

REDEFINING 'SERVICE DOG' IN CANADA

GOVERNING DOGS: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC TALE OF REDEFINING
'SERVICE DOG' IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Service dogs are becoming an integral part of our society. Consequently, there is a need for research that explores how Canada should proceed with the development and implementation of appropriate laws and policies that will ensure the proper use and equal integration of service dogs. Before this can take place, the terminology used within the field must be clarified, as society continues to move toward a more expanded definition of service dog, and public access challenges continue to impact the lives of persons with disabilities.

The goal of this autoethnographical research study was to determine what service dog handlers, particularly 'owner-trainers,' feel constitutes a 'service dog' in Canada. When researchers conduct investigations on topics related to the lives of persons with disabilities, their research typically takes the form of disabled individuals being studied and not being directly involved within the research. Therefore, this project sought to directly involve persons with disabilities, while also attempting to avoid the possibility of censorship or silence. Through the use of statements from social media, this project captured the lived experiences without worrying about participants changing them to fit within society's expectations. Society is not structured to be accessible for all, so when 'accommodations' are made, it is 'expected' that persons with disabilities will show gratitude and not voice their true feelings. Through the use of autoethnography, I shared my experiences, as a service dog raiser, trainer and handler, and provided a glimpse into the lives of other service dog handlers as

they participate within their communities. In doing this, I hope the findings of my project will offer an important perspective to the discussion surrounding what constitutes a 'service dog' in Canada.

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Opening Remarks

I have always loved dogs. My mother used to tell me she thought I was born a dog lover. In fact, my first word ever spoken was 'dog.' So, it is quite fitting that I am writing my Master of Arts thesis about dogs, and while I type this there is a golden retriever laying at my feet and a labrador retriever curled up next to me on the couch. Before I get too far ahead of myself though, let me give you some background on what brought me here.

I do not know at exactly what age I decided that I wanted to be a veterinarian and that I would go to the University of Guelph, but I think it was around the age of three. This dream of taking care of animals continued throughout my childhood. I remember pretending to perform 'procedures' on our cat, Percy, at the age of 10, and I remember talking with friends in my teens about the horse farm I would have and the dogs I would share my home with. A lot of young women dream about the big house, rich husband and adorable children they will have. Not me, I dreamed about the job I would have and the animals I would share my life with.

Unfortunately, becoming a veterinarian was not in the cards for me. At the age of 13, I had a major complication with my Hydrocephalus and lost most of my vision. As soon as I was handed a white cane, I knew I wanted a guide dog. Even though it has been over 18 years since I last used a white cane, I still remember the hatred I had for it. I remember 'accidentally' leaving it at home a few times, having to call home and ask someone to drop it off. I still do not understand how I

walked all the way to school safely without it. But, my orientation and mobility instructor refused to help me fill out the guide dog school applications until I could show her that I was capable of getting around independently in a variety of settings, including downtown Toronto. It took me four years.

I received my first guide dog, Gryphon, a 21 month old male black lab, from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides, on August 1st, 1997. Gryphon and I learned so much from one another over the year we were together, but we were not meant to stay together. After an unfortunate incident involving a car turning right into our path, bumping Gryphon in the process, he could no longer handle the stress of loud trucks, so retired in July of 1998. I was then partnered with Phoenix, a 21 month old male yellow lab, on July 23rd. Phoenix reignited my childhood dream of owning a horse farm, and sharing my life with a house full of dogs.

Phoenix and I worked together for seven years before he retired and became my pet. Over the seven years, we had many adventures. I finished high school, I met my husband, and I attended the University of Guelph, where I did not become a veterinarian, but instead obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and Public Policy. Since receiving Phoenix in 1998, I purchased my first golden retriever, Aspen, in August of 2003, and I was partnered with Cessna, a spunky female black lab, on May 27th, 2005. Phoenix taught me about unconditional love and the strength of canine friendship. Cessna has taught me to be open-minded and that sometimes you just need to laugh. Together, Cessna

and I completed my Bachelor of Social Work, raised two puppies for Autism Dog Services, and continue to enjoy one another's company during her retirement.

Aiden and Reece were only with us for a short period of time, both having come from Autism Dog Services, but each left their mark on our family. Aiden was the first puppy we raised for autism assistance and the only one who ended up graduating. Having the opportunity to raise puppies for service work provided me with a glimpse into what it takes to raise and train a service dog. When Reece was disqualified from the program due to an elbow issue, we decided to stop fostering and purchased our second golden retriever, Canyon. Aspen was timid and became easily stressed, so we did not have a chance to do any dog sports with her. Canyon is the complete opposite. He is highly confident and eager to learn and do new things. With Canyon we have been able to explore the world of dog showing and began to consider dog breeding. Unfortunately, at two and a half years of age Canyon began having seizures, so our breeding plans had to be put on hold.

When Cessna was seven she was diagnosed with cataracts, so I began to ponder owner-training. We had already successfully raised two puppies for autism assistance and two pet dogs, so I decided to attempt raising and training Cessna's successor. After six months of gathering information on owner-training and lab breeders in Ontario, I purchased a female fox red lab and named her RLRs Babe In Total Control, or Rogue for short. My owner-training journey has been full of ups and downs, but I have never regretted my decision. Rogue has

opened a whole new world to me. I have met amazing people online, who are also owner-trainers, and I have become aware of how different a partnership can be when you take an active role in its development. Rogue and I have known one another since she was eight weeks of age, so the trust and intimate bond we share is much different than the one between Cessna and I. Despite the many advantages associated with owner-training, it does have its disadvantages. For example, the public appears to 'see' the mistakes and pass judgment quicker on owner-trained dogs compared to program-trained dogs. As a result, most owner-trainers make sure to train to a higher standard and try to remain up-to-date in all areas of their training. Over the past couple of years, there has been a rise in the number of articles being written about the 'fake' service dog problem. With my interest in disability and service dog-related issues, as well as my personal desire to continue having the option of owner-training, I wanted to pull apart the debate and take an active part in developing a potential solution. I wanted to conduct research on the topic and understand the different ways in which dogs are classified in society, and how the various definitions impact persons with disabilities who choose to partner with a service dog.

As you can see, it has been a rollercoaster ride, full of ups and downs and twists and turns, getting here, but it is a journey I would not change for an instant. I may not have my horse farm, but I have my house full of dogs and I am doing what I love.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The bond between animals and humans is not a new phenomenon. The use of animals in therapeutic settings began in the late eighteenth century when they were used to socialize patients in mental health facilities (O’Haire, 2010). In the last half of the twentieth century animal-assisted interventions have gained popularity as an effective treatment for children and adults (Geist, 2011). Animal-assisted therapy is described as any direct intervention that uses the human-animal bond as part of the therapeutic process (Geist, 2011; Kruger & Serpell, 2006). Animal-assisted therapy programs are found in long-term care, mental health, correctional, educational, and rehabilitation settings as well as a more recent employment in a university setting (Geist, 2011; Adamle, Riley, & Carlson, 2009; DiSalvo et al., 2006). With this increased reliance on animals to assist individuals and groups a number of important questions arise regarding the exact definition of what constitutes a ‘service dog.’

This project strives to understand the problems surrounding language that exist within the service dog field. Animal-assisted intervention, for instance, comes in various forms, with a variety of labels, that can be puzzling to some, and this terminology can be confused with service dogs (DiSalvo et al, 2006). For the purpose of this thesis, a service dog is a specially trained canine who works or performs tasks for a person with a disability in order to enhance their ability to take part in daily activities and in their community (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). Service dogs will be discussed more in-depth within future chapters, but it

is important to note that within the academic literature and legal documents reviewed for this project, a 'service dog' is always a dog who assists a person with a disability. The need for an official disability diagnosis is an important legal distinction between a service dog and any other classification. There is no universally accepted language to describe the different kinds of dogs or to help distinguish between the different roles they play in the lives of humans (Mills & Yeager, 2012). Some of the issues around language are relatively new since this sector continues to expand the therapeutic use of dogs to new roles and settings.

Under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (2010) "a service animal is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability" (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2016). Service dogs play an important role in the lives of thousands with disabilities. Service dogs are no longer just for persons with a visual or hearing impairment. They are now being trained to assist people with a variety of disabilities, including posttraumatic stress disorder, hypoglycaemia, autism spectrum disorder and epilepsy just to name a few (Wells, 2007; Sachs-Ericson, Hansen, & Fitzgerald, 2002). These special canines provide an invaluable service to their partners, permitting them to feel safe, self-confident, and (in many cases) to live independently. Service dogs are becoming an integral part of our society. As they become more central, there is a need for research into policies and legislation that address their role in health care and in the lives of Canadians. The United States has a very broad interpretation of what constitutes a service dog and this vague definition has led

to an increase in public confusion regarding who the ‘real’ service dog teams are and who are not (Weese, 2009). Under the ADA, public establishments are only permitted to ask two specific questions. They may not ask the person what their disability is, but they may ask: “Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?” And: “What task has your dog been trained to perform?” The first question is only allowed to be asked if the dog is not wearing a harness, cape, or vest identifying it as a service dog. Even though some disabilities are not easily identified, a business owner cannot ask for documentation proving the dog has been trained as a service animal, they must accept the person’s answer or risk legal action (Huss, 2009). This ambiguity within the law makes it difficult to enforce and prone to abuse (Weese, 2009). Canadian legislation mentioning service dogs is even less clear. *Ontario’s Blind Persons’ Rights Act* (1990), for example, only mentions guide dogs for the blind (Government of Ontario [GO], 1990). Individuals who have another disability, or who choose to train their own service dog, must turn to other legislation such as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) (Government of Canada [GC], 1982). However, the Charter does not explicitly state what protections are provided; it simply states that every individual has the right to be treated equally.

There is currently no national certification or registration process for service dogs in Canada. Some provinces, such as Ontario and British Columbia, have specific service dog legislation, while other jurisdictions like the Northwest Territories just have broad human rights (Assistance Dogs International [ADI],

2005). Consequently, rules can vary from place to place, creating the potential for public access challenges for individuals and their service dogs (McCaig, 2008).

Research Questions and Objectives

The goal of this thesis is to determine what constitutes a 'service dog' in Canada from the perspective of their handlers, particularly those who are 'owner-trainers.' An owner-trainer is defined as a person with a disability who trains their own service dog, with or without the help of a professional dog trainer (Redden, 2015). Alternatively, individuals can choose to obtain a 'program-trained dog,' or service dog who has been trained by an organization. This question has evolved out of my interest in service dogs, and from my desire to understand where the line exists between a service dog and companion animal.

In recent years there has been a rise in the number of roles dogs are being trained to fulfill without much consideration to how they fit within the current legal framework. Dogs are not only faithful companions living with families, they are also playing a part in health care settings, such as hospitals, offering support to patients, as well as being trained to help individuals with a variety of disabilities. With their rise in popularity comes a number of policy and safety concerns, as well as confusion about the role of each dog and the amount of training associated with each group (Taylor et al., 2013). Before new legislation can be implemented, or existing policies can be revised, it is important to understand the different roles and clearly distinguish between the categories (Mills & Yeager, 2012). In order for this to take place, some key points require clarity:

1. How are dogs, specifically service dogs, classified?
2. Might one definition of service dog make it more or less difficult for people with disabilities to work with, or train their own, service dog?
3. Would a more expansive definition mean that all companion dogs are basically also service dogs?

Exploring how dogs, in particular, service dogs, are defined in academic literature and government documents, will reveal how society conceptualizes the different categories. This project aims to provide handlers, specifically owner-trainers, with a voice by sharing their everyday lived experiences while they attempt to participate in their community. Before this can take place, the terms used to label dogs and their descriptions in regulations that govern the activities of service dog handlers need to be understood. The terminology and related definitions vary across Canada, so this thesis strives to highlight the barriers that exist for handlers. Once a clear and concise definition of 'service dog' has been developed, I believe it will be easier for members of the public to identify who the 'real' service dog teams are and therefore, less stressful for individuals who choose to partner with a dog.

Organization of the Thesis

This study is presented in three parts, discussing how dogs have been broadly classified in society and their effects on human health, how service dogs are legally defined in Canadian legislation and the implications for handlers, and how a 'service dog' is perceived by handlers, specifically owner-trainers. My

project is structured based on the following description. After the introduction, chapter two examines how dogs are categorized in society. Before diving straight into the world of service dogs, it is important to understand the three main groups: companion animal, therapy dog and service dog. To keep the literature search focused on dogs who provide help and support, this review only examined three categories. In addition, service dogs often get called a companion animal or therapy dog. In this review, the term 'pet' was synonymous with 'companion animal,' and I only briefly touch on emotional support animals within the service dog section as they are discussed further in chapter four. Despite the growing amount of literature concerned with the impact animals have on the lives of humans, there is a noticeable absence of research looking at the terminology being used to define each category. This chapter looks at the classifications, discusses how each category affects humans, and suggests areas for further study.

Chapter three builds on the information from chapter two by introducing the regulatory language and policies used to govern (or regulate) service dog access. The section begins with a look at each policy related to service dogs. Afterwards, a simple side-by-side comparison of the regulations was performed to identify potential problems for handlers, in particular, owner-trainers.

Chapter four starts with an in-depth description of the methods employed within the thesis and provides an explanation for how each method was used. This section provides insight into the policy changes that would help ensure

persons with disabilities and their service dogs can move freely within their communities. Using autoethnography and critical disability theory to guide my research and writing, this chapter shares and discusses the perceptions and personal narratives of service dog handlers, focusing on owner-trainers when possible. Finally, in chapter five I conclude the thesis with a summary of study findings, description of project limitations and by offering suggestions for future research. Certification and new or revised laws are the primary recommendations being put forth to reduce the barriers being faced by service dog handlers. After highlighting the terminology problems that exist within academic research and the impact service dog-related legislation in Canada have on handlers, I presented the personal narratives of handlers and shared my own experiences to point out policy changes that need to take place in order to improve the experiences of individuals who partner with a dog. In chapter four, it was observed that education and rule enforcement needs to take place before certification and legislative changes are considered. If society does not understand the purpose of a service dog, then persons with disabilities who partner with a dog will continue to face obstacles. If business owners, the general public and service dog handlers themselves, do not know their rights and responsibilities related to service dogs, then access denials will continue. If the police and establishment owners are not willing to enforce the rules, then discriminatory actions toward service dog handlers will persist and handlers themselves will no longer worry about their dog's behaviour because no one is saying poor manners are not allowed. If none

of these things are happening then certification programs and new policies are not going to make a difference.

Theoretical Framework

The main theory used within this thesis, from the way it is organized to the collection and interpretation of data, is critical disability theory (CDT). To set the stage for a dialogue on the classification of service dogs, the dominant theories that have served to shape society's understanding and attitude toward disability must be explained. In doing this, it will become apparent why this perspective was chosen to guide the research and analysis processes of the project.

In the not so distant past, persons with disabilities were commonly seen as "broken" and in need of "fixing," but with the emergence of the disability movement, disabled individuals began pushing for equal rights. In 1982, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* declared physical or mental disability as a prohibited ground for discrimination (GC, 1982). Sadly, Canada has fallen well behind other developed nations in the creation and implementation of human rights laws and policies; thus, persons with disabilities still experience discrimination when attempting to participate in their communities. Of the two thousand and sixty-eight complaints of discrimination made to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2012, seven hundred and forty-six, or thirty-six percent of them were disability related (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2016). Presently, there are no recorded statistics directly related to service dog

use, but from the information gathered for this project, it can be assumed that discrimination is also a significant barrier faced by service dog handlers.

The Medical Model

For more than a century, disability has been defined in clinical terms as “a chronic functional incapacity whose consequence was functional limitations assumed to result from physical or mental impairment” (Areheart, 2008). Under this definition, emphasis is placed upon an individual’s “broken” or “less than desirable” body (Goering, 2002). Individuals are seen as nothing more than bodies and the model seeks to determine whether or not that body conforms to what society deems to be “normal.” This approach assumes that disability is always caused by disease pathology and that good health will be restored once the disease is permanently removed or its effects are reduced (Wade & Halligan, 2004). Through medicalization, disability is no longer seen as something experienced by a group of people, but as an “unnatural” problem or disease affecting one individual (Barnes, 2012). The medical model of disability places disabled individuals into the role of victim and leads them to believe that there is nothing they can do to end their exclusion from mainstream society, because their problems stem from not having normal bodies (Goering, 2002). Consequently, some people with disabilities will try anything in order to appear non-disabled, but not all disabilities can be “fixed” (Areheart, 2008).

The medical model of disability is outdated and has become an obsolete concept which describes the norms that have always governed disability

(Areheart, 2008). By continuing to define disability as being about an individual's "broken" body, this approach perpetuates the feeling of isolation experienced by many persons with disabilities (Barnes, 2012). In addition, by placing the responsibility for disability upon the shoulders of the person with the impairment, the medical model removes the expectation of accommodation from society (Areheart, 2008; Pothier & Devlin, 2006). This, along with the feelings of isolation and exclusion, can lead individuals with disabilities to feel as though they must find a "cure" for their impairment or risk being unable to successfully participate in their community. The portrayal of disabled individuals in popular culture has not helped make the lives of persons with disabilities any easier (Hosking, 2008). With film makers and the print media using the medical model as their guide for disabled imagery and discourse, able-bodied members of society are not given an opportunity to understand what it really means to experience life with a disability (Hosking, 2008).

The Social Model

The social model was founded by individuals with disabilities and furthered by disability activists (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). The approach assumes that disability is caused by social barriers that limit the ability of persons with impairments to take part in daily activities (Thomas, 2004). The idea came about as a result of the feelings of oppression and isolation felt by persons with disabilities when interacting with health care professionals, social assistance providers and others (Rocco, 2005). The denial of opportunities, the restriction of

choice and the lack of control over the support systems in their lives led disabled individuals to begin questioning the assumptions of the medical model (Thomas, 2004). According to the social model, people with impairments are disabled by the ways in which they are excluded from participating within mainstream society because of physical, organizational and attitudinal barriers (Beckett & Campbell, 2015). In contrast to the medical model, the social model defines disability according to the social oppression experienced by disabled individuals, not by the form of impairment (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). Proponents of the social model believe that it is better to pursue a strategy of social change as opposed to one that focuses on “fixing” the individual (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). It is believed that through eliminating barriers and promoting inclusion, disabled individuals will feel empowered because they will begin to understand that they are not to blame for their problems, society is.

Although the social model sounds ideal, the strength of the approach has ultimately become its greatest weakness (Thomas, 2004; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). Disability activists were initially attracted to the social model because it served to empower persons with disabilities. The social model made disabled people feel good about themselves because “they were no longer responsible for what was happening to them, it was society’s fault” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). Placing all of the blame and responsibility on society has led to a strong sense of entitlement for some members of the disabled community. This perception can be detrimental and enables disabled people to become

complacent and unmotivated to change their own circumstances. The social model has created a polarization between the disabled and non-disabled in society, making it almost impossible for adequate discussion on the topic of disability rights and changes that will satisfy both groups (Beckett & Campbell, 2015; Pothier & Devlin, 2006). As a result, disability activists have had to convince the world that it is not necessary to “fix” the disabled person, that “disability” can be diminished by adapting society itself (Pothier & Devlin, 2006; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001).

Liberalism

Liberalism is the basis for a political doctrine, or world view, where individuals are free to pursue their own goals however they see fit, as long as they do not infringe on the independence of others (Kelly, 2004). Critics of the liberal philosophy believe liberalism is only concerned with liberty, but proponents have dismissed these claims saying that the core value of liberalism is not liberty, but equality (Kelly, 2004). Human rights are an integral part of the liberal doctrine. Liberalism is concerned with the rights of the individual (Kelly, 2004). In a liberal society, the main purpose of government is to protect the rights of the individual. The state is not permitted to force its own values on its citizens, but must allow the free exchange of goods, services and ideas (Kelly, 2004). Most liberal thinkers advocate constitutional restraints to limit the powers of the state because governments have been known to violate human rights and liberties.

The core value of liberalism is equality. Critics of the liberal philosophy believe that equality means sameness and denies the existence of difference, so is not a liberal value at all (Kelly, 2004). In response to this criticism, liberal egalitarians claim that all human beings matter equally because of “their common moral status as equal moral subjects” (Kelly, 2004). Apparently, this claim does not apply to persons with disabilities. According to Michael Prince (2012), liberalism encourages a negative view of disability by continuing to promote assumptions that conceptualizes disability as misfortune, and favours normalcy over the abnormal. In addition, liberalism’s focus on the individual has led to the continued isolation and exclusion of persons with disabilities from mainstream society in some cases because it is not always possible for individuals to be independent or self-sufficient (Dowse, 2009). Finally, the liberal belief in privatization and consumerism over government intervention has resulted in welfare state rollbacks, social program cuts and the off-loading of responsibilities onto communities, private agencies and families, further marginalizing many elderly and disabled populations (Prince, 2012).

Critical Disability Theory

“In traditional theory the researcher is a disinterested observer who simply describes the world as it is” (Hosking, 2008). Critical disability theory (CDT) seeks to go beyond the role of casual observer in an effort to challenge the status quo and give persons with disabilities the ability to participate in society, and an opportunity to take an active role in shaping their experiences (Pothier & Devlin,

2006). Disability is about the cultural, structural and attitudinal barriers faced by disabled individuals. It is not about 'broken' or 'undesirable' bodies (Goering, 2002). In order for inclusiveness and equality to become part of the mainstream, disability needs to be viewed as natural, something normal as opposed to abnormal (Kanter, 2011). Critical disability theorists want to dismantle the dominant assertions regarding disability that still exist with the continued reliance on the medical model (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). It is necessary, from this perspective, to advocate for an understanding of disability that promotes genuine inclusiveness, not just hypothetical rights. Liberalism's preoccupation with individualism and independence does the opposite of this by further perpetuating the discrimination experienced by many disabled individuals (Dowse, 2009). According to Pothier and Devlin (2006), "disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power (lessness), power over, and power to." By drawing from elements of the social model, CDT can reframe society's assumptions about disability in a way that highlights the barriers that exist within the social and physical environments. Disability is socially constructed. This means that the social arrangement of society dictates whether an individual is considered disabled (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). Programs, legislation and initiatives aimed at promoting accessibility and awareness need to be developed and implemented in a way that advocates for the opportunities of participation in

society and leads to positive interactions with both the physical and social environments.

