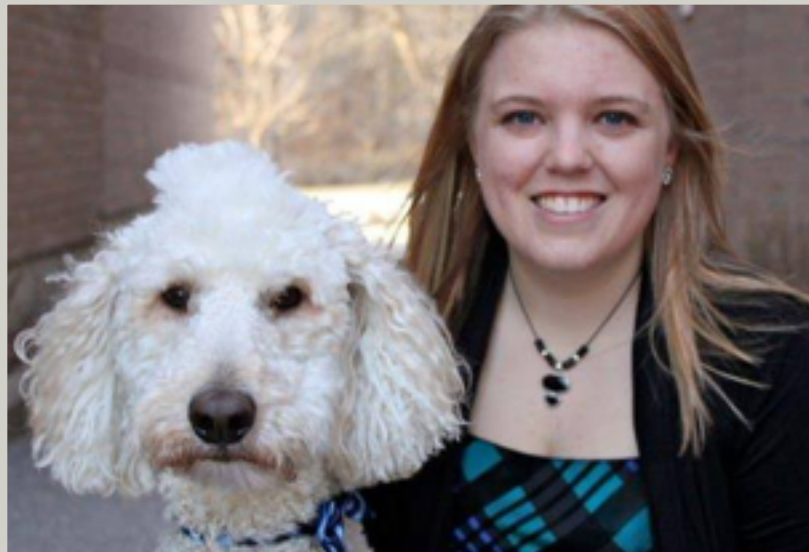
**FORMS:** As per the above, the following forms relating to on-going research ethics compliance are available on the Research website:

1. Renewal
2. Amendment
3. End of Project
4. Adverse Event

**APPENDIX G-RECRUITING POSTER & QUESTIONS SENT TO PARTICIPANTS/  
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS**



**Service Dogs and Mental Health:  
A Qualitative Analysis**



Do you share your life with a service dog?

Do you believe that sharing your life with a service dog impacts your mental health?

Do you want a chance to safely tell your story regarding that experience?

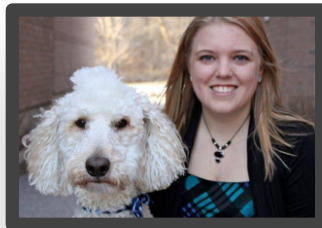
Do you want to make change happen in how service dogs and their human companions are treated, heard or supported?

If you are at all interested in learning about this project, please contact me.  
Your privacy will be respected.

Devon MacPherson  
[givingfor31@gmail.com](mailto:givingfor31@gmail.com)  
905-967-3386



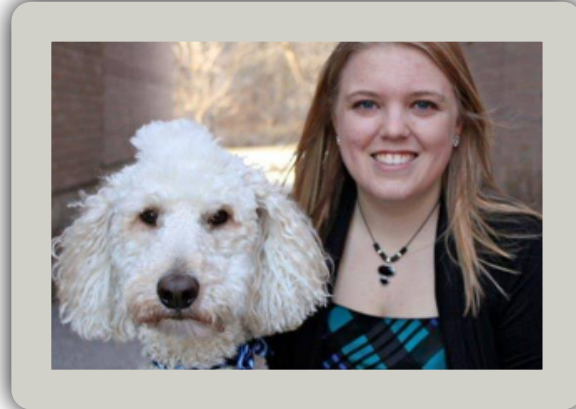
My name is Devon MacPherson and I am a senior undergraduate student at York University in both the School of Communications and the Individualized Studies Program. As a person who shares her life with a service dog, I have a great interest in the the benefits of service dogs, as well as the barriers people face in getting a service dog and/or being accepted once they do so. And so I am conducting research to understand the lived experience of service dogs and mental health. The name of the project is **Service Dogs and Mental Health**. I believe that the bond between service dogs and their human companions is beautiful and hard to understand by those who haven't experienced it personally. I think we have a right to tell our story, be believed, and have it taken seriously. I would like meet with you and learn from you. Your perspective is what is important to me, and I wish to use this information to help others understand how impactful this bond is on mental health and quality of life. It is my hope to be able to promote this relationship as a viable intervention for persons who have experienced traumas, live with anxiety or depression, and many other scenarios – and to create and inspire policy changes that will decrease the barriers faced by many people who cannot receive a service dog. I also, with your help, wish to explore the attitudinal barriers faced by persons with service dogs, and seek change on a national level through policy change. You will have the opportunity to speak freely, without judgment and without any penalty and your privacy will be respected. I want you to know that nothing is more important to me than your perspective and I feel honoured that you would even consider meeting with me and my service dog Barkley. I look forward to hearing your story.