Service dog handlers are a part of the disability community, but most theories do not consider them. For example, the medical model focuses on the individual as the cause of disability, placing emphasis on defects, symptoms and treatments, which does not leave room for service dogs. The social model points to society as the cause of disability, which allows service dogs to enter the picture, but as mentioned earlier the model has created a “us against them” mentality. From the social media messages collected in this project this divide has led to a major access barrier experienced by service dog handlers. I chose to employ critical disability theory as a framework for my thesis because it not only takes a broad, but also a more holistic view of disability, and it has an inherent ability to provide persons with disabilities a voice and a way to challenge the commonly held attitudes of society. In the methods section of chapter four, I further describe CDT and explain how it was used to analyze the project data. Using this perspective enables me to explore all aspects of the service dog controversy, rather than placing emphasis on one area over another.

Chapter 2: The Classification of Dogs in Society: A Review of the Literature

I begin this review by sorting relevant papers and studies into three categories, companion animal, therapy dog and service dog. The sections start with an explanation of the terminology used to describe the group. Following this, a discussion of the impact each category has on the health and well-being of humans takes place, highlighting specific populations when possible. Finally, the review wraps up with an examination of the limitations that were observed when reading each paper. In order to really understand the potential advantages and disadvantages associated with dogs in the role of companion, therapy or assistant, it is necessary to develop a universally accepted language and description for each type of dog. With a more transparent definition of what constitutes a service dog, it will be easier for the public to identify the legitimate teams and therefore less stressful for persons with disabilities who choose to partner with a service dog.

Introduction

My thesis seeks to understand what service dog handlers, specifically owner-trainers, believe constitutes a service dog in Canada. Before I look at the legislation and explore the perspectives of service dog handlers, this literature review addresses the challenge of classifying dogs used to support or help humans. While there is an abundance of research concerned with understanding the human-animal bond and the influence of dogs on human health and well-

being, there is a lack of available literature on distinguishing between dogs who play a companion, therapy or service role in society. 'Society' refers to, "people in general thought of as living together in organized communities with shared laws, traditions, and values" (Merriam Webster, 2016a). Based on the goal of this project, this review only covers companion animals (or pets), therapy dogs and service dogs, as they all influence human health, and the specific terminology is most often used in reference to a dog who assists a person with a disability. To date, the existing studies on therapy and service animals tends to focus on the impact of dogs on the lives of persons with particular health conditions, such as dementia, or the benefit of service dogs for children with autism. With the fast-paced nature of modern society and the corresponding rise in stress levels experienced by humans, it is becoming evermore apparent that humans need animals, even just to take them away for a short period of time (Walsh, 2009). In 2013, 6.6 million Canadians, 15 years of age or older, said their days were somewhat or very stressful (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Additionally, 82.3% of the survey respondents, who stated their days were stressful also reported having a good level of life satisfaction, which is 13.9% lower than the number of respondents who said they did not experience a lot of daily stress (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Demonstrating the positive effects a dog can have on individuals who experience stress, in a study by Odendaal and Meintjes (2003), it was found that 5 to 24 minutes of interaction between a dog and human can result in significant blood pressure reductions in both species. As a result,

research needs to happen at a broader social, historical, cultural and political level because the current population focus encourages a kind of medicalization, or plays into the medical model discussed in chapter one.

It is estimated that in Canada there are approximately 5.9 million dogs, with 57% of Canadian households containing at least one pet (Government of Alberta, 2014). The survey, also found that 86% of the respondents who have dogs, feel their pet is part of the family and believe their dog is beneficial to their health (Government of Alberta, 2014). With the continued increase in dog ownership, and the rising number of roles dogs are being trained to fulfill, further research is needed to define and distinguish between dogs who provide companionship, therapy or service. Supporting this point, in an article looking at the various categories of dogs found in medical settings, Mills and Yeager (2012), emphasize the importance of developing clear and concise definitions before attempting to create policies aimed at governing an activity or practice. They go on to say that dogs are not a medical device, but a “living tool,” so a detailed definition will help to protect their health and well-being, and make sure they are used properly (Mills & Yeager, 2012). To further explain, service dogs are legally considered a medical device, but unlike a walker or wheelchair, dogs are a live being, or “living tool,” so extra care must be taken when creating policies that effect them (discussed in chapter 3).

Literature Searches

Literature searches were conducted using the search engine Google Scholar. From the databases Elsevier, Sage, Wiley, Science Direct, PubMed, Proquest, and Springer, 116 articles were found using the search terms ‘service dog,’ ‘assistance dog,’ ‘disability,’ ‘certification,’ ‘legislation,’ ‘therapy dog,’ ‘human-animal interaction,’ ‘human-animal bond,’ ‘animal-assisted intervention,’ ‘dog-assisted intervention,’ ‘pet-facilitated therapy,’ ‘pet dog,’ ‘companion dog,’ ‘emotional support animal,’ and ‘companion animal,’ or a combination. The terms were cultivated from the key words listed within the articles reviewed for this section. The searches were limited to studies conducted between the years 2000 and 2015, written in the English language, with a focus on dogs who perform a companionship, support or service role. My thesis concerns service dogs, thus, dogs who are employed to help or support humans were selected as a starting point. In an effort to use the most up-to-date information, the period 2000 to 2015 was chosen. After reviewing the 116 articles, 43 were determined to not be a good fit, with 32 being a review or overview and 11 being the wrong focus, a dissertation or a published conference presentation. “Being a wrong fit” was defined as, an article that did not involve dogs, an opinion piece or philosophical discussion, or a paper that did not discuss an investigation performed by the authors themselves. After reviewing the reference lists of the remaining 73, 19 studies were added. The papers were a mix of theory, case study, qualitative and quantitative approaches from a variety of fields including nursing, social work,

disability studies, gerontology, anthrozoology, psychology and palliative care. The following literature review will provide an overview of the following topics:

1. What is a 'pet' or 'companion animal,'
2. Effects of a pet on their owner's health and well-being,
3. What is a therapy dog?,
4. Problems surrounding the human-animal interaction terminology,
5. Effects of animal-assisted intervention on human health and well-being,
6. What is a 'service dog?'
7. Effects of service dogs on the health and well-being of their human partners,
8. Policies regarding the use of service dogs.

When a thorough understanding of how the terms, 'companion animal,' 'therapy dog' and 'service dog,' are conceptualized in the academic literature, an image of what constitutes a 'service dog' begins to emerge. Currently, research has focused on the influence canines have on the health and well-being of humans, rather than on how each category of dog differs. For example, studies do not appear to consider the level of training that is necessary for each role or use, and they do not recognize the potential implications of training level on the classification or regulatory process. It is difficult to define or develop guidelines for each category without acknowledging the intimate relationship between a dog and human. This chapter goes through each category by defining the relevant terminology, describing the impact each group has on humans, and identifies the

research limitations. There is an absence of information on the policies related to companion animals or therapy dogs, so the service dog section goes further by introducing the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and the policy implications.

Background

On May 22nd, 2001, all one hundred and ninety-one member states of the World Health Organization accepted the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health or ICF (World Health Organization [WHO], 2016a). The ICF assesses health and disability at both the individual and societal levels (WHO, 2016a). The ICF attempts to include ideas from the social model by recognizing that no one is exempt from experiencing a decline in health, whether it be temporary or permanent, so disability is not limited to a particular segment of society.

Disability is an inevitable part of the human experience, so it needs to be accepted by society not feared. In 2012 there were an estimated 3.8 million Canadians over the age of 15 who reported having a disability that effects their daily life (Statistics Canada, 2016b). In contrast, over one billion persons globally had a disability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011). Advancements in medical research and technology are helping individuals live longer but not necessarily healthier. According to Statistics Canada (2016b), four percent of Canadians with disabilities were between the ages of 15 and 24, while 33% were 65 years of age or older. The 2004 World Health Survey, found that an estimated

15.6% of the world's adult population has a disability, with this number increasing to approximately 29.5% for adults over the age of 60 in higher income countries and 43.4% in lower income countries (WHO, 2011). According to the World Report on Disability, it is difficult to estimate the global prevalence of specific disabilities, so it is important to examine the numbers found in individual countries (WHO,2011). In Canada, more than three million persons over the age of 15 reported having a disability relating to mobility, pain or flexibility (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Other disabilities, such as blindness, have been shown to impact elderly persons more often than younger Canadians; 10% of Canadians over the age of 75 had a disability related to vision, compared to less than one percent of 15 to 24 year olds (Statistics Canada, 2016b). With the rising incidents of disability, and research pointing to the beneficial effects of using dogs to assist and support persons with disabilities, it becomes even more important to clearly define each category of dogs in society.

Companion Animal

Terminology

The term 'pet' comes from the french word 'petit,' and is the term traditionally used to describe animals kept for entertainment and friendship (Grier, 2006). Similarly, according to the Oxford Dictionary (2016), 'pet' refers to "a domesticated or tamed animal kept for companionship or pleasure." The term 'companion animal' is favoured over the term 'pet' by veterinarians and human-

animal interaction researchers because they feel it better describes the relationship and psychological bond that exists between animals and their human guardians (Walsh, 2009). Additionally, it is also thought that the term ‘companion animal’ helps to promote the proper treatment of animals and eliminate the former master-slave relationship of the past (Walsh, 2009). Although the terms, ‘bond’ and ‘relationship,’ often get used interchangeably, Hosey and Melfi (2014) say that in order to further animal rights, it is important to truly understand the language that is being used and the emotion that exist behind the words.

The strong connection between animals and humans has been the focus of several studies over the past decade (Knight & Edwards, 2008; Odendaal, 2000). Researchers are exploring the areas in human social and cultural worlds that animals fill, and the interactions humans have with them (DeMello, 2012). Odendaal (2000) notes that this area of research is vast because it encompasses all aspects of the human-animal relationship. The American Veterinary Medical Association (2016a) describes the human-animal bond as: “a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviours that are essential to the health and well-being of both.” Companion animals, or pets, have become important members of the family, so it is necessary to understand the terminology used to label them, and to determine how their significance has led to them playing such a key role in society.

The Benefits of Pet Ownership

“Companion animals should not be considered a luxury or unnecessary indulgence, but rather, when cared for appropriately, they should be seen as valuable contributors to human health and well-being, and as a result, society and the broader economy” (Mills & Hall, 2014). More than two thirds of households in Canada and the United States include a pet (IPSOS, 2013; Herzog, 2011). Most have dogs, followed by cats, horses, or birds (Walsh, 2009). Researchers tend to focus on dogs as beneficial sources of attachment, therapy and companionship, but some investigators have also looked at the impact of cats, horses, fish and birds (Knight & Edwards, 2008; Wood, Giles-Corti, & Bulsara, 2005). In a paper exploring the attachment differences that exist within human-pet relationships, the authors found that a person who exhibits insecure relationship behaviours may choose to own a cat over a dog because cats are more solitary and independent (Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer, & Shaver, (2011a).

According to Le Roux and Kemp (2009), dogs can be seen as, “preventers of ill health, facilitators to recovery of ill health and as predictors of ill health.” In a study looking at the relationship between pet ownership and heart attacks, Friedmann, Thomas and Son (2011), observed that having a pet was the only guaranteed predictor of long-term survival. Their study also showed that pets are significantly more important for younger post-myocardial infarction patients, as pets help reduce depression and younger patients tend to exhibit higher levels of depression (Friedmann et al., 2011). The role of dog as predictor of ill health, is also clearly demonstrated by the ability of some dogs to alert their owners ahead

of time to problems such as a migraine. Marcus and Bhowmick (2013) conducted an online survey with 1029 people over the age of 18, who have at least one dog and who have regular migraines. An estimated 57.3% of the participants reported noticing a change in their dog's behaviour about two hours prior to the initial symptoms signalling the onset of a migraine attack. The changes in their dog's behaviour reported by owners included, refusing to leave their owner's side, excessive licking, sitting or lying on their owner, and lower energy level than usual (Marcus & Bhowmick, 2013). Behaviour changes, such as the ones described above, has shown researchers some of the skills dogs can perform to help their owners with their health.

Compared with non-owners, pet owners experience less depression, less anxiety, reduced levels of stress, improved morale, and fewer reported feelings of loneliness (Wood et al., 2005). In a study examining the physiological benefits of dog ownership, a change in diastolic and systolic blood pressure, plasma cholesterol, plasma triglyceride, and skin conductance responses was observed (Odendaal, 2000). Additionally, Odendaal and Meintjes (2003), measured the plasma cortisol secretion of adults interacting with dogs and noted that the levels were lower, pointing to the positive impact dogs have on humans.

When an owner and companion dog are well matched, the dog is able to meet the needs of the human, contributing to their overall feeling of well-being by reducing feelings of loneliness. anxiety and stress (McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, & Martin, 2011). Pets provide a predictable, uncomplicated and

consistent relationship that can help make up for a lack of human interaction (Sable, 2013). Companion animals can be an effective source of support for people who face barriers to developing human relationships, whether from a mobility impairment that restricts access to public spaces or a medical condition that limits a person's ability to leave their home (McConnell et al., 2011). For instance, in a study involving companion animals and persons with dementia, Baun and McCabe (2003) note that animals can be important for individuals with dementia because, unlike humans, pets provide unconditional love and positive attention. Despite these findings, Lutwack-Bloom, Wijewickrama and Smith (2005), determined that even though there is an abundance of research pointing to the positive impact of interacting with dogs on depression levels, the study participants in their study did not necessarily experience this reduction. Rather than directly influencing depression by offering companionship, pets may actually indirectly reduce depression by facilitating a person's ability to interact with other humans (Crawford, Worsham, & Swinehart, 2006). This was further supported by Wisdom, Saedi and Green (2009) who found no significant difference in mental health symptoms and social support in their study participants, showing that pets tend to offer additional support rather than being used as substitutes for human support. Finally in their article, McConnell et al. (2011) concluded that people derive benefits from companion animals, similar to other forms of social support, regardless of whether human support is readily available or absent. While offering their owners companionship and social support, pets can also encourage better

self-care and community involvement (Wood et al., 2005). In a telephone survey examining pet ownership as a form of social capital, researchers noted that dogs appeared to aid their owners in meeting new people in their neighbourhoods more often than other pets (Wood et al., 2005).

On walks, or when buying pet-related items, strangers are more likely to stop and talk (Walsh, 2009). Supporting this, in their study, Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara (2005), found that 45% of pet owners reported meeting someone in their neighbourhood through their pet. Like play groups for children, dog parks and dog beaches promote interactions between pet parents. They create a pet-centred social network for “owners,” who enjoy watching animal interactions and antics, and share their experiences and recommendations on dealing with problems (Walsh, 2009; Knight & Edwards, 2008). Often, people develop relationships with other pet owners, in spite of their chosen animal, because they share a mutual love of animals (Wood et al., 2015). Individuals who walk their dog frequently see themselves as being members of a group that offers them both a sense of pride and satisfaction (Knight & Edwards, 2008). Compared to people walking alone, dog owners are more likely to engage in social interactions while on walks with their dog because even when their dog is not present, they continue to act as discussion topics (Wood et al., 2005). In their telephone-based survey examining pets as a form of social capital, Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara (2005), observed that pets blur the imaginary lines drawn between humans when it comes to age, race, gender, socioeconomic boundaries, and culture. For

instance, persons with mental health concerns often find themselves losing social support because of their condition, but research has found that pets offer acceptance and understanding (Wisdom et al., 2009). The study participants stated that their pets gave them a way to connect and communicate with others, leading to a rebuilding of social support networks (Wisdom et al., 2009). According to Wood et al. (2015), research into the effectiveness of animals as catalysts for interaction between humans has been primarily focused on dogs, evaluating their roles as ice-breakers. They also go on to say that this area of research has trailed behind the abundance of investigations into the health-related benefits of pets (Wood et al., 2015). Further studies into the willingness of companion dogs to support and assist their guardians will help to emphasize the need for clear category descriptions to aid in future public policy development.

Older Adults

Currently, there are an estimated 4,945,060 people in Canada aged 65 years or older, an increase of 14.1% between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016c). In 2015, the number of seniors recorded worldwide was approximately 12% of the global population; by 2050, seniors will make up close to 22% of the population (World Health Organization, 2016b). Investigations concerned with the impact pets have on the health of their owners have found that owners exhibit less physiological risk factors for cardiovascular disease than non-owners, while also showing an improved survival rate following heart attacks (Friedmann et al.,

2011). In 1994, researchers in Australia surveyed pet owners and non-pet owners about pet ownership and personal health and found that pet owners take less medications for heart or sleeping problems, tend to have better physical and mental health than non-owners, and visit their doctors less often (McHarg, Baldock, Headey, & Robinson, 1995). Walking on a regular basis can decrease a person's risk of a stroke by half, reduce the incidents of hip fractures and improve cardiorespiratory function in seniors (Knight & Edwards, 2008). In addition, the social support offered by companion animals is especially important for older adults, who often lose social support from humans because of friends and family passing away (Westgarth et al., 2007). In a study of older women who recently lost a family member to cancer, the women stated that their pets offered them companionship, emotional support, and a reason to go out and exercise (Holtslander & Duggleby, 2009). Additionally, studies have shown that pets benefit older adults, giving them something to exercise or nurture, but many seniors cannot have a companion animal because of housing restrictions or budget shortfalls (Westgarth et al., 2007). In their study, Westgarth and colleagues (2007) found that participants over the age of 60 rarely had a dog because of mobility limitations and concern regarding the dog's care if something were to happen to them. Older adults are just one of the many groups that can be used to illustrate the significance of pets to human health and well-being.

Therapy Dog

Terminology

Researchers within the field of human-animal interaction (HAI) cannot agree on the language that should be used when writing or talking about their work; consequently, terms such as ‘animal-assisted intervention,’ ‘animal-assisted therapy’ and ‘animal-assisted activity’ are used interchangeably (Parenti, Foreman, Meade, & Wirth, 2013). Some authors, such as Mills and Hall (2014), use animal-assisted activity (AAA) as a broad term to outline the ways in which animals are used to help people, from the less structured activities of animal-assisted intervention (AAI) to the more planned and purposeful work of animal-assisted therapy (AAT). In contrast, the American Veterinary Medical Association (2016b) employs animal-assisted intervention as an umbrella term to describe the different ways in which the human-animal bond can be used to support people, such as in AAA and AAT. Nordgren and Engström (2013) define animal-assisted intervention (AAI), as a goal directed intervention between a trained animal and a patient. In their article, they explain that AAI can be used to improve a patient’s skills in communication, memory, focus, balance, and problem solving (Nordgren & Engström, 2013). Animal-assisted therapy is directed by a trained professional and can be used with other treatments to better the health of an individual (Mills & Yeager, 2012; Huss, 2009; Orlandi et al., 2007). Similarly, Harpur (2010) further describes AAT as a goal-directed therapy that incorporates animals in order to improve a person’s social, physical, emotional or cognitive functioning. In their study evaluating the benefits of AAT compared to those of standard treatments

used to treat adolescents with acute psychiatric illnesses such as a mood disorder, Stefanini, Martino, Allori, Galeotti and Tani, (2015) employed AAT activities such as physical contact, grooming, giving basic obedience commands, taking part in agility or playing with a dog. In an effort to further the classification discussion, this section has explored the activities that take place during animal-assisted intervention. Before the term ‘therapy dog’ can really be understood, all aspects of the intervention must be examined, including a therapy dog’s ability to influence the health and well-being of humans. With this knowledge, added to the information on the different terms used within the area found later, researchers can begin to outline the meaning of ‘therapy dog.’ further adding to the service dog discussion.

‘Animal-assisted activity’ is a term used to describe the untailed, often recreational, visits from volunteers and their animals, used to support, entertain or educate a group, such as residents in long-term care or children in a school (Mills & Yeager, 2012; Huss, 2009; Lutwack-Bloom, Wijewickrama, & Smith, 2005). As a result of its informal nature, AAA activities do not need to be documented, scheduled or conducted by a trained professional (Mills & Yeager, 2012). Pet Partners (2016), formerly the Delta Society, differentiates between AAA and AAT by placing emphasis on the fact that AAT is goal-oriented, carefully recorded, structured and always conducted by a trained professional, whereas AAA is frequently done by volunteers, informal, undocumented and often used for recreational purposes. AAA programs can be found in prisons, at universities, in

long-term care homes and in schools (Lutwack-Bloom et al., 2005). Similar to the way in which AAT and AAA are used, the terms 'pet-facilitated therapy' and 'pet-assisted therapy' can also be used to describe the therapeutic use of animals (Wood et al., 2005). Finally, like AAI, the term 'pet therapy' has been employed to define the broad range of interventions that include animals within the therapeutic process (Lutwack-Bloom et al., 2005). Programs have a number of specific rules a therapy dog team must follow, but similar to the policies governing service dog teams, there is no unified system. Each program, or institution, has their own set of rules dictating what constitutes a 'therapy dog' and what teams can or cannot do. Once the language confusion surrounding therapy dogs and companion animals has been cleared up, the classification of dogs in society will be better understood.

The Benefits of Animal-Assisted Intervention

Animal-Assisted Therapy has been reported to have a number of positive effects for humans, including reduced levels of fear, anxiety, loneliness, and depression, as well as increased socialization. In a study looking at the physiological stress response patterns of therapy dog owners interacting with their dog or a dog owner interacting with a therapy dog, researchers found that the therapy dog group showed more of a decrease in salivary cortisol and their self-reported stress levels, possibly because they were permitted to interact freely with their dog (Barker, Knisely, McCain, Schubert, & Pandurangi, 2010). The dog

owners interacting with a therapy dog also experienced a decline in their physiological stress response patterns, showing that it is possible to benefit from interaction with a dog that is not bonded (Barker et al., 2010). This finding is further demonstrated by the results of Rebecca Johnson and Richard Meadows' 2010 study on dog walking that used therapy dogs. In an attempt to gather data on what effects adherence to and outcomes of a regular walking schedule, the researchers asked participants to walk 20 minutes with a therapy dog 5 days a week for either 26 weeks or 50 weeks. In the 50-week group, 13 participants lost an average of 14.4 pounds and had an average 72% adherence rate (Johnson & Meadows, 2010). The findings discussed in the above studies, in regards to the ability of an un-bonded dog to have an effect, is explained by the fact that companion animals are able to elicit attention because they can easily offer love and security (Orlandi et al., 2007).

Researchers have found that AAT is most effective when targeted towards specific groups of individuals or health problems including: residents in long-term care (LTC) facilities (Nordgren & Engström, 2013; Berry et al., 2012) or palliative care patients (Engelman, 2013; Geisler, 2004), persons with a psychiatric disorder (Stefanini et al., 2015; Barker, Pandurangi & Best, 2003; Barak, Savorai, Mavashev, & Beni, 2001) or dementia (Swall, Fagerberg, Ebbeskog, & Hagelin, 2014; Nordgren & Engström, 2013; Majić, Gutzmann, Heinz, Lang, & Rapp, 2013; Mossello et al., 2011; Baun & McCabe, 2003; Richeson, 2003; McCabe, Baun, Speich, & Agrawal, 2002; Katsinas, 2000), or patients diagnosed with

cancer (Fleishman et al., 2015; Johnson, Meadows, Haubner, & Sevedge, 2008; Orlandi et al., 2007; Johnson, Meadows, Haubner, & Sevedge, 2003). For instance, when Stefanini et al. (2015) compared the impact of AAT to that of traditional treatments used to treat adolescents with serious mental illnesses, they observed improvements between the start and end of the study in participant participation, interactions with their dog, social behaviours with adults, and a decrease in withdrawal behaviours. In addition, the AAT participants tended to spend less time in the hospital, attend school more regularly and function better than the adolescents in the control group (Stefanini et al., 2015). This section has explored some of the benefits of therapy dogs for individuals with a variety of health conditions. By understanding how therapy dogs, and earlier companion animals, can positively influence the health and well-being of humans, investigators can see how dogs might be employed in a variety of settings and perform a number of functions.

Residents in Long-Term Care

Being forced to move into a long-term care facility can cause serious declines in a person's health and well-being because of the negative effects of loneliness and stress associated with losing their home (Berry et al., 2012). As a result, facilities need to develop and implement programs that will keep people actively engaged, decreasing the rates of depression and stress experienced by residents (Berry et al., 2012). Some of the more common non-pharmacological

approaches that are being used to help improve the lives of residents include, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, validation therapy, music therapy, and animal-facilitated therapy (Swall et al., 2015; Mossello et al., 2011). In long-term care facilities, dogs can help residents maintain joint mobility and muscle strength, as well as release excess energy by permitting them to take part in basic pet-keeping activities such as walking, playing or grooming (Swall et al., 2015). Velde, Cipriani and Fisher (2005), state that animals in long-term care facilities offer residents something to nurture which is not usually available, and explain that dogs promote a caring atmosphere through their natural need for physical attention. Additionally, animals can be used to help improve residents' mood, decrease stress levels, promote meaningful interactions, decrease depressive symptoms, and improve overall well-being (Nordgren & Engström, 2013; Baun & McCabe, 2003). For instance, in a study examining the effectiveness of AAT for institutionalized geriatric schizophrenia patients, researchers found that over the 12 month period participants showed a significant improvement in socialization and activities of daily living (Barak et al., 2001). Therapy dogs help to increase communication and cognitive functioning, increase motivation and self-esteem, and increase movement and participation in activities for residents in LTC (DiSalvo et al., 2006). Additionally, the animals help residents by facilitating social interactions with staff and other residents, promoting improvements in health, providing companionship and social support (Barak et al., 2001).

Loneliness is a significant problem experienced by individuals who reside in long-term care homes (Banks & Banks, 2005). Not only do people frequently lose their independence from chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease or strokes, but they also lose friends, family and spouses as they move or pass away (Banks & Banks, 2005). Additionally, moving into an LTC often causes people to lose contact with community members and forces them to give up personal possessions such as pets (Banks & Banks, 2005). In a Swedish study that examined the impact of AAI on the quality of life of persons with dementia, the researchers observed that interacting with a therapy dog caused patients to remember stories from their past that they shared with the therapy dog handlers and health care staff (Nordgren & Engström, 2013).

In their study looking at loneliness in long-term care facilities, Banks and Banks (2005), found that animal-assisted therapy programs were most effective for residents who experienced the highest degree of loneliness. Odendaal and Meintjes (2003) found that companion animals can positively effect a person's level of stress and loneliness by offering them comfort, positive contact and a source of distraction. In a study, by Lutwack-Bloom, Wijewickrama and Smith (2005), the researchers worked with two long-term care facilities to determine whether therapy dog visits were effective because of the dog, or as a result of the visit itself. They concluded that the mood of residents was significantly improved when they received visits including a dog, compared to those with just a human visitor. Similarly, when evaluating whether a human visitor can evoke the same

effect on loneliness as a visiting dog, Banks and Banks (2005) concluded that AAT is more effective. In spite of this finding, LaFrance, Garcia and Labreche (2007), state that it is important for program organizers to remember that the benefits related to pet therapy are highly dependant on the values and personal preferences of individuals. Not everyone likes or feels comfortable around companion animals, possibly because of a negative past experience (Odendaal, 2000).

Service Dog

Terminology

Animals have been used for thousands of years to help persons with disabilities achieve independence and participate in society (Luck, 2014). Various species have shown the potential to assist disabled individuals, but partnership with a canine has shown the most success (Mills & Yeager, 2012; Lutwack-Bloom et al., 2005). Despite the increased numbers of service dogs that are being trained to aid persons with disabilities, the terms often get used interchangeably and there is no universally accepted terminology (Luck, 2014; Glenn, 2013).

‘Assistance dog’ is the overarching term used in the United Kingdom (see Table 2.1) and by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and its member organizations to describe the various types of dogs that help persons with disabilities (Yamamoto, Lopez, & Hart, 2015; Glenn, 2013). This language is referenced throughout academic literature and is used by many service dog

trainers, but ‘assistance dog’ is not the term usually found within government policies or that is used by the general public (Parenti et al., 2013). According to Assistance Dogs International (2016), there are three categories of assistance dogs: guide dogs, hearing dogs and service dogs. Under ADI’s guidelines, the service dog group can be further broken down into mobility assistance, medical or seizure response, and psychiatric assistance (Glenn, 2013). Despite the absence of a unified terminology, the term ‘service dog’ is the term often used within North America (see Table 2.1) and found within government legislation (Yamamoto et al., 2015). As a result of its high level of acceptance, ‘service dog’ and the following definition will serve as the bases for this research project. Service dogs are specially trained canines who work or perform tasks for a person with a disability to enhance their ability to take part in daily activities and in their community (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013; Fairman & Huebner, 2001). Prior to the 1960s, service dogs for the blind and 1970s, service dogs for the deaf were the only animals being trained to aid persons with disabilities, but over the past decade, canines have started to fill an increasing number of roles (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013).

The terms ‘assistance dog’ and ‘service dog’ can also be used more narrowly to refer to a dog trained to perform tasks to assist a person with a disability related to a mobility limitation (Harpur, 2010; Collins et al., 2006). Some of the tasks service dogs for individuals with physical disabilities can be trained to perform are: to turn on or off lights, press buttons, to retrieve dropped items or

items that are out of reach for the handler, call for help, and open or close doors (Walthall, 2012; Zapf & Rough, 2002; Fairman & Huebner, 2001).

Additionally, similar to the way in which ADI employs ‘service dog,’ the term ‘assistance dog’ can be used as an umbrella term to describe dogs who help individuals with conditions other than blindness, deafness or a physical disability (Harpur, 2010). For instance, a dog who has been trained to complete tasks to aid a person with type 1 diabetes or epilepsy, can be called an ‘assistance dog,’ ‘service dog’ or even a ‘medical alert dog’ (Harpur, 2010). Psychiatric service dogs (PSDs) are specially trained canines who assist persons with a mental health related disability (Esnayra & Love, 2008). Some of the conditions PSDs help people manage are: posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia, and depression. In the case of a person who has agoraphobia, a service dog can be used to help ensure that the individual leaves their home regularly (Esnayra & Love, 2008). For an individual with schizophrenia, a dog can be taught skills that will assist their handler manage their mental state, as well as help with other aspects of their disability (Harpur, 2010). Some of the tasks performed by PSDs, who work with veterans with PTSD, include: walking behind the veteran when in public to “watch their back,” searching places the person worries about entering, and nudging or providing another form of tactile distraction to avoid episodes of increased panic (Nunley, 2013; Huss, 2009). Finally, for persons diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, a dog can be trained to perform work that will help them remain grounded, as well as interrupt self-harming behaviours

(Waterlander, 2011; Huss, 2009). With the increasing numbers of tasks dogs are being trained to perform to help individuals with a broad range of medical problems, it has become unclear as to whether a service dog is only for a person with a disability, or if they can also be used to assist individuals with a health concern. As a result of this confusion, the service dog category needs to be redefined, making it easier for a solid description of what exactly is meant by the term 'service dog.'

The Benefits of a Service Dog

Despite the differences in function and purpose that exist between service dogs, their impact and the relationship itself work to unite their handlers (Eames & Eames, 2001). Service dogs can help reduce the feelings of isolation that many persons with disabilities experience, as well as help to improve social confidence, self-esteem, independence and social identity (Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008; Zapf & Rough, 2002). Generally, people tend to feel more comfortable approaching and interacting with a person accompanied by a dog, whether they have a disability or not (Dawson, 2004; McNicholas & Collis, 2000). In a study by Fairman and Huebner (2001), 100% of the survey respondents reported being approached more often in public following receipt of their service dog. When evaluating a dog's ability to facilitate social interactions, McNicholas and Collis (2000), compared the number of encounters experienced by a well-dressed owner and good looking dog to those of a less appealing owner and dog. The researchers observed that both owners received a similar amount of attention

(McNicholas & Collis, 2000). For a person who is blind, a guide dog frequently facilitates social interactions while out in public (Dawson, 2004). In a study concerned with the experiences of guide dog handlers, 21% of the participants stated that they believe people treated them better when they had their dog (Whitmarsh, 2005). Similarly, an autism service dog tethered to a child attracts attention and encourages strangers to approach the team and ask questions about the dog (Burrows, Adams, & Spiers, 2008). As shown above, service dogs can help their handlers appear more approachable and stimulate conversation in a public setting, but their role as social bridge does not stop there. Service dogs can also initiate communication and social interaction in other environments (Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008). By offering their handlers a way to connect with others, service dogs help build communities in which persons with disabilities can share “war stories” or join forces to push for change (Eames & Eames, 2001).

In addition to acting as social catalysts, service dogs give persons with disabilities independence and improved self-confidence. For instance, the primary purpose of an autism service dog is to provide safety, but they can also teach their child valuable lessons on caring, and offer them a way to be independent (Burrows et al., 2008). Similarly, a guide dog can give their handler the ability to travel safely on their own, while permitting them to feel independent and self-confident (Wiggett-Barnard, Steel, 2008; Dawson, 2004). In their paper, Fairman and Huebner (2001), noted that study participants showed improvements in independence, as demonstrated by a decrease in paid human

assistance of approximately two hours per week and an estimated six hours per week of unpaid help following receipt of their service dog. Additionally, Rintala, Matamoros and Seitz (2008) conducted a study to compare what tasks people hoped their future service or hearing dog would perform to what their dogs actually did, and found that in most cases participants needed less human assistance after being matched with their dog. For example, the hearing dog recipients needed human assistance 83.3% of the time when someone called their name, but after receiving their dog they only needed help 16.7% of the time (Rintala et al., 2008). A similar result was observed in an earlier study by Ng, James and McDonald (2000), who found that the majority of participants in their study showed increased autonomy after being matched with their service dog. In particular, they noted that the service dogs made the most difference for the teenagers in their community, at school and in meeting their psychosocial needs (Ng et al., 2000).

For individuals with progressive disabilities, service dogs can be continually taught new skills that can help lessen their challenges, providing them with a source of reliable support (Collins et al., 2006). In addition, when their human partner is unwell, the service dog continues to offer companionship in spite of their medical or physical state (Collins et al., 2006). In a study that used attachment theory to examine the bond between a service dog and their human partner, 21 out of 25 participants reported that their dog offered them comfort when they were stressed or upset (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). In another

study, examining the use of psychiatric service dogs, 84.4% of the survey respondents stated that their dogs help reduce their negative mental health symptoms, and 40.0% reported that their use of medication declined (Esnayra & Love, 2008).

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) was first enacted in 1990 and was revised in 2010 (Rothberg & Collins, 2015). Under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (2010) a service animal is defined as “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” (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2016). In 2010 the definition saw the word ‘individual’s’ replacing ‘handler’s’ because there are circumstances, such as with an autism service dog, where a dog is not working for a handler (or the child’s guardian), but an individual, (the child’s school assistant) (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013). In addition, ‘service animal’ was revised in 2011 so that it no longer applied to a variety of animal species, but only to dogs, and in some cases miniature horses (Rothberg & Collins, 2015). Prior to this change there were a number of animals being used, such as ferrets, snakes, rats and parrots, by persons with disabilities (Walthall, 2012). The Act explicitly states that dogs who provide help in the form of protection or emotional support are not considered service animals and therefore, are not protected (Yamamoto et al., 2015). The

work or tasks performed by a service dog must be trained and not something they naturally do (Mills & Yeager, 2012).

Additionally, pursuant to the ADA, service dog handlers must be granted entry into any facility to which the public is normally permitted, such as restaurants, hospitals, universities, grocery stores, or on public transportation (Esnayra & Love, 2008). The Act also specifies that while in these public accommodations the service dog is the sole responsibility of the handler, or individual directing the dog's behaviour (Sutton, 2015). Under the ADA, the public may only ask persons with disabilities two specific questions in order to determine whether their dog is a service dog. They may not ask the person what their disability is, but they can ask: "Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?" And: "What task has your dog been trained to perform?" The first question is only allowed to be asked if the dog is not wearing a harness, cape, or vest identifying it as a service dog, and neither question can be asked if the person's disability is easily recognizable (Sutton, 2015). The ADA does not provide any guidelines detailing how much or what kind of training a dog must receive in order to be considered a service animal (Huss, 2005). In addition, the federal statute does not offer any specific instructions on how much work or what sorts of tasks a service dog must perform to help their human partner (Huss, 2005). The ADA only states that the service animal must perform 'work' or 'tasks' that help to eliminate the limitations experienced by a person with a disability (Rothberg & Collins, 2015).

Even though the ADA does not prohibit Americans from training their own dog (owner-training will be discussed further in chapter 4) or dictate the organizations where they must obtain their dog, the Army and Veterans Administration (VA) are the exception (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013; Huss, 2005). In order for veterans to qualify for benefits relating to their service dog and to access VA facilities, dogs must come from organizations that are members of ADI or IGDF (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013). In her article, Nunley (2013) discusses the VA's decision to deny assistance to veterans with psychiatric disorders, while providing help to those with other disabilities. She argues that the VA has based their policy on the outdated evidence-based medical model (see chapter 1), ignoring the research that shows a direct relationship between a number of mental and physical conditions affecting many veterans (Nunley, 2013). Consequently, the Veterans Administration policy offers coverage for veterans with a traumatic brain injury, while denying access and funding for service dogs who help veterans with PTSD, claiming that there is not enough concrete scientific evidence to support the efficacy of psychiatric service dogs (Yamamoto et al., 2015; Nunley, 2013).

The *Americans with Disabilities Act* states that service dog owners cannot be denied access to a public facility with their dogs because of allergies or a fear of animals (DOJ, 2016). Despite this, a handler can be asked to leave with their service dog if the dog is not housebroken or if the dog is out of control and the owner does not appropriately remedy the situation (Rothberg & Collins, 2015).

In his paper Harpur (2010), says that service dog handlers could be restricted from a number of public places because of their dog, if legislation aimed at eliminating disability discrimination is interpreted too narrowly. He therefore, suggests that policymakers attempt to limit the occasions in which anti-discrimination policies are used to regulate the movement of service dogs and their human partners (Harpur, 2010). Barbara Hanson (2005) notes that regulatory policies that target dogs can lead to increased discrimination and problems for persons with disabilities who attempt to enter public accommodations with their service dog. She goes on to say that this trend is even more concerning because it serves to increase the negative attitudes faced by individuals with disabilities who already experience a higher level of stigma (Hanson, 2005). When an individual with a disability partners with a service dog, the two species become a team and develop a united identity (Hanson, 2005). As a result of this shared identity, when the canine partner is viewed poorly, the human partner is often seen in the same light. This section has explored the ADA and the various regulations within the Act to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to move freely in public with their dog. Later, chapter three will introduce and examine the service dog policies in Canada, and in chapter four, the topic of owner-training versus program-training will be discussed.

Discussion

The literature findings on the advantages of pet ownership are varied and inconsistent (Herzog, 2011). Some of the common reasons for this are: variation in the characteristics of the human sample such as age, marital status or gender, degree of attachment between owner and pet, broad range of pet related characteristics, and the lack of a universally accepted or empirically supported framework that can help researchers examine and understand the human-animal relationship (Hutton, 2015). Claims about the health benefits of pet ownership need to be evaluated using the same standards of evidence as a new medication, therapy, or assistive device (Herzog, 2011). In his article, Herzog (2011) notes that the media often tends to focus on the studies reporting positive results regarding the effects of pet ownership on human health and well-being, while ignoring the investigations finding little, or even negative, outcomes. For instance, companion animals can cause serious health complications for certain populations such as persons who are immunosuppressed or individuals with respiratory illnesses (Lutwack-Bloom et al., 2005).

Additionally, social policies continue to restrict pet ownership for a number of populations, such as older adults (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). In their paper, Kwong and Bartholomew (2011) explain that when an older individual moves into long-term care, they often have to give up their pets because current regulations do not permit pet ownership within facilities, forcing seniors to lose not only their independence, but also an important source of attachment, caregiving and companionship. Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara (2005), suggest that the

advantages derived from pet ownership need to be weighed against the disadvantages, such as injury, grief and waste because it is possible that human health may suffer if restrictions continue to push dogs further outside of their communities. They go on to say that the estimated health care savings are potentially much higher than the money spent dealing with pet-related injuries or illness (Wood, Giles-Corti & Bulsara, 2005). In fact, despite the risks, the relationship between humans and animals has survived over thousands of years, across continents, cultures, and technological change (Staats, Sears & Pierfelice, 2006).

Finally, humans appear to benefit from the companionship of pets, but investigations into the impact humans have on the well-being of animals is limited (Shore, Douglas, & Riley, 2005; Odendaal & Meintjes, 2003). Rebecca Huss (2009) states that animals are still considered to be property under the law, so research into their health and well-being will continue to be ignored until humans view animals as sentient beings in need of protection.

Determining what is meant by the terms, 'pet' or 'companion animal,' is important, but research continues to focus on the influence animals have on humans, in an effort to determine how they can be used to improve health outcomes. Study results have varied, but investigations looking at pet ownership and human health have shown some promise. A thorough understanding of what is meant by the terms 'pet' and 'companion animal,' can be used as a basis to begin formulating a description for 'service dog.'

Within the field of animal-assisted intervention, research has primarily focused on the beneficial effects of a therapy dog on the health and well-being for persons with medical conditions such as dementia and cancer. With its rise in popularity, more research into the negative outcomes of the practice needs to be conducted. Problems such as zoonotic disease transmission and the public policy implications need to be considered (Velde et al., 2005). Some of the more common challenges associated with animal-assisted interventions include, phobias, dislike of animals, potential risks, financial expense, and cultural beliefs (DiSalvo et al., 2006; Brodie, Biley, & Shewring, 2002). According to Johnson and colleagues (2008), the monetary costs associated with human-animal intervention is not actually an issue because the programs are volunteer-based, with volunteers covering the expense related to bringing their dogs to visit patients. Another potential concern related to AAI is the severity, cost and frequency of injuries related to animal bites which makes this issue one of the more problematic (Brodie et al., 2002). Although, according to Rebecca Huss (2009), it is not possible to present an accurate statistic on the number of animal bites associated with animal-assisted intervention programs because there are no studies in the area, and not every bite is reported. The World Health Organization (2016c), defines zoonoses as “any disease or infection that is naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans and vice-versa.” There are over 200 different zoonotic diseases (DiSalvo et al., 2006). Specific populations, such as children, can be highly susceptible to illness and disease

caused by zoonoses because of their more intimate interactions with animals, and because they may forget to wash their hands after contact (DiSalvo et al., 2006; Brodie et al., 2002). In order to eliminate the potential for transmitting zoonotic diseases or infections, AAT programs must have effective hygiene protocols in place (Brodie et al., 2002). The therapy dog must also be healthy and in good physical condition (Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2011b). Zoonoses transmission, animal welfare and potential injuries, are also concerns within the companion animal and service dog categories. A concrete distinction between each group will make it easier for program organizers and policymakers to create and implement guidelines that will serve to protect the health and welfare of dogs and the humans they assist.