## **Service Dogs and Mental Health: A Qualitative Analysis Questions for 1:1 Interviews**



During our Interview, which I will audio tape so I can really be present with you during our time together and so I can listen intently to your responses later on, I will invite you to comment/reflect on the following questions:

1. Tell me about your journey to obtaining a service dog.
2. What is life like now with your service dog? What has changed and how?
3. Can you describe to me your relationship with your service dog? Would you consider it to be a bond? Explain.
4. Do you feel your service dog impacts your mental health? If so, how? Do you have a particular story that would show this?
5. Have you experienced any systemic or attitudinal barriers in public, school, work, family, friends? What needs to change for people sharing their lives with service dogs



## Service Dogs and Mental Health: A Qualitative Analysis SURVEY FOR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS



1. Do you feel \_\_\_\_\_'s service dog impacts his/her mental health? Explain/Elaborate;

2. Are you aware of any attitudinal, systemic or societal barriers that \_\_\_\_\_ has faced because of having a service dog. Please explain/elaborate.

## **APPENDIX H-CREATING INCLUSIVE PUBLIC ACCESS FOR SERVICE DOG TEAMS**

### **CREATING INCLUSIVE PUBLIC ACCESS FOR SERVICE DOG TEAMS**

#### **GOALS**

- Create inclusive public spaces and services for service dog teams.
- Ensure that employees of your business/organization treat service dog teams with respect.
- Ensure that other clients treat service dog teams with respect.
- Understand the needs of the service dog team and try to accommodate them.
- Include a “Service Dogs Welcome” sign to your business or organization in order to show acceptance.
- Be a mentor to other companies/organizations that are working to or need to create service dog friendly businesses.

#### **TERMINOLOGY:**

- Service Dog- “Any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability...The work or tasks performed by a service dog must be directly related to the handler’s disability.” Reference 28 CFR 36.104 (CFR=Code of Federal Regulations).
- Persons with Disabilities- “The *Employment Equity Act* defines persons with disabilities as individuals who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment, and who: (a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or (b) believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment.”

#### **SERVICE DOGS CAN BE TRAINED FOR:**

- Individuals with Autism
- Individuals who are hard of hearing
- Individuals who are blind
- Individuals with physical disabilities
- Individuals with psychiatric disabilities
- Individuals prone to seizures and epilepsy
- Individuals with diabetes
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Individuals with sensory disabilities
- Individuals with heart conditions

***REMEMBER JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN’T SEE IT DOESN’T MEAN IT ISN’T THERE!***

#### **LAWS REGARDING SERVICE DOGS:**

According to R.S.C., c.H the purpose of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*: “is to extend the laws in Canada to give effect, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of

Parliament, to the principle that all individuals should have an opportunity equal to other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligation as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, **disability** or conviction for an offence for which pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.”

Discriminatory Practices from the *Canadian Human Rights Act* include:

(1) Denial of good, service, facility or accommodation

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of goods, services, facilities or accommodation, customarily available to the general public

- (a) to deny, or to deny access to, any such good, service, facility or accommodation to any individual or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

(2) Denial of commercial premises or residential accommodation

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of commercial premises or residential accommodation

- (a) to deny occupancy of such premises or accommodation to any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

There are also individual provincial laws which protect service dogs and their handlers from being denied public access.

IN ESSENCE, IT IS **ILLEGAL** TO DENY SERVICE DOGS AND THEIR HANDLERS ACCESS TO YOUR ORGANIZATION OR PLACE OF BUSINESS. IT ALSO IS **ILLEGAL** TO REFUSE TO SERVE THEM. SERVICE DOG TEAMS SHOULD BE ABLE TO ENTER GROCERY STORES, MALLS, RESTAURANTS, ETC. WITHOUT BEING HASSLED, DISRESPECTED, OR BELITTLED.

#### **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ASSISTANCE DOGS IN PUBLIC:**

According to Assistance Dogs International, Service Dogs:

- Must be handled by a person with a disability or a third party directly working with a person with a disability.
- Must be cleaned, well-groomed, and do not have an offensive odor.
- Do not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- Does not disrupt the normal course of business.
- Does not vocalize unnecessarily, i.e. barking, growling, or whining.
- Does not solicit or steal food or other items from the general public.

- Be specifically trained to perform three or more tasks to mitigate the aspects of the clients disability.
- Obey the commands of the client, except in cases of intelligent disobedience.
- Work calmly on a harness, leash, or other tether.
- Perform his/her tasks in public.
- Be able to lie quietly beside a handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc.
- Stay within 24" of its handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires it to be working at a greater distance.