Finally, despite the fact that only a small percentage of people in North America are actually allergic to pet dander, allergies are the most common challenge reported for AAT (Brodie et al., 2002). According to the literature, cats cause the highest rate of allergic reaction followed by horses and guinea pigs, with dogs creating less allergy issues (Brodie et al., 2002). In spite of the overwhelming concern surrounding allergies, Orlandi et al. (2007) stated that during their 25-week study there were no reported allergic reactions or infections caused by the dog. Given this finding, it is possible that allergic reactions can be avoided or at least minimized within animal-assisted intervention programs.

Clear and concise policies regarding animals in public spaces, such as health care settings, are important in order to maintain public safety and proper

infection control (DiSalvo et al., 2006). For example, in their article DiSalvo and colleagues (2006) discussed the Santa Clara Valley Medical Centre who had to revise their policies regarding dogs because there was a lack of understanding by staff which led to therapy and visitation dogs being given the same open access as service dogs. Unlike service dogs, visitation and therapy dogs are prohibited from entering some areas of hospitals, such as the intensive care unit (DiSalvo et al., 2006). Health care facilities can request therapy and visitation dog owners present certification and vaccination documents, but the *Americans with Disabilities Act* does not require a service dog handler show this paperwork (DiSalvo et al., 2006). To avoid confusing the roles and categories of dogs, it is necessary for people to be educated on the proper terminology and responsibilities associated with each type (Huss, 2009). Once the terminology employed within the field of human-animal interaction has been clearly outlined, the policy issues surrounding infection control in health care settings and public safety can be properly addressed.

Finally, research in the service dog field has been concerned with the advantages of canine assistance, ignoring many of the challenges that exist. For instance, dogs do not live as long as humans, so service dog handlers must accept the inevitable, their partner will age and their health will decline. In an investigation by Kwong and Bartholomew (2011), 13 of the 25 study participants had lost their dog prior to retirement age, with 12 of the cases being because of illness. The death of a service dog or ending of a partnership can be extremely

difficult, given the intimate relationship that exists between a handler and their canine partner (Taylor et al., 2013). In her study examining the experiences of guide dog owners, Whitmarsh (2005) observed that 5% of the participants reported the certainty of their dog's retirement and death as a hindrance to partnering with a service dog. People with disabilities spend a great deal of time with their service dog, so the bond between human and dog tends to be strong; the human side of the partnership relies on the dog for daily functioning, while the canine side of the partnership depends on the human for daily care (Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). When referring to the emotional connection aspect of the human-animal bond, researchers often use the term "attachment," but current research does not explain whether the bond between persons with disabilities and their service dog is considered attachment or caregiving (Odendaal, 2000; Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011). Odendaal (2000) breaks down the relationship by explaining that the human offers shelter, food and care, while the dog serves a function and provides their owner with security.

There are also several ethical issues that have been voiced regarding service dogs. For example, some of the methods used to train service dogs and the manner in which they are housed, often in large kennel facilities, while in training have been brought up as significant concerns (Huss, 2009). In addition, many worry that service dogs do not receive enough time to play or relax, believing the dogs are expected to work constantly (Huss, 2009). In their study, Burrows, Adams and Millman (2008), observed that many of the autism service

dogs were not given enough time “off duty” or to relieve themselves. In their article they later stated that the behavioural problems exhibited by some service dogs can frequently be avoided by allowing them to have an adequate amount of recreation and stress-free time (Burrows, Adams, & Millman, 2008). Finally, the industry is growing fast in order to meet the rising demand for service dogs and with that growth comes the potential for an increase in poorly socialized and poorly trained service dogs in public (Parenti et al., 2013). In spite of the work service dog trainers do to ensure their dogs are ready for real world experiences, it is not always possible for them to predict the stress or uncertainty the dogs will face while working (Rothberg & Collins, 2015). In spite of the difficulties, disabled individuals continue to choose partnership with a service dog over help from another human, so clear and concise terminology describing the role and function of a dog has become even more necessary.

Review Limitations

This review incorporates a wide variety of studies from a number of academic disciplines in order to provide a look at the research that is taking place within the field of human-dog interaction, focusing on the benefits and drawbacks for three main categories: companion animals, therapy dogs and service dogs. While reading the papers for this review, some limitations were observed. For instance, in many of the studies used for the service dog section of this literature review, the research samples came from particular organizations or affiliations

which offers the potential for problems with their findings. For example, there were several factors which limited the study findings of Esnayra and Love (2008), such as the study funding was provided by the Psychiatric Service Dog Society, so the study goals were tailored around their needs which may have led to biased results. Additionally, the survey participants, who had all had positive experience with dogs, were gathered from the member lists of groups relating to psychiatric service dogs, making it difficult to determine whether the study would have come to the same conclusions if the participants had been chosen randomly (Esnayra & Love, 2008). Without a study sample that is more representative of the general population, it is tough to apply the study results to other situations. Fairman and Huebner (2001) and Kwong and Bartholomew (2011) ran into similar challenges relating to their study results. In the case of Fairman and Huebner (2001), the study participants consisted of 202 service dog recipients from Canine Companions for Independence, and in the study by Kwong and Bartholomew (2011), the participants were all recruited from Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides, making it difficult to apply the findings to other situations. This investigation was not associated with service dogs, but in a study evaluating the potential use of dog walking as a method for promoting regular walking habits, Johnson and Meadows (2010), state that their findings should not be applied to the general population because the participants came from similar types of housing and neighbourhoods, so it is unclear as to whether they would obtain the same results from a larger community in which

safety might be an issue. In addition, they did not have a control group of healthy participants to contrast with their study groups composed of persons with varying levels of disability (Johnson & Meadows, 2010).

Stefanini et al. (2015) attempted to fulfill the requirements for a good study design in their comparison of the effects of AAT to the standard treatment used to treat adolescents with acute psychiatric disorders. The researchers used a pre-post experimental design with a randomized controlled trial in which the physicians and raters were blinded to the assignment of study participants (Stefanini et al., 2015). According to Zapf and Rough (2002), researchers in this area need to conduct studies that use clinical trials and base their conclusions on functional outcomes. Collins et al. (2006) furthers this point by explaining that it is necessary to have studies determine what positive effects are obtained through the use of a service dog compared to those that come from just owning a pet, in order to prove the efficacy of service dog use. Finally, Burrows, Adams and Millman (2008) state that studies exploring the effects of AAT are often criticized for not paying attention to the changes in animal behaviour over time, and for being solely anecdotal. In their study, the authors describe their observations of the changes in autism service dogs over a period of 6 months to one year (Burrows, Adams, & Millman, 2008).

Traditionally, research in the area of human-animal interaction has been based on anecdotal reports and personal stories (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011b). They further this point by stating that most studies use quasi- or non-

experimental designs which provide inconclusive results (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011b). For example, in her quasi-experimental pilot study looking at the effects of AAT on the agitated behaviours and social interactions of persons with dementia, Nancy Richeson (2003) found that despite the improvements observed immediately after the visit, the agitated behaviours returned during the follow-up phase. Similar results were found in a longitudinal study by Swall and colleagues (2014), where study participants demonstrated improved activity levels for just an hour following the therapy dog visit. Odendaal (2000) states that the medical community will continue to resist the use of animals in health care settings until researchers can provide concrete and easily replicated results from scientific studies. Taylor, Edwards and Pooley (2013), also observed that the journalists and commenters they used in their study frequently stated that there is an absence of concrete, scientific evidence supporting the use of dogs in therapy and service roles.

In Whitmarsh's (2005) study examining the benefits of guide dog use, she recruited an estimated 800 participants from the client lists of Guide Dogs and the membership lists of organizations in the UK serving individuals with vision loss, in an attempt to ensure a variety of individuals took part in the study, but Whitmarsh appears to be highly involved with Guide Dogs, potentially narrowing the scope of her research and its findings. In another study, Yamamoto, Lopez and Hart (2015) collected information for their study using the registration records of animal control facilities throughout California. their research was limited by the fact that

not every dog in the state are registered and the records did not always report whether they were service dogs (Yamamoto et al., 2015). Finally, the study by Taylor, Edwards and Pooley (2013) was limited by the fact that the authors needed to assume that the information, regarding the dog ownership experiences of veterans with Posttraumatic stress disorder, presented by the journalists was accurate. They also noted that it is possible the veterans themselves may have given their experiences reported to the media a positive spin in order to improve the image seen by the public (Taylor et al., 2013). Glenn (2013) eliminated the accuracy concerns and potential for biased results by using a mixed methods approach in her research. In addition to using a variety of methods, Glenn (2013) started by recruiting participants through international service dog group list serves and membership lists, but then employed a snowball sampling approach to gather participants from other areas.

Conclusion

In discussing the advantages and disadvantages related to dogs in the role of companion, therapy or service, this literature review sought to determine how dogs, specifically service dogs, are classified in society. Despite the increased amount of information available in the area of human-animal interactions, there is a need for research looking at the language used in the field. There is currently no universally accepted terminology within any of the categories, companion animal, therapy dog or service dog, leading to confusion for researchers and the general public. In the initial group studied for this

literature review, the terms 'companion animal' and 'pet' are commonly used, while in the therapy dog and service dog categories, there are a wide variety of labels being used in describing the dogs. When the information collected for this review is critically examined, it becomes apparent that terminology problems grow as the roles diversify and the amount of training required in order for a dog to perform the role increases. To reduce the language issues found within each category, a unified terminology must be developed that includes concrete definitions to describe each term. Once this takes place, the policy issues, related to public health and safety can be addressed. By understanding how society classifies dogs who play a companion, therapy or service role, the information from this review can be applied within future chapters where I analyze service dog legislation and the perceptions of handlers, specifically owner-trainers. With a clear and concise definition of what exactly constitutes a 'service dog,' it will be easier for the general public to identify who the 'real' teams are and who are not..

CHAPTER 3: Regulating Service Dogs in Canada: A Comparative Analysis of Service Dog Policies and Laws

In this chapter, I discuss and analyze service dog legislation across Canada, in an effort to determine how service dogs are viewed within the law and explore the potential implications for service dog handlers and owner-trainers.

Introduction

Equality is considered by all Canadians to be a fundamental human right. To the average person, this means that all Canadians are the same and are therefore afforded the same rights to live freely and without worry. In a human rights setting equality does not denote sameness, it means that no matter how different people may be, all Canadians, including persons with disabilities, are important and are entitled equally to the same human rights merely because they are human. The notion that everyone should be treated the same is known as formal equality and can lead to inequalities itself because the approach overlooks the discriminatory effects of many policies and initiatives (Barnett, Nicol, & Walker, 2012). In contrast, substantive equality recognizes that everyone is different and comes with different experiences, so it is necessary to acknowledge discriminatory effects (Barnett et al., 2012). To further substantive access and equality though, it may be necessary to occasionally treat people the same and other times, treat people differently (Prince, 2012). Legislation protecting the right of persons with disabilities to use a service dog in Canada varies from province to

province. In general, Canadians cannot be discriminated against based on their use of a service dog, but each jurisdiction and law differs in the protections it offers, the disability groups that are covered and who is afforded the rights, whether it be the individual or the dog itself (McCaig, 2008).

Document Searches

An in-depth analysis of government documents relating to service dogs was performed. Service Dog Central was used as a resource to locate places to begin researching the federal, provincial and territorial service dog laws. Service Dog Central is a website that brings together a diverse community of service dog handlers and trainers (servicedogcentral.org). In addition to housing a wide range of up-to-date service dog information, the website also hosts a number of forums where members can ask questions that can be answered by knowledgeable people in the area (servicedogcentral.org). From the main page, I clicked the link titled “service dog laws,” and a page appeared listing a number of countries, including Canada, that have service dog legislation. After clicking the “Canada” link, another list appeared, this one offering a number of resources for obtaining information on the laws across the country. The first website listed was the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII). The Canadian Legal Information Institute, is a non-profit organization, founded by members of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, that strives to ensure Canadian laws are accessible online (canlii.org). Using the search term ‘service dog,’ 268 results were offered: 255 court documents and 13 policy documents. In order to improve the efficiency

of my research process I used 'AND' along with 'Government of Canada,' followed by the names of each individual province and territory. Employing this method helped me to obtain a good understanding of all relevant legislation.

Finally, I typed the title of each Act into Google in order to locate the actual policy document and read all other relevant search results. By understanding how service dogs are legally classified, I sought to highlight some of the limitations present in the service dog legislation across Canada.

Federal

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* was passed in 1977 and last amended in 2014 (Government of Canada [GC], 1985). The Act ensures all Canadians, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, are given an equal opportunity to participate fully in society (GC, 1985). Pursuant to section 5 of the Act, no one can be prevented from accessing any facility, goods or services, or accommodation because of their disability or any other prohibited ground (GC, 1985). The *Canadian Human Rights Act* does not directly reference persons with disabilities who use service dogs, but due to the broad nature of the Act, service dog handlers are guaranteed equal rights under the law. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* can be altered or repealed through a simple majority vote in the House of Commons because of its status as a federal statute (GC, 1985).

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted on April 17th, 1982 (Government of Canada [GC], 1982). The Charter outlines the basic freedoms,

democratic rights, legal rights, language rights and equality rights guaranteed to all Canadians (GC, 1982). The Charter places limits on the ability of governments, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal, to pass laws or partake in acts that are discriminatory or that may have the ability to negatively affect human rights (Barnett et al., 2012). Pooran and Wilkie (2005) state that the definition of disability added to the human rights goal of section 15 of the Charter, results in a definition that includes unintentional discrimination. Under this section disability is defined as: “the restriction of activity because of a medical loss of abnormality” (Pooran & Wilkie, 2005). The rights and freedoms outlined within the Charter are entrenched within the Canadian Constitution, so it is nearly impossible for Parliament or any other level of government to violate or change them (GC, 1982). Similar to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not explicitly mention service dogs or the protections provided to their handlers. The Charter plays a vital role in human rights protection, but it is limited because it only applies to the actions, policies and legislation of government. Unlike the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not protect people from the actions of groups, organizations or private individuals (Barnett et al., 2012).

Canada is still far behind in the formulation and adoption of policies and strategies aimed at enabling persons with disabilities to equally participate in mainstream society (Burns & Gordon, 2009). The provincial and territorial governments are responsible for implementing their own disability legislation,

because at the federal level, there is no legislation that deals specifically with disability (Burns & Gordon, 2009). To date, there has been no significant progress made in the area of disability laws at the federal level since the addition of disability as a prohibited ground of discrimination into the Charter in 1982. In fact, in a report entitled *Moving Backwards: Canada's State of Transportation Accessibility in an International Context*, researcher David Baker found that Canada is no longer progressing in the area of accessibility for persons with disabilities, but instead is regressing (Baker, 2005).

Provincial and Territorial

Ontario

Ontario was the first province to implement anti-discrimination legislation (ohrc.on.ca). The *Ontario Human Rights Code* was enacted in June of 1962, but did not include disability as a prohibited ground of discrimination until it was completely revamped in 1982 (ARCH Disability Law Centre, 2013). The purpose of the Code is to protect Ontarians from discrimination based on specific prohibited grounds and protected social areas, such as housing and employment (ohrc.on.ca). Similar to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* does not plainly set out protections for persons with disabilities who use a service dog, but the Code does refer to “physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal” within its definition of ‘disability’ (ohrc.on.ca). Despite this fact, before disability was ever considered as a prohibited ground of discrimination under the *Human Rights*

Code, Ontario was the first province to pass a law that permitted blind individuals to be accompanied by a specially trained guide dog in all public establishments (ohrc.on.ca).

On December 31, 1990, the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* (BPRA) came into effect and has not been amended (Government of Ontario [GO], 1990). On May 7th, 2008, Bill 70 An Act to Amend the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* was introduced in the legislature (McCaig, 2008). The goal of the Bill was to expand the BPRA to also protect the rights of persons with disabilities other than blindness (McCaig, 2008). According to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (2016), Bill 70 did not go any further than first reading. The BPRA provides specific protections for persons who are blind and rely upon a guide dog (McCaig, 2008). The Act guarantees blind handlers and their guide dogs equal access to public facilities and accommodations, as well as to the goods and services offered to the public (GO, 1990). Under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, businesses who refuse access to their goods or services, facilities or other accommodations to which the public is regularly permitted, can be fined a maximum of \$5,000 (GO, 1990). Additionally, anyone who has been found guilty of pretending to use a guide dog can be fined up to \$500. Even though the BPRA is meant to protect persons who are blind, the Act discriminates against individuals who do not receive their dogs from one of the 13 'accepted' training facilities or one that is approved by the Attorney General (GO, 1990). In an effort to ensure easy access to public venues, the Attorney General can provide handlers with an identification card that has the law

written on it, but these cards are only offered to individuals who receive their dog from an approved program or facility (McCaig, 2008). As a result of the limits placed upon the protections provided through the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, blind individuals who choose to owner-train or obtain their guide dog from an organization not included within the accepted list must turn to the Ontario *Human Rights Code* or *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* for help.

In 1994, the Ontarians with disabilities bill was introduced, but the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) was not passed until 2002 (ARCH Disability Law Centre, 2013). The purpose of the Act is to advance the lives of persons with disabilities by making sure they are given an equal opportunity to participate in their communities (Government of Ontario [GO], 2001). The ODA also offers disabled individuals a chance to take part in identifying barriers and determining ways of overcoming the various obstacles they experience. Through consultations with disabled Ontarians and other stakeholders, the Ontario Government hoped to devise barrier-free design guidelines that would encourage accessibility for persons with disabilities (GO, 2001). This point leads to one disadvantage of the ODA: the Act only applies to government owned, purchased or utilized buildings, structures or properties. The ODA requires all government owned or run buildings and properties to meet or exceed the level of accessibility required by the *Building Code Act*, but provides leeway for some facilities. This means that some buildings may be exempt from meeting the accessibility requirements all-together or may be given some extra time to make the

appropriate adaptations (GO, 2001). In addition to requiring government buildings and structures to become barrier-free, the ODA also places the expectation of accessibility on government websites and publications. Similar to the exemption given to some government properties though, some websites and publications may be exempt under the ODA (GO, 2001). There is no federal equivalent to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Even though Canada has human rights laws, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, prohibiting discrimination based on disability, there is still no national disability law or act (Burns & Gordon, 2009).

In 2005, the Government of Ontario (2005) passed the Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). The AODA outlines the accessibility standards for persons with disabilities that must be followed throughout the province (GO, 2005). There are five main areas of daily life to which the Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* applies: customer service, employment, information and communications, transportation and in the design of public spaces (GO, 2005). The AODA has prescribed standards for barrier-free access to services by disabled individuals, and requires each municipality to produce a yearly accessibility plan, in addition to a plan of action for dealing with or preparing for future challenges (Burns & Gordon, 2009).

Service dogs and their handlers are protected by the Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (GO, 2005). The AODA's definition of 'disability' mentions physical reliance on a guide dog, as

well as the use of other animals (GO, 2005). The Integrated Accessibility Standards states that a person accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal must be given access to any goods, services, facility or accommodation to which the public is also allowed (GO, 2005). In addition, the regulation grants a person with a disability the right to keep their service animal with them at all times unless it is unsafe or against the law to do so (GO, 2005). The AODA does not mention service dogs in training, so it is left up to individual businesses to decide whether they will permit them. Under this regulation, the animal must be visually apparent, such as wearing a vest or harness, to be a service animal, or the handler must carry a letter written by their current treating medical professional, such as a physician or occupational therapist, prescribing the need for a service animal (GO, 2005). In spite of the problems that exist with Ontario's disability-related statutes, most other provinces and territories are further behind in creating and implementing disability legislation.

Alberta

There are three pieces of legislation which serve to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the province of Alberta: the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, and the *Service Dogs Act*. The *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* first came into effect in 2000, and in 2009, was renamed the *Alberta Human Rights Act* (AHRA) (Government of Alberta [GA], 2000). The AHRA strives to protect the rights of all Albertans by outlining specific prohibited grounds of discrimination (GA, 2000). Comparable to human

rights legislation found elsewhere in Canada, the AHRA says that individuals and groups cannot be refused entry into an establishment, denied access to goods or services, or refused entry into any accommodation where the public is permitted, based on one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination, such as race, age, gender, ancestry, or disability (GA, 2000). The *Alberta Human Rights Act* does not set out specific protections for individuals who use service dogs, but mentions “physical reliance on a guide dog, service dog” within its definition of ‘disability’ (GA, 2000).

The *Blind Persons’ Rights Act* (BPRA) was enacted in 2000 and has not been amended since 2004 (GA, 2000). The primary goal of the BPRA is to ensure the rights of Albertans who are blind, including those who use a guide dog, to enter any place or access any service to which the public is usually permitted (GA, 2000). With the implementation of the *Blind Persons’ Amendment Act*, these rights were extended to include hearing dogs for the deaf or hard-of-hearing (Assistance Dogs International [ADI], 2005). Under the BPRA’s definition of ‘blind person,’ the person must be considered blind by a qualified medical professional, and rely on a guide dog or white cane (GA, 2000). In addition, the Act says that a ‘guide dog’ is a dog that has been trained for an individual who is blind and meets the guidelines set out by the Act (GA, 2000).

The *Blind Persons’ Rights Act* prevents business owners from unlawfully denying a person who is deaf or blind entry to their establishment or access to any goods or services because of their guide dog (GA, 2000). The Act also

prohibits landlords from refusing to rent to an individual partnered with a guide dog, or from charging the person extra for their dog (GA, 2000). Finally, the BPRA gives 'certified' dog trainers the same public access rights with their dogs in training as those given to persons who are blind and rely on a guide dog (GA, 2000). In spite of the above guarantees, the Act says that access can be lawfully denied if the person does not have control over their dog (GA, 2000).