### **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ASSISTANCE DOG PARTNERS:**

According to Assistance Dogs International, assistance dog partners or handlers must:

- Treat the dog with appreciation and respect.
- Practice obedience regularly.
- Practice the dog's skills regularly.
- Maintain the dog's proper behaviour in public and at home.
- Carry proper identification and be aware of all applicable laws pertaining to assistance dogs.
- Keep the dog groomed and well cared for.
- Practice preventative health care for the dog.
- Obtain annual health checks and vaccinations for the dog.
- Abide by all leash and license laws.
- Follow the training program's requirements for progress reports and medical evaluations.
- Arrange for the prompt clean up of dog's waste.
- Educate their support system to the proper disposition of their dog upon emergency illness or death.

### **NOTES:**

- Service dogs or service animals are the **ONLY** ones with public and employment access. Therapy dogs (those trained to comfort people in hospitals, retirement/nursing homes, schools, libraries, and rehabilitation units) do not have the same privileges that a service dog/animal does. Therapy animals do not have to be accepted into your place of business, but service animals do.
- The rules regarding Emotional Support Animals (those trained for companionship, comfort, and emotional support) vary when it comes to public access and employment accommodations (for example they might be granted access to a public airline). Do your best to work collaboratively with the team in order to create a situation where both of you feel comfortable. **If you are able to provide accommodations please do.**

### **References:**

<http://servicedog.ca/programs/service-dogs>

[http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/tb\\_852/cwwed01-eng.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/tb_852/cwwed01-eng.asp)

## **CREATING SERVICE DOG ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACES**

### **GOALS:**

- To create a workspace where individuals with service dogs feel like contributing members of the team or business.
- To treat individuals with service dogs with the same respect as other employees/staff involved in the workplace.
- To provide reasonable accommodations in order to support the service dog team.
- To educate other members of the workplace or team, as well as clients, regarding the proper behaviour and procedures expected in the accompaniment of the service dog.
- To maintain a high level of privacy regarding the human companions condition.
- To understand that those with service dogs are able to contribute positively to the workforce, but perhaps may approach it differently than other employees.
- To become a mentor and advisor for other businesses and organizations who are working on creating service dog accessible workplace.

### **TERMINOLOGY:**

- Service Dog- “Any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability...The work or tasks performed by a service dog must be directly related to the handler’s disability.” Reference 28 CFR 36.104 (CFR=Code of Federal Regulations).
- Persons with Disabilities- “The *Employment Equity Act* defines persons with disabilities as individuals who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment, and who: (a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or (b) believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment.”

**According to the *Treasury Board of the Canada Secretariat* this is the proper language to use when referring to an individual with a disability.**

- Person with a disability (not “disabled person”)
- Person who is blind, or person with visual impairment
- Person with a physical disability, or person with a mobility impairment
- Person who is deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or person with a hearing impairment.
- Person who is unable to speak, or person with a speech impairment.
- Person with a learning disability.
- Person with a psychiatric disability.

### **SERVICE DOGS CAN BE TRAINED FOR:**

- Individuals with Autism
- Individuals who are hard of hearing
- Individuals who are blind
- Individuals with physical disabilities
- Individuals with psychiatric disabilities

- Individuals prone to seizures and epilepsy
- Individuals with diabetes
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Individuals with sensory disabilities
- Individuals with heart conditions

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### **LAWS REGARDING SERVICE DOGS:**

According to R.S.C., c.H-6 of the purpose of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*: “is to extend the laws in Canada to give effect, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, to the principle that all individuals should have an opportunity equal to other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligation as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, **disability** or conviction for an offence for which pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.”

Discriminatory Practices from the *Canadian Human Rights Act* include:

(1) Denial of good, service, facility or accommodation

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of goods, services, facilities or accommodation, customarily available to the general public

- (a) to deny, or to deny access to, any such good, service, facility or accommodation to any individual or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

(2) Denial of commercial premises or residential accommodation

It is a discriminatory practice in the provision of commercial premises or residential accommodation

- (a) to deny occupancy of such premises or accommodation to any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

(3) Employment

It is discriminatory practice, directly or indirectly,

- (a) to refuse to employ or continue to employ any individual, or
- (b) to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

There are also individual provincial laws which protect service dogs and their handlers from being denied employment or treated differently than other employees.

IN ESSENCE, IT IS **ILLEGAL** TO NOT EMPLOY ANY INDIVIDUAL BECAUSE THEY NEED A SERVICE DOG. THEY ARE RESPECTED TO BE AS EQUALLY AS OTHER EMPLOYEES UNDER THE LAW.

### **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ASSISTANCE DOGS IN PUBLIC:**

According to Assistance Dogs International, Service Dogs:

- Must be handled by a person with a disability or a third party directly working with a person with a disability.
- Must be cleaned, well-groomed, and do not have an offensive odor.
- Does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- Does not disrupt the normal course of business.
- Does not vocalize unnecessarily, i.e. barking, growling, or whining.
- Does not solicit or steal food or other items from the general public.
- Be specifically trained to perform three or more tasks to mitigate the aspects of the clients disability.
- Obey the commands of the client, except in cases of intelligent disobedience.
- Work calmly on a harness, leash, or other tether.
- Perform his/her tasks in public.
- Be able to lie quietly beside a handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc.
- Stay within 24” of its handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires it to be working at a greater distance.

### **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ASSISTANCE DOG PARTNERS:**

According to Assistance Dogs International, assistance dog partners or handlers must:

- Treat the dog with appreciation and respect.
- Practice obedience regularly.
- Practice the dog’s skills regularly.
- Maintain the dog’s proper behaviour in public and at home.
- Carry proper identification and be aware of all applicable laws pertaining to assistance dogs.
- Keep the dog groomed and well cared for.
- Practice preventative health care for the dog.
- Obtain annual health checks and vaccinations for the dog.
- Abide by all leash and license laws.
- Follow the training program’s requirements for progress reports and medical evaluations.
- Arrange for the prompt clean up of dog’s waste.
- Educate their support system to the proper disposition of their dog upon emergency illness or death.

### **AS AN EMPLOYER YOU SHOULD:**

- Realize that an individuals needs may vary over time and follow up to ensure continual inclusion and respect.



- Understand that the employee has a right to privacy and does not have to fill out a self-identification form or disclose their disability to yourself, your clients, or any other members of your company or organization.
- Treat the service dog team with respect.
- Realize that even if an employee does not fill out a self-accommodation form or disclose their disability they still have the right to receive accommodation.
- Ensure that facilities are accessible and accommodating to the needs of service dog teams.
- Allow for a water bowl near place of work if possible (if this is not possible provide many breaks to ensure hydration of the dog).
- Make sure that the handler is given the opportunity to take the dog outside to urinate or defecate at least every 3 hours.
- Work with handler in order to ensure that other employees/team members follow the rules of a service dog team.

#### **AS AN EMPLOYER YOU SHOULD NOT:**

- Disclose any health or personal information regarding the individual without their permission.
- Speak or pet the service dog or let other employees speak or pet the service dog while they are working.
- Un-invite or un-include the service dog team to company events, meetings, trips, etc.
- Make fun of, draw unnecessary attention to, or disrespect the service dog team.
- Ignore instances where other employees, members, or clients of your organization are making fun of, draw unnecessary attention to, or disrespect the service dog team.

#### **AS THE HUMAN COMPANION IN YOUR COMPANY OR PLACE OF WORK THEY SHOULD:**

- Work with you in order to create reasonable and effective accommodations.
- Be active in telling clients and/or other employees in your workplace about the rules surrounding the service dogs.
- Make you aware of any difficulties they are experiencing in the workplace or with individual clients/employees.
- Continue to be a positive member of the team and contribute to the best of their ability.
- Make sure their service dog follows the minimum standards for assistance dogs in public listed above.

#### **NOTES:**

- Service dogs or service animals are the **ONLY** ones with public and employment access. Therapy dogs (those trained to comfort people in hospitals, retirement/nursing homes, schools, libraries, and rehabilitation units) do not have the same privileges that a service dog/animal does. Therapy animals do not have to be accepted into the workplace, but service animals do.
- The rules regarding Emotional Support Animals (those trained for companionship, comfort, and emotional support) vary when it comes to public access and employment accommodations (for example they might be granted access to a public airline). Do your best to work collaboratively

with the team in order to create a situation where both of you feel comfortable. **If you are able to provide accommodations please do.**

**References:**

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[http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/tb\\_852/cwwed01-eng.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/tb_852/cwwed01-eng.asp)

**APPENDIX I-SERVICE DOG WELCOME POSTER FOR BUSINESSES/PUBLIC LOCATIONS**

**SERVICE DOG FRIENDLY BUSINESS**



**Creating Inclusive Public Spaces and Services  
for Service Dog Teams**