Comparable to Ontario, the Alberta BPRA does not protect persons who are blind and obtain their guide dog from an organization that is not a member of the International Guide Dog Federation, or protect individuals who choose to train their own dog, so they must turn to the *Alberta Human Rights Act* for protection (GA, 2000).

The *Service Dogs Act* (SDA) came into effect on January 1, 2009 and has not yet been amended (Government of Alberta [GA], 2007). The primary goal of the SDA is to guarantee Albertans with disabilities have the same access rights as individuals who are blind, as well as with the general public (GA, 2007). The Act defines a 'disabled person' as a person with any disability, other than blindness or visual impairment, who uses a service dog, and a 'service dog' as a dog who has been trained to guide an individual with a disability (GA, 2007). Similar to the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, the SDA forbids business owners from denying access to goods, services or facilities to individuals with a service dog or a certified dog trainer with a service dog in training, and says they cannot charge extra for the dog to accompany their human (GA, 2007). Along with this, the Act

gives business owners the ability to request individuals to leave with their service dog or dog in training if their dog is poorly behaved (GA, 2007). Both the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* and *Service Dogs Act* recommend fines of no more than \$3,000 for anyone who violates the regulations set out in the legislation (GA, 2007; GA, 2000). Like the BPRA, the SDA does not protect disabled Albertans who receive their service dog from a program that is not a member of Assistance Dogs International or who choose to train their own dog.

British Columbia

The *British Columbia Human Rights Code* (BCHRC) was enacted in 1984 (Government of British Columbia [GBC], 1996). The purposes of the Code are: to make sure every citizen of the province has the ability to take part in all aspects of their life without worrying about discrimination, to help the government locate and fix systemic issues, and to provide people with a method for dealing with the barriers as they arise (GBC, 1996). Unlike other human rights legislation in Canada, the BCHRC does not appear to define the term 'disability,' but simply includes mental or physical disability within the list of its prohibited grounds of discrimination (GBC, 1996).

In 1996, the *Guide Animal Act* (GAA) came into effect and was last revised on January 1, 2004 (Government of British Columbia [GBC], 1996). Under the Act, a 'guide animal' is defined as any species or animal, that has been recognized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that helps a person with a disability to safely navigate their surroundings or perform daily tasks (GBC,

1996). The GAA also describes a person with a disability as someone who can easily be identified as blind, or to have another disability, and uses a white cane or guide animal (GBC, 1996). Comparable to other provincial service dog laws across Canada, the GAA prevents the unequal exclusion of persons with disabilities who rely on a service dog from public spaces, accessing services or goods that are normally offered to individuals without a dog (GBC, 1996). The Act goes further than other laws in that it explicitly prohibits handler's from placing their service dog on a chair off the floor in a restaurant or other public setting, and says that all dogs must be held by a leash or harness (ADI, 2005). If a business has been found guilty of violating the rights of a disabled individual and their service dog, they can face a fine of up to \$200, one of the lowest fines in the country (GBC, 1996).

On January 18, 2016, the Government of British Columbia (2016) unveiled the *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* (GDSDA), repealing the *Guide Animal Act*. The GDSDA strives to improve public safety, ensure equal access to public establishments and rental properties, as well as raise the bar for service dog training standards (GBC, 2016). In addition, the Act gives handlers the ability to keep their certified retired service dog and provides certified puppies in training the same public access rights as working dogs (GBC, 2016). All handlers, including visitors to the province, who have obtained their service dog from an Assistance Dogs International or International Guide Dog Federation accredited program must apply for an identification card from the Ministry of Public Safety

and Solicitor General (PSSG) (GBC, 2016). Owner-trainers and individuals who have received a dog from a program that is not affiliated with one of these international organizations must apply to take and then pass a certification test conducted by the Justice Institute of BC (GBC, 2016). Trainers from accredited organizations must also apply for certification from PSSG in order to take puppies in training into public places (GBC, 2016). Added to all of the changes mentioned previously, the *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* now makes it possible for people to be fined up to \$2,000 for violating the rights of a certified team (GBC, 2016). Since the enactment of the BCHRC in 1984, the rights of persons with disabilities who rely upon a service dog have evolved to include more specific expectations, making it easier for business to follow the law and for the rules to be enforced.

Manitoba

There are two laws in Manitoba that protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including those who are partnered with a service dog: the *Human Rights Code* and the *Service Animals Protection Act*. The *Manitoba Human Rights Code* (MHRC) was enacted on July 17, 1987, and last modified December 5, 2013 (Manitoba Government [MG], n.d.). The MHRC seeks to secure the rights and equal participation of all Manitoba citizens, including those who are disabled (MG, N.D.). The Code does not state specific rules relating to service dogs or their handlers, but defines the term ‘service animal’ within the terminology section and refers to the use of a service animal within the definition of ‘disability’ as a prohibited ground of discrimination (MG, N.D.). The term ‘service animal’ did not

appear within the *Manitoba Human Rights Code* until 2012, when ‘guide dog’ was replaced with ‘service animal’ (Manitoba Human Rights Commission, 2016).

According to the Code, the term ‘service animal’ describes an animal that has been trained to perform a task or job that will help a disabled individual (MG, N.D.). This is the only human rights legislation in Canada that mentions service animal, as opposed to service dog.

The *Service Animals Protection Act* (SAPA) came into effect on October 8, 2009 (Manitoba Government [MG], N.D.). Under the Act, a ‘service animal’ is described as an animal who has been trained to perform tasks to assist a person with a disability or an animal who has been trained to work with an officer or other individual to help a peace officer in their role (MG, N.D.). Pursuant to the regulation, it is a crime for a person, or other animal, to impede, touch or interfere with a service animal, as well as for a person to feed a service animal (MG, N.D.). There are several remedies that can be used to deal with a violation, including: a fine of no more than \$5,000 for a first offence or \$10,000 for a second, and mandatory obedience training for the animal (MG, N.D.). In spite of the broad level of protection provided to Manitoba citizens, neither the SAPA nor MHRC explicitly outline the need for individuals with disabilities to freely access goods, services, facilities or accommodations with their service animal, leaving a potential opening for public access challenges.

New Brunswick

The 1973 *Human Rights Act* was revised and repealed on September 1, 2011 (Government of New Brunswick [GNB], 2011). The goal of the statute is to ensure the rights of, and the ability to take part in all areas of daily life, of all persons who reside in New Brunswick (GNB, 2011). Similar to other human rights policies found in Canada, the *New Brunswick Human Rights Act* (NBHRA) sets out specific prohibited grounds of discrimination, including mental and physical disability (GNB, 2011). The Act does not provide any guidelines regarding the rights and protections set out for individuals who rely on the assistance of a dog, but references “Physical reliance on a guide dog” within the definition of physical disability (GNB, 2011). Even though the NBHRA only directly acknowledges ‘guide dogs,’ human rights policy is meant to protect everyone equally, so individuals who reside in New Brunswick and use another type of service dog are still covered.

Newfoundland and Labrador

There are two pieces of legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador which help to protect the rights of persons with disabilities: the *Human Rights Act* and the *Service Animal Act*. The *Human Rights Act* of Newfoundland and Labrador came into effect June 24, 2010, replacing the *Human Rights Code* of 1990 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador [GNL], 2010). The regulation describes the personal traits and social circumstances that make up the prohibited grounds of discrimination, while also outlining the social areas in which the law applies, including employment and housing (GNL, 2010). The *Human*

Rights Act of Newfoundland and Labrador does not mention guide or service dogs within its definition of disability, but the Act broadly protects all citizens from discrimination, and this includes those who rely on a service dog.

On June 27, 2012, the *Service Animal Act* (SAA) was assented, replacing the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* of 1990 (GNL, 2012). The purpose of the regulation is to secure the equal participation of persons with disabilities who choose to partner with a service animal (GNL, 2012). According to the Act, a 'blind person' is an individual who the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's standards view as blind, and a 'person with a disability' is an individual who has any level of disability and relies on a service animal (GNL, 2012). Additionally, the statute defines a 'service animal' as a specially trained animal who performs tasks that help a person with a disability (GNL, 2012). The SAA also says that the service animal's work must be easily recognized as helping a person with a disability or the individual must carry a note from a medical professional as proof of a need for the animal (GNL, 2012). The Act prohibits business owners and landlords from denying disabled individuals access to any facility, rental property or services because of their service animal, as well as from charging handlers extra for their dog to accompany them (GNL, 2012). In addition to explaining the rules business owners and landlords must follow, the *Service Animal Act* also says that service animal handlers must take full responsibility for their animal's needs and behaviour (GNL, 2012). According to the SAA, a corporation who violates the

regulations can be fined up to \$1,000 and an individual can be fined up to \$500 or serve a maximum of 30 days in prison (GNL, 2012).

Northwest Territories

The *Northwest Territories Human Rights Act* (NWTTHRA) guarantees the rights and equal participation of all residents (Government of Northwest Territories [GNWT], 2002). The Act outlines specific prohibited grounds of discrimination, including “physical reliance on a guide dog” (ADI, 2005). Similar to other human rights legislation, the *Northwest Territories Human Rights Act* does not provide specific protections to guide dog handlers, but broadly offers them the same rights as other citizens.

Nova Scotia

The *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* (NSHRA) was implemented in 1984 and last revised in 2014 (Government of Nova Scotia [GNS], 1989). Like other human rights policies found across Canada, the NSHRA protects the rights and equal participation of Nova Scotia’s residents (GNS, 1989). Pursuant to the Act, the term ‘physical disability or mental disability’ includes “reliance on a hearing-ear dog, guide dog” (GNS, 1989). Since the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* does not provide guidelines regarding the type of work or training a dog must undergo, it can be assumed that even an owner-trained guide or hearing dog are protected.

The *Blind Persons’ Rights Act* of Nova Scotia strives to protect the rights of individuals who are blind, but the Act has not been amended since February 22,

1990 (Government of Nova Scotia [GNS], 1989). The statute describes a 'blind person' as an individual who is registered with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, or who qualifies for social assistance because they are recognized as blind through other government legislation (GNS, 1989). Additionally, the Act defines a 'dog guide' as a dog that has been trained to help a blind person, meaning that owner-trained dogs are not covered (GNS, 1989). Comparable to other Blind Persons' Rights Acts, the Nova Scotia law prohibits business owners and landlords from discriminating against persons who are blind, and prevents them from charging more for the dog guide (GNS, 1989). Unlike other provinces, the Nova Scotia legislation does not prescribe its own penalties for not complying, but says to refer to the *Summary Proceedings Act* (GNS, 1989).

Nunavut

On November 5, 2004, the *Nunavut Human Rights Act* (NHRA) came into effect (Government of Nunavut [GN], 2003). The statute broadly addresses discrimination and outlines the guaranteed rights and protections offered to individuals residing in Nunavut (GN, 2003). According to the NHRA, there are 17 prohibited grounds of discrimination including 'disability,' which is defined as "any previous or existing or perceived physical or mental disability and includes disfigurement and previous or existing dependency on alcohol or a drug" (GN, 2003). Unlike many other human rights policies found within Canada, the NHRA does not mention physical reliance on a service dog or other animal within its

regulations or definitions. Despite this, service dog handlers who reside in Nunavut are still granted the same equal access under the law as other citizens.

Prince Edward Island

The *Prince Edward Island Human Rights Act* (PEIHRC) was last revised on December 31, 2013 (Government of Prince Edward Island [GPEI], 1988). Under the Act, the definition for the term ‘disability’ refers to “physical reliance on an assist animal,”; Prince Edward Island is the only province who uses this terminology (GPEI, 1988). The statute does not specify what is meant by ‘assist animal,’ so an assumption can be made that this regulation offers the same protection to all persons with disabilities who use a service animal, no matter what species or type of work it performs.

Quebec

There are two pieces of legislation within the province of Quebec that serve to protect the rights and ensure the equal participation of persons with disabilities: the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Act*. The *Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Quebec Charter) recognizes the need for regulations to prevent discrimination based on one of the prohibited grounds, including disability or any method used to alleviate the effects of the disability (Government of Quebec [GQ], N.D.). Pursuant to the Quebec Charter, it is an offence to deny a person with a disability access to any facility, accommodation or goods or services to which the public is normally given, even when accompanied by a service dog (GQ, N.D.). The statute also describes a

number of social areas in which people cannot lawfully discriminate against an individual, such as housing and employment (GQ, N.D.).

The *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDA), formerly called *An Act to Secure the Handicapped in the Exercise of Their Rights*, strives to improve access to public spaces and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in a number of social areas (Government of Quebec [GQ], N.D.). According to the statute, a 'disabled person' is an individual who experiences functional limitations that can act as a barrier to participation within their daily life (GQ, N.D.). The IDA does not directly mention service dogs, but the overall goal of the Act is to better the lives of persons with disabilities, so may indirectly protect the rights of service dog handlers.

Saskatchewan

The *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* (SHRC) was enacted on August 7, 1979 (Government of Saskatchewan [GS], 1979). Like other human rights legislation, the Saskatchewan regulation outlines a number of prohibited grounds of discrimination along with a description of areas in which the grounds apply, including employment (GS, 1979). In May of 2000, a bill was put forth to revise the definition of 'disability' to refer to a 'service animal,' instead of a 'guide dog' (ADI, 2005). The SHRC does not offer any specific guidelines surrounding the level of training a service animal should have or what kind of tasks they must perform (GS, 1979). Similar to other provinces' laws, such as Ontario and Manitoba, Saskatchewan's human rights legislation leaves room for persons with

disabilities to choose to train their own service dog because they do not specify what species can be a service animal.

Yukon

The *Yukon Human Rights Act* (YHRA) broadly addresses the rights and freedoms guaranteed to all residents of the territory (Government of Yukon [GY], 2002). Comparable to other disability-related laws found in Canada, the YHRA splits the definition of disability into two categories, mental and physical disability, and then describes what is meant by ‘physical disability,’ including the “physical reliance on a seeing eye dog” (GY, 2002; ADI, 2005). Although the *Yukon Human Rights Act* uses the term ‘seeing eye dog,’ the nature of human rights legislation ensures all service dog handlers are given the same rights.

Discussion

The policies related to service dogs found within the country, can often be placed into one of two categories, general human rights and more targeted regulations. Canada and each province and territory have their own human rights legislation, offering a wide range of protections against discrimination in several social areas, employment, housing and public access, based on a number offer specific prohibited grounds, such as race, religion, marital status, and disability. New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan, as well as the territories do not have specific policies directed towards service dogs; instead, persons with disabilities who rely upon a service dog must attempt to navigate their vast human rights legislation for guidance. While other provinces, such as

Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta, have more specific laws aimed at ensuring the equal participation of disabled individuals and their service dogs, but each policy differs in its level of restriction and who it covers.

As a result of the varying degrees of guaranteed rights, there are a number of challenges faced by persons with disabilities who partner with a service dog. For instance, the differences in terminology found within service dog policies can lead to confusion and potential public access difficulties. In Alberta and British Columbia, the terms 'guide dog' and 'service dog' are found, while in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, the term 'service animal' is more common (see Table 3.1). Also, New Brunswick and Northwest Territories only use 'guide dog,' Prince Edward Island employs 'assist animal,' and 'seeing eye dog' can be found within the *Yukon Human Rights Act* (see Table 3.1). Finally, Nova Scotia's *Blind Persons' Rights Act* uses the terms 'dog guide' and 'hearing-ear dog' (see Table 3.1). Most of the terms can be easily understood, but in some cases misunderstandings can occur, creating unnecessary problems for the public and individual service dog handlers.

Another potential barrier relates to the definitions or lack of descriptions available to explain the terminology. In all three Ontario laws, "reliance on a guide dog or other animal" can be found within the definition of disability, but the regulations do not clearly demonstrate what is meant by this statement, leaving it open to interpretation. Despite the fact that the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, ODA and AODA do not say what species of 'service animal' are protected, section 60

of the *Health Promotion and Protection Act* says that only dogs are allowed to enter places where food or beverages are served, sold or offered for sale to consume immediately or at a later time (Government of Ontario, 1990). Also, as described earlier, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* says that an animal must be easily identifiable, such as wearing a harness or vest, as a service animal, or the individual must carry a letter from their current medical professional ((GO, 2005). These requirements provide business owners and their staff a way to ensure the appropriate animals are permitted access to their facility. In British Columbia's new *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* (GDSDA), handlers will be required to place a government-issued patch on their dog's harness or vest, making public experiences less stressful for both the service dog handler and the staff of the establishments they wish to enter (Government of British Columbia, 2016). Contrary to laws in Ontario and other jurisdictions, Manitoba's *Human Rights Code* uses 'service animal' within its definition of disability, and then provides a solid description of what is meant by the term, offering business owners a more concrete understanding (Manitoba Government, N.D.). Finally, the *Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not explicitly mention service dogs within its regulations, but defines disability and acknowledges any method used to reduce the effects of a disability, leaving a potential opening for both program-trained and owner-trained service dogs (Government of Quebec, N.D.).

The variations that exist between the different legislation, in respect to their expectations and penalties, are also a significant issue experienced by service

dog handlers. As mentioned earlier, according to Manitoba's *Service Animals Protection Act*, it is a crime to touch, feed, impede or interfere with a service animal, or for another animal to do so (MG, N.D.). Additionally, the statute prescribes a fine of \$5,000 for a first offence or \$10,000 for a second, as well as a recommendation for an offending animal to take part in an obedience class (MG, N.D.). These expectations and penalties are quite harsh, so due to their overly restrictive nature, it is likely they are rarely enforced. Also, these regulations do not just apply to service animals for persons with disabilities; unlike other provinces, Manitoba has selected to include other working dogs, such as police dogs, within the scope of the Act (MG, N.D.). In Alberta, both the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* (BPRA) and *Service Dogs Act* (SDA) give service dog trainers the same public access rights as persons with disabilities who use a dog (Government of Alberta, 2007; GA, 2000). Meanwhile, provinces such as Ontario, do not address dog trainers and their service dogs in training, so they are not guaranteed the same open access (GO, 2005). Since their enactment, Alberta's BPRA and SDA have recommended a fine of up to \$3,000 for individuals and groups who violate the regulations, but in Ontario's BPRA, the fine for unlawfully denying a person who is blind and uses a guide dog access to any facility, service or accommodation to which the public is normally provided, is a maximum of \$5,000 (GA, 2007; GA, 2000; GO, 1990). Finally in British Columbia, in order to enjoy the benefits of the GDSDA, handlers and dog trainers must apply for certification (GBC, 2016). As mentioned earlier, if the service dog or dog trainer is

from an organization that is not affiliated with Assistance Dogs International or the International Guide Dog Federation, trainers and handlers must pass a certification test that is run by a third party (GBC, 2016). This certification requirement makes it easier for both service dog handlers and trainers to travel freely within the province, but it also creates significant challenges for owner-trainers and visitors to British Columbia. *According to the Act*, the fine for discriminating against a certified team is \$2,000, which is not as much as some provinces, but it raises the former fine of \$200 that existed within their *Guide Animal Act* (GBC, 2016; GBC, 1996). As shown above, the service dog-related policies that exist across Canada vary, creating widespread confusion and frustration for not only the service dog handlers, but also the general public.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to discover how service dogs are viewed within the legislation found across Canada. This was achieved by exploring the applicable laws within each jurisdiction and then comparing the policies to highlight some of the barriers that exist for handlers of program-trained and owner-trained service dogs. Some jurisdictions, like the territories and the federal government, rely upon human rights legislation that offer a broad array of rights and freedoms to the general population. Meanwhile in several of the provinces, such as Manitoba and Ontario, the policies are more targeted towards individuals who use service dogs, but are still open to interpretation. Finally in British Columbia, the legislation is clearer, but also more restrictive and potentially indirectly discriminating

because it requires service dog handlers to apply for certification in order to move freely through their daily lives, and by displaying a special patch, openly disclose to the public that they have a disability.

Through the writing of this section, several problems were identified within the service dog related policies in Canada: terminology, clarity and variation. Some legislation use the term 'service animal,' while others only include 'guide dog,' and then Prince Edward Island employs the unique term of 'assist animal' and the *Yukon Human Rights Act* says 'seeing eye dog.' With the absence of a standard, yet inclusive, language for service dog regulations, it becomes confusing for the public and challenging for individuals who have partnered with a dog.

Within some jurisdictions the laws include terms without definitions or, in some cases, definitions without clear descriptions. For instance, some human rights legislation include the use of a service dog within their explanation of disability, but the regulations do not further define what constitutes a service dog. This gap leaves room for individuals to choose to train their own service dog, but it also makes it possible for persons with disabilities to experience increased public access problems. Finally, with the widespread variations that are present within the laws across Canada, it becomes confusing and frustrating for the general public and service dog handlers because what is acceptable in one jurisdiction may be inappropriate somewhere else. For example, Ontario's legislation makes it possible for owner-training, but British Columbia requires all

service dog handlers to obtain certification, even if they are just visiting the province. Situations like this can be resolved by relying upon the Canadian human rights legislation, which guarantees all Canadians the freedom to move across the country without discrimination, but it may put disabled Canadians in positions they are not ready or willing to be. It may force them to stand their ground and push for their guaranteed rights. Canada needs a common language that includes clear definitions and universally accepted rules, so that Canadians who choose to partner with a service dog, whether it be program-trained or owner-trained, have the same opportunity to freely participate within society.

Chapter 4 Redefining ‘Service Dog’: An Owner-Trainer’s Perspective

Introduction

The intimate relationship between dogs and humans is not new. For thousands of years, dogs have played a vital role in the health, healing and survival of humans (Walsh, 2009; Cutta, Giles-Corti, Knuiman, & Burke, 2007). Every culture has its particular history with and beliefs about dogs; this is even evidenced by early greek societies keeping dogs in healing temples (Huss, 2009). Meanwhile in ancient Egypt, dogs were thought to be guides in the afterlife because of their strong allegiance to their humans (Walsh, 2009). Most breeds have only been in existence for an estimated 200 years, but through domestication and selective breeding practices, wolves have become workers, companions and athletes (Schoenebeck & Ostrander, 2014).

I have written this from my personal experiences with service dogs; as not only a handler, but also as a raiser and owner-trainer. I make use of critical disability theory to interpret comments from social media and the published media, to explore the perceptions and personal narratives of service dog handlers, particularly those who owner-train, and discuss what policy revisions might improve their experiences.

The thoughts and preferences of persons with disabilities are often challenged and ignored by mainstream society (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). For example, Hosking notes, “When the disabled voice says what the able-bodied

perspective wants to hear, it is heard; when it says something the able-bodied perspective does not want to hear, it can simply be dismissed as the inappropriate response of a person who has developed an unhealthy response to the impairment” (2008, p. 12). Critical disability theory (CDT) as discussed in chapter one, brings the voices of persons with disabilities to the forefront, sharing their lived experiences, in an effort to confront the negative assumptions held by mainstream society (Pothier & Devlin, 2006). Unlike other theories of disability, CDT embraces difference and assumes equality is possible (Hosking, 2008). Similar to CDT, autoethnography, an informal approach to research and writing, strives to understand the social world and challenge the status quo (Anderson, 2006; Pothier & Devlin, 2006).

Methods

Autoethnography

Through the use of autoethnography, I reflect on my experiences raising, training, and working with service dogs, and further explore the cultural, political, and societal perspectives regarding service dogs. Through the use of self-reflection and writing, autoethnographers examine their own experiences while attempting to understand the social, political and cultural concerns within society (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Anderson, 2006). Autoethnography places the researcher in the centre of the study, using their thoughts and feelings on a topic to challenge the status quo and push for change (Hamilton et al., 2008). As a result of the free writing style and focus of autoethnography on the

investigator as a main character, there are a number of scholars opposed to its use (Roth, 2009). In his article, Roth (2009), states that autoethnography is possibly a great form of therapy, but that it is more likely a special kind of narcissism. In contrast, Anderson (2006) does not believe autoethnographers are self-absorbed, he argues that this approach to research and writing helps researchers connect with others in the group, and push for social change. With Roth's critique in mind, I still believe that autoethnography was the best methodological choice and I attempted to employ additional methods that would legitimize the project findings and strengthen the writing itself.

Data Collection Procedures

In an effort to better understand how service dog handlers, specifically owner-trainers, conceptualize 'service dogs,' I used direct content analysis to interpret their messages posted on social media. Through direct content analysis, initial categories are determined using prior research findings or a theory (Lichtman, 2013). Using two popular social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook, I collected tweets and posts for a 12 month period, from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015. The study sample was derived from my personal Twitter and Facebook accounts, so posts came from people I 'follow' and who 'follow' me back.

The tweets were primarily gathered from service dog handlers, as well as from other, publicly available, tweets retweeted by my followers. Additional, publicly available, tweets were obtained by searching the Twitter hashtags:

'servicedog,' 'guidedog,' 'dogguide,' and 'assistancedog.' Twitter allows users to set their own privacy settings, so some tweets can be publicly available, while other users set their privacy so that only people they 'follow' can view their posts, but not share them. Hashtags were searched about twice a month, but I tend to skim my personal timeline three to five times a week. I am also a member of various service dog related Facebook groups, so about twice a week, I read through the groups for relevant posts or comments. Most of the information collected from Twitter for this study, came from individuals residing in the United States, whereas most of the data from Facebook came from persons located within Canada. I would have liked to limit my data to just Canada, but it was more convenient to gather research material from previously established networks. Throughout the data collection process, I created a sort of autoethnographic journal, noting down my thoughts as I reviewed the posts, as well as writing down any personal memories the statements brought to the surface.

Once I finished gathering data, I carefully read through all of the posts and deleted any I felt were repetitive or no longer needed. When I found a repeat, I tried to keep the source that was most informative or valid. For example, if I had a media source share an article and then a service dog handler share that same article with a personal comment, then I kept the service dog handler's comment and deleted the media source. Any other type of comment I deleted, no longer applied to my project focus.

Published news stories on the topic of service dog legislation and regulation were also analyzed.

News articles, written about service dog legislation and regulation, published on the websites of popular media outlets, were gathered over the same 12 month period, providing me with a rich source of information to legitimize the information collected from social media platforms. I tried to only use reports published in text unless I was only able to locate the story in a video format. In most cases, I learned about the articles through social media. Google searches were also performed about every four months, using the keywords 'service dog' and 'legislation' with 'Canada,' in order to ensure that significant news articles were not missed. The Canadian media outlets that provided most of the data for this study were: Toronto Star, CBC News, National Post, Globe and Mail, and Huffington Post. I chose to use media reports and social media discussions for gathering data because I felt they provided the most current information related to the controversy about how service dogs should be classified and the potential implications of such a definition.

Analysis Process

The World Health Organization ([WHO], 2016a) describes barriers as: “factors in a person’s environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as: a physical environment that is not accessible, lack of relevant assistive technology, negative attitudes of people towards disability, services, systems, and policies that are

either nonexistent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life.” Using WHO’s definition of barriers along with critical disability theory, I selected three initial categories, language, social and policy, with another called ‘random’ to place other information, until I could determine additional categories.

According to Pothier and Devlin (2006), language is highly limited because it is often unclear and prejudice. Added to this, Behuniak (2011) says that language has a significant impact on the way in which people are viewed and treated in society. For instance, in her article “The Living Dead? The Construction of People with Alzheimer’s Disease as Zombies,” she notes that through the use of language society is able to create abstract images out of things they see and apply them to their own experiences (Behuniak, 2011). Using WHO’s (2016d) Social Determinants of Health, I defined a ‘social barrier’ as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work and age that can contribute to decreased functioning among people with disabilities.” Finally, I characterize a ‘policy barrier’ as “a lack of awareness or enforcement of existing laws and regulations that require programs and activities be accessible to people with disabilities” (Centers for Disease Control and Protection [CDC], 2016). After clearly outlining the parameters of each category, I sorted the messages from Twitter and Facebook into one of the four groups. As I moved through the data, I began to see patterns or themes emerge within each category, which then became my subgroups. Through the sorting process I also identified an additional

category, 'attitudinal barriers,' which the CDC (2016) describes as the discrimination, stigma and prejudice directed towards persons with disabilities, or the negative assumptions some members of society have about disabled individuals or about disability in general.

Participants

In accordance with McMaster's Research Ethics Board (MREB) protocol for research involving humans, the methods for my project were submitted for approval before I began writing. I did not seek approval from the MREB prior to data collection because the use of autoethnography and social media is quite new, thus, the need for ethics approval is a grey area. Following some minor revisions, I received ethics clearance in May of 2016.

Due to the personal nature of autoethnographic writing, I contacted my friends and family members who might appear within my writing. In addition to providing details on my study, I offered each person an opportunity to read over the stories I wanted to share that involved them and gave them a chance to choose whether or not they would be shared. For social media participants, I contacted each individual for permission to use their comment and when permission was obtained, I assigned each individual the name of a Greek god or goddess. Additionally, before using a specific comment, I provided each person with a chance to read it prior to use. I felt it was necessary to offer each participant an opportunity to see the comments or stories ahead of writing because I wanted to make sure I was not conducting research on individuals, but

involving them within an aspect of the research itself. Finally, for any comment I did not have to obtain prior consent to use, I used the Greek God name, Chaos.

The Decision

My story begins the day I was matched with my second service dog, Phoenix. The trainer knocks on my dormitory door, I open the door, and in walks a very happy small male yellow Labrador Retriever. Despite having had a service dog prior to Phoenix, I have chosen to start my tale from his arrival because I feel he is the dog who really set me on my path towards owner-training.

It is difficult to provide an accurate number for service dog teams currently working in North America, but Rebecca Huss (2009) suggests there are an estimated 10 to 30 thousand service dogs working in just the United States alone. There are 18 guide dog schools and 97 service dog programs in North America accredited by at least one of the two primary international organizations, the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) and Assistance Dogs International (ADI) (International Guide Dog Federation [IGDF], 2016; Assistance Dogs International [ADI], 2016b). Guide dogs are the most familiar type of service dog (Harpur, 2010). Guide dogs have existed for more than 70 years, while many of the other types of service dogs have only been in existence a short period of time (Eames & Eames, 2001). During World War I, the first service dogs were trained to guide blinded soldiers in Germany, but it was not until 1928 that guide dogs began to emerge in the United States (Dawson, 2004). In 1929, the first guide dog school, The Seeing Eye, was opened in New Jersey, and in 1942 Guide

Dogs for the Blind was established in California (Olson, 2002). It was not until several decades later that Canine Companions for Independence, a program which trained dogs for persons with a physical disability, was launched (Hines, 2003). Over the past 75 years, the job of a service dog (SD) has evolved beyond the 'traditional' guide and assistance work of dogs for persons who are blind or who have a physical disability. Dogs are now being used to detect allergens, alert to oncoming migraines and provide counter-balance (Glenn, 2013). In their California study, Yamamoto, Lopez and Hart (2015) noted a dramatic rise, between the years 1999 and 2012, in the number of service dogs registered for medical or psychiatric support, far out numbering the dogs being registered for mobility, guide or hearing work.

According to Aristaeus, "95% of dog owners out there do not have the kind of hard ass working dog that can handle hard training without fallout" (2015). Less than 50% of the dogs who enter training graduate because the training process can be stressful and the performance expectations are high (Mac Lagan, 2010). The costs associated with the breeding, raising and placing of a dog can range from an estimated \$20,000 to \$60,000 (Ng, James, & McDonald, 2000; Dawson, 2004). In order to increase donations and other funding for their dogs, many programs have started to place their focus in areas that will bring in more money. As Athena states, "it appears that [certain organizations are] following the money and putting all their efforts into veterans with PTSD ... there is a huge lack of civilian PTSD support...and the stats are [saying that] we have 50% of the

diagnoses...veterans only have 30% and first responders, therapists and crisis workers make up the last 20%” (2015). Many individuals receive their service dog from an organization free of charge, but they are responsible for any expenses following placement (Zapf & Rough, 2002). “Many people, if not the majority, who are looking to add a SD to their treatment plan need funding. Unfortunately, unless you fit into the traditional programs, and can access a SD through a program ... many people are left just wishing for a SD or to win the lottery” (Athena, 2015). Survey respondents in a study by Fairman and Huebner (2001) reported that their dogs cost upward of \$10,000, with 75% saying that they spend up to \$1,000 per year on food and veterinary care, and 32% reporting that they receive financial assistance to cover these expenses. “Until SDs are truly recognized as necessity, I don’t see any formal funding for individuals looking to obtain an independently trained SD from government bodies” (Athena, 2015). With many service dog organizations’ waiting lists being anywhere from a year to three years long, individuals have begun to turn to smaller programs, not accredited by one of the international organizations, or, owner-training, with or without the help of a professional trainer (Redden, 2015; Zapf & Rough, 2002; Eames & Eames, 2001). In spite of the potentially high costs associated with service dog use, demands for them continue to rise.

Often it takes about a year to receive a service dog, but when I first decided to apply for a dog, it took just nine months to be matched with Gryphon. Then, when I went back for Phoenix a year later, it only took a month, and for

Cessna, it was only a couple of weeks. When we learned that Cessna was developing cataracts at the age of 7, I knew I was going to need to seriously think about a successor. I had tossed around the idea of owner-training, but it was not until this diagnosis that I really thought about it. I had less vision now than when I got Cessna, so I thought it would be better to return to a program for a successor, but Huib said he was confident in my abilities, so he convinced me to take the plunge. “For some, an owner trained service dog, an animal that has the same legal protections as a program dog from an organization, is a viable option. It’s not a choice that’s right for every would-be handler. A young untrained dog, however bright and sweet, may be too much for a novice partner...” (Charleson, 2013).

Knowing the Difference

Humans have an inherent need to categorize and label things. According to Behuniak (2011), “language is capable of not only constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of bringing back these symbols and reprinting them as objectively real elements in everyday life.” For disabled individuals who use a service dog, the terminology and imagery used to depict persons with disabilities and their dogs, can significantly impact society’s perception of them (Hosking, 2008). Despite the large number of dogs being trained to assist individuals with disabilities, the terms used to describe them continue to be used inappropriately, and there is still no universally accepted terminology (Luck, 2014; Glenn, 2013). In an examination of the dog experiences

of veterans with PTSD as reported in the media, the authors found that journalists consistently blurred the different types of dogs discussed, into a “generic pet dog” group (Taylor, Edwards, & Pooley, 2013). They explain that this observation is significant because it highlights the gaps that exist in the public’s knowledge about the role of each dog and the amount of training that is necessary for the individual categories (Taylor et al., 2013).

Around Christmas, Huib and I had an opportunity to visit his former coworker at their place of employment. While they were catching up, an employee came over and started asking me questions about Rogue. They began by asking the usual questions, name, age, breed, where I got her, and upon hearing that I had trained her myself, they started telling me about their teenager with chronic pain. They told me about the teen’s condition and then proceeded to explain that they felt an emotional support dog would be beneficial. They felt the dog could be trained to ‘protect’ their painful side by ‘blocking’ others from coming too close, and that the dog could also provide the teen with ‘support’ for their anxiety. As Huib and his former coworker finished their chat, the coworker began talking about their young adult who also had anxiety. They told me about having their golden retriever trained and ‘certified’ as a therapy dog. They said the dog has really made a difference for the young adult while out in public. I stayed silent, smiling as they talked, not wanting to insult either one of them. I did not know how to politely tell them they were wrong, tell them that what they described their teenagers needing was actually a service dog.

Language mistakes like this are not uncommon. For example, KCCI 8 News, an Iowa station, shared a story on Twitter from their website about a child with disabilities whose mother feels he could benefit from the support of a “therapy piglet” (KCCINews, 2015). In response to the article, Aristaeus, an owner-trained SD handler from the United States, says: “wow, huge misconceptions about therapy animals in that article” (2015). One of the fallacies Aristaeus is referring to, is when the reporter writes: “...once Stuart is registered as a therapy animal, the two will be able to go everywhere together” (KCCI 8 News, 2015). Like service dog laws in Canada, most SD policies within the US, such as the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, do not extend public access rights to therapy animals and their handlers (Huss, 2009). In yet another example shared on Twitter where the media uses the wrong label, Britt Conway (2015), a reporter for WACH FOX News in Columbia, wrote an article about a dog named Max. The story headline read: “Meet Max; a service dog helping those in new way” (Conway, 2015). In reading the article, it quickly becomes clear that the reporter is not talking about a service dog, but a therapy dog who provides comfort to individuals during a counselling session (Conway, 2015). In spite of the two years of extensive training and ‘certification’ process Max went through to do his job, he is still not a service dog. Unlike service dogs, therapy dogs are trained to offer assistance to a variety of people, whereas SDs are specifically trained to work with one individual (Mills & Yeager, 2012). Athena, an owner-trained service dog handler from Canada, says: “I see that too often....for some reason people

seem to think therapy dog relates to psych or emotional issues, which is not the case. Therapy dogs are definitely for others!!” (2015). With more veterans and persons with psychiatric disabilities needing the help and support of a service dog, clearly distinguishing between dogs who provide therapy, emotional support, and service becomes necessary.

Defining ‘Therapy Dog’

Therapy animals are personal pets who offer support and companionship to individuals or groups of individuals in long-term care facilities, hospitals, or even in schools (Pet Partners, 2016; DiSalvo et al., 2006). Therapy programs often use dogs, but other species, such as horses, have also been found to be effective (Mills & Yeager, 2012). Before being accepted to the program, the dog must pass a temperament test, and then the owner must show that they can properly handle their dog in a variety of situations (Taylor et al., 2013; DiSalvo et al., 2006).

About a year after Phoenix retired, I noticed that he still wanted to come with me, sometimes even pushing Cessna out of the way when I got the harness out. Knowing Phoenix really enjoyed older adults, I decided to contact our local branch of St. John’s Ambulance to ask about taking part in their therapy dog program. It took about six months before we finally had the opportunity to begin the testing and certification process. Since I would need Huib to join us at the visits, we decided to have both Phoenix and Cessna become therapy dogs. Phoenix had a really strong attachment to me, often refusing to go anywhere

without me, and the program supervisor said we could not be a two human team, so having Cessna take part was the best solution. There were about three sessions to the testing process. The first class included just the people, while the other two classes included the dogs as well. The dogs had to go through various tests to determine their suitability for the program. Some of the tests included, a person moving in unusual ways, an individual using a walker or wheelchair, and loud or sudden sounds. Since both Phoenix and Cessna had been trained as service dogs, they had no problem passing any of the tests.

Similar to policies in Canada, therapy animals are not afforded the same rights under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* as service dogs, even though they have the privilege to enter environments such as hospitals or long-term care facilities, therapy dogs are prohibited from entering most other public accommodations (Sutton, 2015; Huss, 2009).

Defining 'Emotional Support Animal'

In October, the New York Times published an article examining the rising anxiety levels among university students and their requests to have emotional support animals in dormitories (Hoffman, 2015). The story received an abnormally high number of reader comments, so the newspaper published a follow-up piece. After reading through the comments, I feel this particular one clearly states what other readers are saying: "It's not bad to want a pet and I believe that people can benefit emotionally from owning pets, but when you sue a school in order to have one and are so pushy and self-absorbed about it that you

think your want outweighs the wants of everyone else around you then, yeah, you're going to be made fun of and labelled a lazy, entitled little snot" (NY Times Commenter, 2015).

An emotional support animal (ESA) is a companion animal that does not have any specialized training, but who uses their innate behaviours to provide comfort and support to a person with a psychiatric disability (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013; Mills & Yeager, 2012). Studies have found companion animals to be a dependable and responsive source of support for individuals who feel socially isolated or stigmatized (Hutton, 2015). For example, in a study comprised of seven men with HIV or AIDS in Canada, the authors found that the human-animal bond offers owners a way to cope with the social isolation, depression and stigma associated with the disease (Allen, Kellegrew & Jaffe, 2000). Additionally, living with HIV can make it difficult to form new relationships and negatively effect existing ones (Hutton, 2015).

Understanding the difference between an ESA and a SD is something many people find complicated. In fact, some believe emotional support animals are just another way in which people, with and without disabilities, try to get past no-pets rules to have the privilege of always having the company of their companion animals (Luck, 2014). Reinforcing this scepticism is the fact that there are a number of websites where people can purchase identification cards and service dog vests without providing documentation proving that they have a disability and their dog performs work that mitigates its effects (Redden, 2015).

In December, CBC News posted a story about a Canadian veteran who was told by Air Canada she could not fly with her emotional support cat (Marchitelli, 2015). When interviewed, Ms. Skywalker was quoted as saying, “she calms me down sometimes when I travel or even when I’m in crowds, I have severe anxiety, so having her with me comforts me” (Marchitelli, 2015). On Facebook, in response to the article, Athena commented: “if, the cat in question was trained to mitigate her disability and trained by a recognized service animal training facility, then yes, it could fly with her, but the Federal government that has written and upholds the law that govern flying, they know that only dogs are being trained as service animals and this cat has no training what so ever, just a scam ID card” (2015). While echoing Athena’s point about Canada’s federal policy related to air travel, Marchitelli (2015) also reported that WestJet, another Canadian airline, has a policy allowing emotional support animals to travel with their owners free of charge in the cabin. I think this point by Skywalker, “...the airline’s policy is too narrow because it only recognizes support animals for people with physical disabilities,” serves to show how the different categories are beginning to blur with the expanding definition of ‘service animal’ (Marchitelli, 2015). Finally, the article closes with a comment by a member of the Canadian Mental Health Association who says: “there is often this perception when it comes to service animals for mental health that they are just well-loved pets. In reality, a mental health service animal is no different than a guide dog...” (Marchitelli, 2015). This statement further illustrates the continued confusion that exists between a

‘service animal’ and an ‘emotional support animal,’ and the policies associated with each.

During a discussion over Twitter on the difference between SDs and ESAs, Roxy, a friend and fellow owner-trainer from the United States, said “under FHA you can have an ESA which does not need to be task or foundation trained” (Roxy, 2015). Emotional support animals are not protected by the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, so in order to bring one in public housing or on an airplane, a person with a recognized psychiatric disability must have their doctor write a letter of support (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013). In the US, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* explicitly says that emotional support animals are not covered (Huss, 2009). In comparison, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) permit ESAs for individuals with a recognized mental illness (Ensminger & Thomas, 2013; Huss, 2005). Despite their apparent need, ESAs serve to further muddy the waters and add to the public’s confusion regarding service dogs.

In Canada, emotional support animals are not recognized. Many provinces do not have specific service dog policies, but for those that do, the wording within the regulation often says that the dog must be trained to perform tasks that will reduce the disability-related limitations of their handler (see Chapter 3). As Chaos so succinctly put it, “It is considered a trained task only if it something you can’t do for yourself. Otherwise it’s just a cool trick” (2015). Since ESAs do not perform any skills, other than naturally provide comfort and support to their handler, they

are not service dogs and therefore, do not qualify for protection under Canadian laws.

Defining 'Service Dog'

“Puppies are not born knowing how to be dog guides, army dogs, or anything else but cute. We pose and pick the rest” (Chaos, 2015). Added to this, “...a pup who is a few months old is not a working dog. It is a dog in training” (Chaos, 2015). I purchased Rogue from a breeder with the intention of raising and training her to become my service dog, labelling her according to her skill level. For the first 18 months, I called Rogue my ‘future guide dog hopeful,’ until she began learning her service dog skills, at which point I changed her status to ‘guide dog in training.’ Finally, in May of 2014, when Rogue was about three years old, I felt she was ready to do the ADI public access test, and have her status changed over to ‘guide dog.’ Using this terminology to describe Rogue to others as she progressed through her service dog training helped me educate strangers and avoid potential problems.

Service dogs are specially trained canines who work or perform tasks for a person with a disability in order to enhance their ability to take part in daily activities and in their community (Taylor et al., 2013). In an effort to eliminate the challenges related to their handler’s disability, service dogs provide assistance by performing a variety of skills, such as physical assistance, allergen detection, and help navigating the world (Huss, 2012; DiSalvo et al., 2006). Every year more dogs are being trained to fill new roles in the day-to-day lives of persons with

disabilities, making it extremely difficult to distinguish between dogs who perform necessary skills, as opposed to those who just offer emotional support and companionship. Supporting this fact, Artemis, a puppy raiser from Canada, commented “funny how much confusion there is about this though - reading the comments on [another Facebook page] I can see how few people know the difference between an accredited service dog and an emotional support dog” (2015).

The Purpose of a Service Dog

Freedom is defined as, “the quality or state of being free: as the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action (Merriam Webster, 2016b). To me, Rogue is freedom. Rogue joined our family on June 10th, 2011 but even before her arrival she had begun to set me free. Five months before picking up Rogue I lost most of my usable vision, and in the process, lost myself. I had always been a confident person. Even after being with Huib for over a decade, I still found it difficult to ask for help...I never wanted him to see me as dependent. When my vision changed and I no longer saw the same way, my world fell apart. I was scared. I did not know how I would ever learn to get around on my own again. Rogue has not only enhanced my life by being a friend, but she has also set me free. She has forced me to go outside of my comfort zone and work to regain my independence. In the process of raising, training and working with Rogue, I have found myself again. I may not be completely comfortable going everywhere on my own yet, but Rogue has shown me that it is possible because

she will always be by my side. To me, the purpose of a service dog is ‘freedom’ and ‘independence.’

A service dog does not always work the same, or hold the same meaning, for every handler. When describing on Facebook what their father’s service dog does for him, Chaos says: “she does things like wake my Dad up from nightmares and accompany him to all the places that are otherwise hard for him to go to” (2015). Generally, “the purpose of a service dog is to do things for you [that you] cannot and are reasonable for a service dog to learn. A dog to just make you feel better or more secure would likely not be seen as a service dog” (Athena, 2015). For individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, service dogs, also referred to as hearing dogs, can be trained to alert their handler to sounds such as the telephone, the door, a kitchen timer, a baby crying, the smoke alarm, and a person calling their name (Walthall, 2012; Harpur, 2010). Service dogs for the deaf or hard-of-hearing usually inform their handler by nudging them with their nose or paw, and when possible they will take them to the source of the sound, or to a designated area (Mills & Yeager, 2012). “Today they were testing the fire alarm. They never give me warning. Soleil got practice running me out the building to the safe place” (Roxy, 2015).

A service dog can significantly improve the day-to-day life of an individual with a disability, but they are not a ‘magical cure.’ As Athena says, “no, a dog cannot really assess situations and decide if it will be triggering or not. Sometimes if a person is unaware of their symptoms in the earlier stages of

anxiety or panic, a dog can be trained to alert to the anxiety, but [it is] still up to the person to use their skills to work with the uncomfortable emotions, a SD is not a replacement for active treatment, medication or self-help skills like deep breathing” (2015). During 12 months of data collection, I read at least one post each month, written by people looking for that ‘silver bullet,’ the solution to all their problems. Often, when a person begins to research SDs, they have tried a number of other treatments without satisfactory results, so they are desperately hoping a dog is what they need. Many individuals do not realize a dog is only meant to assist them with tasks that will help lessen the effects of their disability.

When Rogue and I first started at McMaster University, we got lost quite a bit. No matter what happened though, Rogue did her job well and kept us safe. It took me a few months to really feel comfortable with our various routes around campus, but since Rogue kept doing her job well, it was up to me to work harder and start fulfilling my side of the partnership. The relationship between a service dog and their visually impaired human is a partnership; the blind handler issues verbal commands, or hand gestures, to direct their guide dog, while the dog makes sure the path is safe and helps their handler navigate the world (Dawson, 2004). Guide dogs locate steps and doors by stopping at the target, and move their handler around obstacles such as parked cars or other people (Walthall, 2012; Harpur, 2010). Additionally, guide dogs are taught ‘intelligent disobedience,’ or to disobey their handler if they feel it is unsafe to follow their command (Yamamoto et al., 2015).

Cessna and I had to attend a meeting in a part of Guelph I am not quite familiar with, so I tried to follow the directions Huib texted me. I caught the bus near our condo, transferred buses downtown and then got off the bus a short distance from the meeting location. After we had successfully crossed the road, I knew we had to walk forward for a few minutes and then turn right into a driveway. As we walked, Cessna started pushing me over onto the grass, so I resisted because I thought she was just distracted by a squirrel. After a few seconds of trying to lead me onto the grass, Cessna stopped walking. I asked her to continue on, and when this was not successful. I firmly told her “NO!...LEAVE IT!...forward.” Cessna still refused to move, sat down and looked up at me. I was not sure what she was trying to tell me, but this was not like her, so I carefully moved half a step forward and put my hand out, feeling to see if maybe something was blocking us. Sure enough, there was a construction barrier across the sidewalk. Feeling like a complete failure, I apologized to Cessna and asked her in a cheerful voice “forward.” She immediately took me onto the grass, around the barrier and then back onto the sidewalk. As soon as we reached the sidewalk, I stopped, excitedly praised Cessna, and gave her several treats. Rogue and Cessna play an important role in my life, eliminating many of the physical barriers caused by my disability, but despite their hard work, I still continue to face vision-related obstacles because dogs are limited in their abilities as a service animal.

The Plan

Once a person has done their research and determined a service dog would be beneficial, whether they go to a program or owner-train, they must have the support of one of the government-approved medical professionals. “It must be [someone like] your current treating physician or nurse practitioner ... They will need to support your use of a service dog and state that one is required because of your disability” (Athena, 2015). According to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), if the animal is not easily identifiable as a service animal, then the handler must carry a letter from their healthcare provider, prescribing the need for a service animal (Government of Ontario, 2005). Therefore, in Ontario, without the blessing of a medical professional, such as a doctor, occupational therapist or audiologist, it is not possible for an individual to obtain a service dog from an organization or to successfully train their own dog.

Can I Owner-Train?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a well-known poet, once said: “do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” Often the journey of an owner-trainer is a lonely one, a path full of ups and downs, twists and turns, but when it comes to a successful end, the journey of an owner-trainer becomes a path others want to follow.

When I first began telling people I would be training Cessna’s successor myself, I got a lot of mixed reactions. Some people were happy and thought I would do well, while others wanted to know why I would decide to owner-train, and how I was going to ‘certify’ my dog in order to go into public places. When I

attempted to explain that there is no national certification process in Canada or the United States and, therefore, owner-trainers have the same right to enter public places with their dogs, I got strange looks because programs often tell their clients that their dogs are 'certified' and the only legitimate service dogs.

"If SD programs spent half as much time educating their clients about the flipping laws as they do on PR, the world would be a better place!" (Roxy, 2015). As both a program-trained service dog user, and now an owner-trainer, I would have to agree with Roxy's statement. Instructors often brush over the laws in class, telling their clients that anytime we have an issue, we just need to show our identification cards because our dogs are 'certified,' and therefore, have the 'right' to accompany us into public. "Each time a service dog user talks about "a dogs right to go into stores" or "fake SDs" they should get 10 lashes. Dogs do not have rights" (Roxy, 2015). Maybe a large part of the 'fake' service dog discussion has been fuelled by a misunderstanding about the laws and the fact that not all SDs need to be trained by an organization.

There are international organizations, such as Assistance Dogs International or the International Guide Dog Federation, who set guidelines for service dog training and qualification, but in Canada and the US there are no national registry or certification processes (Redden, 2015; Ensminger & Thomas, 2013). In addition, like the regulations found within Ontario's AODA, stating that a service animal may be visually identified by a harness or vest, there is no legal regulation requiring service dogs in the US to wear a harness, a cape, a vest or

anything else identifying them as a service animal (Government of Ontario, 2005; Taylor et al., 2013). Despite the need for a harness or vest, there are still “no special tags, certification or registration requirements in Ontario, but you [are] required to carry a letter from your current treating doctor that states you require the use of a SD because of your disability” (Athena, 2015). In fact, there is no legal recognition of certification for service dogs in Ontario unless they are covered under the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act* (Government of Ontario, 1990).

Advantage of Owner-Training

While owner-training, “many handlers find they learn as much about themselves during the process as they do about their dogs” (Charleson, 2013). Added to this, Charleson (2013) says, “building the early relationship with the service dog in training (SDIT) and developing a dialogue specific to the handler’s need, has real benefit.” I have had three amazing service dogs from an organization. Part of the reason I chose to owner-train is because I wanted the challenge of doing the raising and training myself, while the other part of my decision was centred around the fact that I wanted the ability to make choices for me and my dog. I was also tired of always feeling as though I needed to worry about who saw us and what a trainer might say if my dog did something or I said something that got back to them. As my friend Roxy says: “the power dynamic between handler and program is very heavily weighted in the favor of the program, [especially if the program maintains ownership of the dog]” (2015).

Additionally, "...the expectation of an attitude of gratitude I see from some program staff/puppywalkers/other handlers is interesting" (Roxy, 2015).

Disadvantage of a Service Dog

"Dogs in public places draw attention. When a dog goes into a restaurant or any public place like this, the attention focuses on the dog and questions are always asked why the dog can be in the restaurant" (Chaos, 2015). Before deciding to get a SD, people need to think about how they will handle the constant attention. "...access challenges and confrontation will come with having a SD" (Athena, 2015). As Pollux, an owner-trainer from Canada, says "I have never had issues with him not being program trained. The only problem I ever have is nosey people who ask too many prying questions because the idea of an invisible disability had never crossed their mind" (2015). In agreement, Athena states "way too many nosey people...and too many of them get offended when you don't want to share your private health with a complete stranger!!!" (2015). "I just saw a pug as a [service dog] really?! I'll just use my cat and put him in a service vest" (Chaos, 2015). Lack of understanding about what constitutes a service dog contributes to the problem of accessing public spaces (Redden, 2015). "I had a significant AODA violation take place on Monday evening at a restaurant. I was bullied, intimidated and told by the owner that I needed to ask permission to have the dog in the restaurant. He stated that it wasn't his responsibility to look at the ground to read the dogs vest, and even told me that I should wear a shirt announcing my disability and need for a service

animal” (Hera, 2015). The restaurant owner’s comment serves to reinforce Hera’s further claim that, “...there is a lack of education about service dogs coming in all shapes and sizes” (2015). Doris, an owner-trainer from Canada says: “I get to hear “I didn’t know they came so small!” a lot, but only security guards have ever denied she’s a service dog” (2015). Historically, german shepherds, golden retrievers and labrador retrievers were the breeds being trained for service work, but more recently there has been a shift towards the smaller and less common breeds (Glenn, 2013; Huss, 2009). In California, between 1999 and 2012, smaller breeds were often used by persons with hearing or psychiatric disabilities, while the larger breeds were trained for guide or service work (Yamamoto et al., 2015).

Knowing the Rules

Service Dogs in Training

About three years after being matched with Cessna, I found out that a trainer I knew was starting his own program, training service dogs for children with autism. We had previously asked to foster for Cessna’s school, but in order to avoid the challenges associated with deciding which clients should or should not be raising a puppy, the organization implemented a blanket policy that said no clients could foster. After further inquiry, I learned that this policy only applied to the organization itself and did not prohibit me from raising a puppy for another program. About a month after contacting the trainer and offering to foster a puppy, 10 week old Aiden entered our home.

The journey of a service dog typically starts around 8 weeks, when the puppy is given to a raiser, or foster family, who cares for and socializes them for approximately 12 months (Chur-Hansen, Werner, McGuinness, & Hazel, 2014). At about 12 to 18 months of age, the puppy returns to the service dog organization for an estimated 3 to 12 months of intensive training, at which time they are placed with a disabled individual (Chur-Hansen et al., 2014; Ensminger & Thomas, 2013).

Aiden lived with us for 12 months before entering formal training. While with us he learned proper manners and basic obedience commands. We introduced him to a variety of people and exposed him to a number of different environments. Aiden was matched with a young boy six months after he had entered training.

In most provinces, particularly Ontario, a person with a service dog in training (SDIT) does not have the same open access rights as an individual with a working service dog. “If it’s an SDIT you are there at the sufferance of the businesses and if they ask you to leave then you do have to” (Circe, 2015). Once, while raising Aiden, we ran into an access issue. I needed to get my hearing aid adjusted, so Huib and Aiden came along. While I was waiting for my appointment, Huib took Aiden to grab some coffee. During their walk back from the coffee shop, a security guard stopped them and asked “is that dog in training to be a seeing eye dog?” When Huib said “no, he’s going to be an autism service dog,” the security guard told him Aiden was not welcome, only seeing eye dogs are

allowed. Normally, Huib would just leave, but when the security guard specifically stated that only seeing eye dogs are permitted, he asked to talk to the man's supervisor. After we got home, I decided to call the security office and ask for clarification. A few days later, I received a call and was told the security guard was mistaken and all dogs in training are allowed.

British Columbia's new *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*, as well as Alberta's *Blind Persons' Rights Act* and *Service Animal Act*, grant service dog trainers the same level of public access with their dogs in training as those guaranteed to service dog handlers and their working dogs (Government of British Columbia, 2016; Government of Alberta, 2007). Nonetheless, Ontario's service dog policies do not mention service dogs in training or their trainers, so "you can walk into a store with your dog identified as a SDIT and do your training, or you can call ahead and ask permission. Either way, if they ask you to leave, you must, handlers of SDITs do not have rights regardless if you are a handler practicing training or a puppy raiser/trainer" (Athena, 2015). It can be frustrating, and at times embarrassing, to be asked to leave with your SDIT, but I still like that Ontario's regulations do not touch SDITs. I believe the omission provides business owners with an easy way to ask puppy raisers or trainers to leave their establishment with a disruptive dog. Athena explains: "if the dog is having an off-day, then again...take the puppy away from all the activity, but at 5 months old...a farmers market is likely way too much, and his barking, lunging and jumping shows he is not ready for that environment" (2015). Unfortunately, I do not think

many business owners or their staff realize they are legally permitted to refuse a puppy in training. I also do not think many puppy raisers know this is the case. I often wonder if this is why some raisers get upset when a business owner exercises their right to deny them access with their puppy. In response to a raiser's rant about being asked to leave a store, and to counter their claim that raisers should have the same rights as a handler, Zeus, a program-trained service dog handler, says: "it's about the rights of the disabled not dogs. While it is nice and important for the training of service dogs it's not a legal requirement as it is for a person with a disability" (2015). This comment is referring to the fact that the AODA is not meant to provide service dogs with rights, but to ensure persons with disabilities can equally take part in their community with their service dog.

Restaurant Problems

In almost 19 years of working with a service dog, I have only had a hand full of public access challenges. In all cases, it was because we were going into a business owned or staffed by a person who was not born in Canada. Many cultures have different customs or beliefs about dogs, so many public access difficulties faced by service dog handlers are due to cultural differences. In March, Global News reported a story in which a woman and her husband were told to leave a sushi restaurant because of Karoline's service dog (Stevens, 2015a). When asked about the incident, the restaurant owner said he will continue to deny individuals with service dogs entry to his restaurant because of his concerns

for other customers who might be allergic or afraid of the dog (Stevens, 2015a). In a follow-up story in November, Stevens (2015b) reported that the owner changed his point of view on allowing service dogs into his restaurant, and will be volunteering for the service dog organization where Karoline received her dog. Then, in May, the Toronto Star shared a story about a woman who was told she could not take part in her family gathering with her guide dog because the restaurant served halal style food (Armstrong, 2015). When interviewed for the story though, the CEO for the company said the employee had made a mistake and service dogs are actually permitted in their restaurants (Armstrong, 2015).

In a study by Fairman and Huebner (2001), the survey respondents reported being denied access to a number of places, such as retail establishments, public transportation, hotels and restaurants because of their dog. The service and hearing dog recipients in Rintala, Matamoros and Seitz's (2008) study reported similar access problems. About two years ago, Huib and I were refused entry into a local Subway because of Rogue. The store had a sticker on the front door to say that service dogs are welcome, or something similar, so I refused to leave, and politely asked the woman to contact her manager. I guess she did because she finally served us. The entire time we were eating, the employee stared at us, as if Rogue was going to jump up on the table and dance for her or something. After we got home, I emailed Subway's main office about the incident, and a couple of days later, I got a call from the location's owner to apologize. He said the employee had been talked to and that she would

be receiving further training. “If [business] owners are not made aware of their responsibilities, and their rights, under the law regarding access to public places for people with disabilities and their service dogs, they should be. If they are made aware and don’t pass this knowledge on to their staff, they are negligent in their duties” (Apollo, 2015).

Barriers Faced by Children with Autism Service Dogs

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a set of complex neurodevelopmental disorders, characterized by deficits in communication and social interaction (Government of Canada, 2016). According to the World Health Organization (2016e), approximately 1 in 160! children globally, have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Research conducted in North America, Europe and Asia has suggested the prevalence of ASD to be around 1% of the population (Government of Canada, 2016). Service dogs for children with ASD perform differently from other service dogs in that they are tethered to the child, but they are handled by the caregiver (Burrows, Adams, & Spiers, 2008). Autism service dogs are primarily trained to resist their child’s attempts to leave their caregiver by acting as an anchor and waiting for the release cue (Burrows et al., 2008). The dog is tethered to their child by a leash and belt system which provides the child with a chance to walk freely and not hold their caregiver’s hand (Waterlander, 2011; Burrows et al., 2008).

“We just brought our son’s service dog home a month ago and have had a flurry of access issues” (Ares, 2015). Children with autism appear to face a higher

number of access issues with their service dogs, compared to many other disabilities. "...Thank goodness I've seen such a positive impact the dog has had on my son in such a short time because the amount of resistance we've been met with so far is daunting" (Ares, 2015). Being blind, I do not have problems with public access too often. When I have had an issue, it has usually been quickly resolved with an explanation. This Facebook comment shared by a mother of a child with autism demonstrates, that this is not usually the case for them: "employee near the entrance door didn't know anything about service dogs too. ... I can educate people, but when my child [is] with me, it can be very stressful for him" (Chaos, 2015). These two families are not alone in their experiences. In a Huffington Post article from September of 2015, a reporter describes a situation in which a family from Toronto was told they could not participate in a whale-watching excursion while on vacation in British Columbia because of their son's service dog (Schmunk, 2015). Within the article, Schmunk (2015) says that while interviewing one of the whale-watching companies, the owner said that "he's never taken service dogs on tours and never will because he has an obligation to the majority of his patrons, not just one." The owner also stated that his company also refuses to take individuals who use a wheelchair because the water can be unpredictable (Schmunk, 2015). According to British Columbia's *Guide Animal Act*, the legislation that was in effect at the time of the incident, persons with disabilities who rely on a service dog cannot be lawfully prevented from accessing any goods, services, establishments or accommodations to which the

public is normally allowed access (Government of British Columbia, 1996). In fact, under the *Guide Animal Act*, the whale-watching companies could be fined up to \$200, if found guilty of violating Adam's right to equal access to service with his dog (Government of British Columbia, 1996). The boy's mother reported the incident to the province's Justice Minister, so that the whale-watching companies can be made aware of the laws surrounding persons with disabilities and service dogs (Schmunk, 2015).

In the United States, "federal law says that service dogs can go anywhere the public can go if they are under control, and schools are not separate" (Chaos, 2015). The increased use of service dogs by children has led to a rise in stories about school boards refusing SDs until they are ordered to accommodate them. In Detroit, a family had to homeschool their child because she was not permitted to bring her service dog to school, even though he provides her with physical assistance (White, 2015). On October 15, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a petition with the Supreme Court, asking them to announce that individuals should not need to jump administrative hoops before they can have a court listen to their case (White, 2015). "It's important to set a precedent so other children's lives are not disrupted while school officials drag their feet and refuse to provide them their right to a service dog or other accommodation..." (White, 2015). Meanwhile in Staten Island, in order to have a student attend with their SD, an elementary school was forced to assign a teacher another classroom because she was allergic to dogs (Lore, 2015). Similar to the service dog policies found

within Canada, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* says that “allergies and fear are not valid reasons for preventing the service dog from having access to the facility” (Chaos, 2015). Lore (2015) also reported that the Department of Education says there are less than 10 students needing a service dog at school, and in almost all situations, the parents had to ask the court to order the school allow the SD (Lore, 2015). Unlike the schools in Detroit and Staten Island, there are schools that freely welcome service dogs. For example in New Brunswick, Fairvale Elementary, made small adjustments to their classrooms, and informed their students about the purpose of the dogs, in order to have two of their students bring their autism service dog (CBC News, 2015a). When interviewed, the kindergarten teacher said: “we explained to them how it works ... he’s not a dog here, he’s not a pet, he’s essentially a teacher” (CBC News, 2015a). According to their teachers, both Jackson and Kate benefit from having their service dog at school (CBC News, 2015a).

The Social Side of a Service Dog Partnership

Research has found that dogs act as ice breakers and social bridges, facilitating social interactions for their owners because they normalize social situations, encourage approaches by others and often stimulate conversation (Hutton, 2015; Wood et al., 2015). In December, the Globe and Mail published a story about a child with disabilities whose independently-trained service dog has brought her out of her shell (Leung, 2015). In the article, Taite’s mother talks about how her daughter is learning to advocate for herself: “...when people go to pet him, you

can see the anxiety rise in her, and she says — in a really quiet voice — “Please don’t pet him because he’s working.” And it’s huge. It’s huge that she’s starting to self-advocate and to speak to people she doesn’t know when she’s not comfortable” (Leung, 2015). In their 2005 study, Wood, Giles-Corti and Bulsara observed that 74.5% of the participants reported they rarely or never had difficulty getting to know others, whereas 62.6% of non-owners found it more difficult. After presenting to the local United States Attorney’s Office, Roxy tweeted: “...puppy raisers, The “service dogs are ice breakers” schtick really needs to stop. I don’t have an SD so I can have friends” (2015). This tweet was one out of a series of tweets in which Roxy vented about a puppy raiser continually stating that a service dog can facilitate social interactions for their handler.

A person with a disability may not partner with a SD to make friends, but our dogs often lead to interactions with strangers that can result in friendships. When I attended the University of Guelph, Phoenix and I lived in residence and he quickly became the most popular resident. I met a lot of people through Phoenix because he laid outside of my room with a toy. More than half of the time, Phoenix was able to find someone to play. Almost every time someone stopped, they would begin asking me questions about him, which often led to future interactions. “I like that guide dog ownership makes me popular everywhere. People start out wanting to know [my dog], but then they get to know me” (Chaos, 2015). Although we may not set out to meet new people through our dogs, we often end up interacting with people because of them.

Public Issues

Some of the barriers faced by SD handlers are a direct result of the general public's reaction to the dog. "One thing to keep in mind. A SD is a HUGE NEON SIGN and magnet when out in public together. Everyone [trying to] pet the dog, ask invasive questions, stare and make comments, often negative ones" (Athena, 2015). When 202 clients from Canine Companions for Independence were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the service dog relationship, they stated that interference from the public was one of the most common problems they experienced, saying that in many cases the intrusion made it difficult for them to manage their dogs' behaviour (Fairman & Huebner, 2001). Whether we want it or not, a service dog brings attention to the fact that we have a disability. Although I am quite aware of this, there have definitely been times when I have wanted to scream or toss my 'invisibility cloak' on and walk right past. "...No, I don't know every other service dog handler in the area. And no, I don't want to hear your opinions on fake service dogs" (Aristaeus, 2015).

Difficult encounters with the public are also faced by puppy raisers. "Always frustrating when someone sees you sleeping on the train, and wakes you up just so they can tell you about their dog and if you can train it for them because your dog is so well behaved" (Maia, 2015). When Chur-Hansen and colleagues (2014) studied the experience of guide dog puppy raisers, they found that the puppies tend to negatively impact the lives of their raisers. The study participants reported

meeting new friends through fostering, but said that they often found public and social interactions to be stressful (Chur-Hansen et al., 2014).

Petting

“When people pat your service dog with gloved hands—that they just used to clean toilets on multiple occasions” (Gaia, 2015). A common challenge service dog handlers must deal with is when strangers interact with their dog. For instance, blind or visually impaired handlers may run into situations where individuals attempt to ‘fool’ them, talking to them about their SD, while petting the dog. “Reaching out and petting my service dog. While asking me if you can pet my service dog. Do you think I won’t notice?” (Iris, 2015). Even when strangers are asked not to touch a SD, things can get interesting. After an extremely frustrating bus ride, Iris posted a message on Twitter: “I gotta ask this. You ask if you can pet my guide dog on the bus. I say “No, she’s working.” You say OK. At what point does “No, you can’t pet her, she’s working” become “Oh, yes, please scratch her muzzle”” (2015).

When I was first partnered with Cessna I had a woman come up and start petting her while I was ordering a slushy. I felt Cessna moving, so I turned and saw a woman petting her - at the time, I could still see reasonably well - and asked the woman to please not pet my dog. The woman continued to pet her and said “how do you know I’m petting your dog? I thought you were blind.” I told her I could see her hand against Cessna’s black coat, so the woman stood up straight and as she was leaving said “well, too late, I already pet her.” I was honestly

shocked. I turned back to the counter to pay and grab my slushy. The cashier had seen the exchange and told me I was a lot calmer and nicer about it than she would have been. I think I was more surprised by the interaction than upset to be completely honest. I've had people pet my dog without asking, but I've never had someone be so rude about it. During a Twitter search, I found this tweet: "No fair! The owner is letting a kid pet it. #servicedog" (Chaos, 2015). Then, in another tweet, "yesterday a woman asked mum why blind people are so grumpy when you stroke their guide dog?" (Chaos, 2015). These tweets illustrate some of the frustrating encounters persons with disabilities can face when out in public.

Public Reactions

In a study by Whitmarsh (2005), 51% of the guide dog owners interviewed stated that service dogs are not without their problems. They may be extremely helpful to persons with disabilities, but their presence can also create problems for their handlers because there are still individuals in society who object to sharing space with them (Harpur, 2010; Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008). "Another typical day at the grocery store with a service dog. Today 4 customers complained about me to management" (Hera, 2015). In another Facebook post from Hera, she says: "Customer pretending to be employee denies me + service dog at [Starbucks]..." (2015). Situations like these are not ones I have dealt with, but they are not uncommon. Individuals with disabilities that are not readily apparent, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, can experience negative public encounters that are not faced by persons with a more recognizable disability,

such as blindness. “Guy started screaming at me for telling someone else to leave [my dog] alone...” (Aristaeus, 2015).

I have really only ever once had an extremely negative public encounter. One day Huib and I were out with Cessna at the grocery store. I was at the front with Cessna waiting for Huib to come back, he had run to grab something we had forgotten. I asked Cessna to stop sniffing something several times and finally gave her a quick collar correction, and a woman freaked out at me. She told me that I should not be doing that to my dog or I might “yank her head off.” Looking back, I feel bad for giving Cessna a collar correction, but in my defence it was a really mild one. “Yeah those people need to get a life. A woman yelled at me when I made Soleil rework something after she messed up” (Roxy, 2015). Despite the fact that most service dog handlers know what they are doing, and frequently the so-called ‘expert’ enters the scenario part way through, ‘experts’ love to step in and tell them what they are doing wrong. “Someone whose never seen my guide dog indicated her behaviour might indicate her need to retire. That’s nobody’s business but mine!” (Iris, 2015). “...Can you believe I used to wonder if such experts knew something I didn’t? Now I just roll my eyes and grit my teeth” (Hecate, 2015). As a follow up, Hecate stated: “the majority of the experts with all the unwanted advice didn’t know squat about guide dogs or even dogs” (2015). “Least helpful thing ever: “Yeah, your dog needs a little more training, doesn’t s/he?” Never mind age appropriate” (Apollo, 2015). Handlers need to make sure their dogs know when they have made a mistake, and within

reason, they need to make sure it does not happen again. "...it's horrible when somebody [criticizes] your dog for no reason" (Chaos, 2015). Unless the handler is about to injure the dog, it is important for the public to step back and let them work things out. "...wanted to thank him for his advice, and then tell him to shut up when he wasn't providing any..." (Iris, 2015).

Owner-Training Versus Programs

Many service dog schools, including the one I received my program-trained dogs from, maintain ownership of the dog while it is working. As a result, "the power dynamic between program and handler is very heavily weighted in the favor of the program..." (Roxy, 2015). A few years after being matched with Cessna, I considered training for rally-obedience. I thought competing in rally would improve our team communication and give Cessna a new environment to work in. When I talked to a trainer, I was told we could train for rally and even compete, but the school refused to give me her Canadian Kennel Club registration number that I needed to enter an event. Owner-training is rewarding in so many ways, but one thing that makes owner-training great, is that I can try anything with Rogue. We have tried barn hunt, where the dogs search a barn for rats in tubes. We have tried conformation, where the dogs are examined for structure in a ring with other dogs of the same breed. Finally, we take part in field, where dogs retrieve ducks, and tracking, where dogs search for hidden items. All of these activities are ones that most, if not all, service dog programs would prohibit.

“Why do people accept paternalistic [policies] from guide dog programs that they’d never accept from another business?” (Roxy, 2015). “It is this weird sort of loyalty unique to guide programs, like gratitude plus a little fear” (Roxy, 2015). Some organizations place limits on their teams such as what to feed and what activities they are permitted to do with their SD. For example, Nyx said “I have a service dog from [a program] and we are told by our school not to take our dogs to zoos” (2015). When I was partnered with Gryphon, we were told not to play tug with our dogs because it would lead to aggression. A year later, when I received Phoenix, we were told we could play tug, but not to let our dogs win or they would become dominant. I will admit, I played tug with all of my dogs, and not one had an aggression or dominance issue. I think Roxy puts it best when she said: “if I’m adult enough to get a guide dog, I’m adult enough to own it and accept full responsibility. If [the] program doesn’t trust me, then don’t give me a dog, it’s just that simple” (2015).

The Divide

“...Person describes encounter with badly behaved guide dog.
Commenter: It was probably a self trained guide dog.” ... Because program dogs never screw up- either that or they have great PR, and I would love a self trained guide dog. Save me a lot of work” (Roxy, 2015). Owner-trainers do not have a big organization sitting behind them. As a result, “an owner trained dog and his handler should meet the same high standards that a program trained dog and his handler do, higher even” (Charleson, 2013). “I see way more poorly behaved

program dogs than independently trained dogs. I think that has a lot to do with poor maintenance of manners and skills and they don't always abide by the no-petting/no-visiting rules, and many dogs need consistency when they are working" (Athena, 2015). When something happens involving a program-trained dog, clients often believe their school will immediately swoop in to help and make excuses for them or their dog. During a conversation on Facebook about an access denial involving a program-trained service dog, Athena commented: "... some programs give out ID cards, and many programs just tell their handlers to 'flash their magical cards' to get access. Makes it much harder when they do that for handlers with independently trained SDs" (2015). Supporting this point, Nyx, a program-trained service dog handler, says: "...none of us from the schools carry letters and have copies of the law stating we do not need to. Our ID cards are all we need" (2015). When it comes to a human rights case, the school might not provide financial support, but they will offer support in other ways, such as allowing the client to use their name which provides weight on its own. This fact is frustrating because it can often lead to a sense of entitlement. In a Facebook discussion on unusual staff encounters, Athena shared: "A while ago, I was closely watched while shopping in a Dollarama. I asked the clerk why she was doing that and she stated that they had a SD lab with a program identifiable vest, that lifted his leg and peed along a portion of the fake flower displays. She said the handler saw the dog do it, and did nothing about it. Not clean up the mess, nor pay for the now damaged product...and KEPT ON SHOPPING!! I asked the

clerk why they didn't have the dog removed and she said she didn't know she could do that!?" (2015).

A year ago, a stranger stopped me in the mall and asked to pet my dog. I politely said no, and explained that Rogue was working and we were running late for an appointment. The woman said no problem and apologized for bothering me. I told her it was not an issue and that if she ever saw us again, to come up and ask. As she was leaving, she said: "you are one of the nicest blind people I have met." I smiled at the comment, but it also made me a bit sad. Sad to know that this stranger had rarely had the chance to meet a "nice blind person." I do not think people realize that their interactions with others can lead to either positive or negative interactions for the next disabled person that stranger meets. As Chaos, a program-trained service dog handler from the US, says: "sometimes you get tired of explaining stuff to people - no, don't feed my dog! - that you snap. But the person may not know why" (2015). If we want to be treated with dignity and respect, we need to do the same with others. Aristaeus provides a good example of this when she tweets: "I never share my dogs' names. If people ask I explain that I don't because it can put me in danger" (2015). By taking the time to educate strangers on why she does not share her dogs' names, instead of just saying no and walking away, Aristaeus shows the person respect and helps them understand the reason for her response.

I have had program-trained service dogs and now I have trained my own dog. I am not sure how, or if, this entitlement piece can be solved, but I do think it

adds to some of the barriers faced by service dog handlers, specifically owner-trainers. If a program-trained service dog handler did not know there would be someone to back them up, I wonder if they would be less likely to create problems within public places.

Future Directions

There are two main solutions being proposed to ‘solve’ the problems encountered by service dog handlers, certification or standardization, and new or revised legislation.

Certification and Standardization

In June, CBC News (2015b) published a story about new policies being developed in Nova Scotia to standardize how service dogs are governed. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of dogs being trained for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, and there is a need for policies on training (CBC News, 2015b). When asked about the plan, Milena Khazanavicius, a long-time guide dog handler, said: “It’s not even just about the dogs, it’s about the people that are not being trained” (CBC News, 2015b). In addition to certification and stricter training guidelines, Khazanavicius would like to see higher penalties for businesses who refuse service animals (CBC News, 2015b). Finally, she would also like there to be legislation banning the sale of service dog equipment, such as harnesses or vests, online (CBC News, 2015b).

“I really hate this trend of people/industry thinking we, as people with disabilities, needing to prove ourselves and/or the status of our SDs”)Athena,

2015). I am not sure people really understand what they are requesting when they demand certification and stricter rules for service dog handlers. For example, Athena says: “training standards, single issue certifications still does nothing for what I see is the biggest issue in the SD industry, poorly maintained SD, the one’s handlers (and neglectful programs) have let develop bad behaviours, work them beyond what is healthy for the dog, and not address aggression/reactivity issues” (2015). Added to this, Nike points out, “We do not certify wheelchair users, crutch users or those who use walkers. We do not license mobility scooters. In fact, with all of those things you do not even need to have a disability. With service dogs you **must** have a disability and the dog, through task training, **must** be able to mitigate that disability” (2015). Finally, Aristaeus says “asking someone to prove service dog need is like asking them to prove wheelchair need...” (Aristaeus, 2015).

There are also way too many unanswered questions such as, “...who would certify service dogs. Owner trained service dogs are allowed. My breed already has a bias against it by many if not most trainers. Having a program that trains service dogs do the testing could lead to bias as owner trainers have not paid for their services” (Nike, 2015). The concerns highlighted by Nike are ones voiced by many owner-trainers, who worry about losing their ability to raise, train and work with their own service dog. Hermes, an owner-trainer from Canada, says: “the idea of stringent standards do raise a number of concerns. One of the big ones is, who is going to police these standards? Because if it is left up to the industry

itself, we now have schools(?) suppliers doing self certification themselves?” (2015). Additionally, “if we do not allow owner-trained dogs it’s like saying that nobody can work on their own car, because it may be putting people at risk” (Hermes, 2015). Not every person or disability or combination of disabilities can be accommodated by a program, and most persons with disabilities cannot afford to get a service dog trainer, so if certification or an exclusion of owner-training was implemented, then many individuals with disabilities would lose their freedom and independence. In May, Global News published a story discussing the push for government identification for service dogs in Ontario (Stevens, 2015c). In response to the article, Hermes says: “...it is like the industry is trying to protect it’s self interest with no consideration to people’s health or life” (2015). Finally, although many handlers believe certification will help decrease public access problems, it may actually lead to an increase in issues, especially for individuals whose disability is not easily recognize. “My fear is that this law will, while decreasing fakers, cause an increase in belligerent business owners/managers” (Nike, 2015). Highlighting the public access issue, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission released a report noting that restaurants, hotels and schools continue to refuse service dogs because they do not understand their purpose (CBC News, 2015c). When interviewed, the Chairperson of the Commission said that, in particular, business owners lack an adequate amount of awareness regarding the various jobs a

service dog can perform and the types of disabilities they can assist with (CBC News, 2015c).

New or Revised Laws

With the rising concerns regarding ‘fake’ service animals, many states, such as Florida, have taken it upon themselves to ‘improve’ their service dog legislation. In many cases, the new regulations are helpful, but there is always going to be problems, and in many instances the problems will be faced by those with less traditional SDs. In response to Florida’s new legislation, Gaia says: “good idea: yet what concerns me is those with invisible disabilities may be falsely accused of not having a real SD” (2015).

The revisions to Florida’s service animal regulation, came about after a request for help from a disability advocacy group for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, and came into effect on July 1, 2015 (Myers & Zizo, 2015). According to the policy, a ‘service animal’ is “an animal that is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability” (Florida House of Representatives [FHR], 2015). The revised law not only makes it a crime to knowingly pretend your dog is a service animal, but the penalties for interfering with a service animal have been increased (FHR, 2015). The regulation sets out requirements for accommodating a service animal, as well as guidelines to follow when a business must ask a handler to leave with their service animal (FHR, 2015). When a program-trained guide dog handler was asked about the new legislation, he said that he felt his ability to do things with his guide dog would be

improved because the new fines would deter individuals who have fake service animals (Myers & Zizo, 2015). Finally, when interviewed for the article, State Representative Smith, said that he received many requests for certification to be implemented, but this request was rejected because “the federal government doesn’t do certifications” (Myers & Zizo, 2015). In response to a Facebook post examining the new legislation, Nike commented: “So.. someone will ask “but what about testing the dogs?” Testing doesn’t need to occur. A business already has the right to tell a service dog handler to remove the dog if it is misbehaving, being disruptive or incontinent (and yes, even service dogs occasionally make a mistake). The business cannot exclude the handler from the business in those cases just the dog” (2015).

Florida is not the only state who has implemented, or begun to develop, new service animal policies. States such as Michigan and Arizona have also worked on new legislation. In Arizona, lawmakers attempted to implement anti-service dog policies that would have permitted restaurant owners to deny access to persons with disabilities who use a service dog (Hansen, 2015). According to the article, the bill was meant to stop ‘imposters,’ by forcing all service dog handlers to carry a permit and register with the state (Hansen, 2015). The bill went too far though, when it suggested that restaurants be allowed to refuse SDs if they felt the dog would violate local health codes (Hansen, 2015).

In Michigan four service dog policies, Public Acts 144, 145, 146 and 147, were developed and became law in January of 2016 (State of Michigan, 2016).

The new regulations: allow handlers to obtain licenses free of charge, make it illegal to injure a service animal, prevent businesses from denying access to a service animal, make it a crime to knowingly pretend to need a service animal, and provide 'voluntary' identification for service animals (Roebuck, 2015).

Through the implementation of these laws, the State of Michigan hopes to: "... highlight the importance of service animals ... work to promote awareness of the need for and use of service dogs, as many are simply unaware they are allowed in nearly every establishment (Roebuck, 2015).

In Canada, on March 12, 2015, the Government of British Columbia (2015) put out a press release to announce they would be scrapping their *Guide Animal Act* and "modernizing B.C.'s guide and service dog guidelines." In the release, the government said they wanted to ensure public safety and guarantee service dog handlers and trainers with service dogs in training had equal access to public spaces (Government of British Columbia [GBC], 2015). After reading the press release, Athena commented: "it will be interesting to see how this all plays out. It has always frustrated me to constantly see only one side of this.....the rights of people with disabilities and what happens when someone refuses them. What about the responsibilities of SD handlers, those should not be 'a given' and the rights of a store own/service provider to be supported when kicking out a poorly behaved SD" (2015). In order to achieve their goals, the government said they would create new training standards and implement a certification process which would give, handlers who passed, official government identification (GBC, 2015).

In response to the expectations of BC's new Guide Dog and *Service Dog Act*, Iris says: "I am not in favour of showing anyone any ID simply because someone wants to challenge my access rights. I have the right to be accompanied by my guide dog (Note: the DOG does not have rights, *I* do!) anywhere the public goes" (2015). Added to this, Athena commented: "when Ontario wrote the current laws of the AODA (and it is still being implemented) they looked at all side of the SD issue and at that time decided that formal legal protection really had nothing to do with the dog, but it is a PERSON'S right to use the adaptive aids and technology that suits their needs" (2015).

Leading up to the release of the new act, the BC government did not clarify what was meant by "third-party tester," so many handlers wondered if this meant someone from an actual program. "I wonder where this is going to leave owner trained service dogs. Many people's health conditions do not have the option of sitting on a three year waiting list. And people on a disability income, cannot afford a "so-called" trainer" (Hermes, 2015). Handlers, specifically owner-trainers, worried that by having an organization perform the testing, no owner-trained service dogs would be passed, and, in some cases, even a program dog might fail testing. Now that the policy is out, it is understood that an actual third-party, not industry-related, will be performing the testing, but some owner-trainers still worry about not passing the test because the tester might not be familiar with what service dogs do, or because of a bias against independently-trained service dogs. I do not really mind the whole third-party testing idea, but I do find it

problematic to know that even visitors need to obtain temporary certification before they can move freely within the province.

Recommendations

Education needs to be the first step, before bringing in new laws regulating service dog use. "...I feel like Ontario's laws are absolutely perfect! They basically require a well behaved dog and a doctor on board. If you and your doctor think you would benefit from having a dog with you, I really don't care what it does, as long as it i[s] well behaved and [public access] trained. Plus, every SD handler in Ontario is accountable, as they must provide their medical paperwork to gatekeepers if requested" (Doris, 2015). Like Doris, I believe many of the laws found within Canada are fine, people just do not know they exist or understand what is or what is not permitted. I think that once SD handlers hear the word 'right,' they automatically see it as meaning they are 'entitled.' Handlers need to understand that if their SD is misbehaving, then a store owner, or restaurant manager, can legally ask them to leave. In order for this point to be truly accepted, the managers of public establishments need to know their own rights and responsibilities. As Athena says: "if a dog is in a store and not identified as a SD, then of course they should be approached, there is a business license (health code) on the line. If there is a dog identified as a SD and acting in ways that are not like a SD, ... then kick them out!!!!" (2015).

Lack of enforcement is another reason for the trouble faced by handlers. "The doctor's letter, ID cards (fake or program) or vest/harness should never be a

pass to a poorly behaving SD” (Athena, 2015). I think in many cases our laws are suitable, but if no one knows what they are, then they are not going to follow them. During a Facebook discussion looking at the differences in the protections offered to program-trained service dog users versus independently-trained dog handlers, Athena commented: “maybe instead of going after what [certified guide dog] handlers get you could focus your fight to getting businesses and service providers in compliance with the AODA and its regulations!” (2015). Also, if the police or other officials are not willing to push the owners and managers of public establishments to follow the laws, then why would they? Following an extremely difficult access challenge, Hera tweets: “Why is it that Toronto Police don't take reports of intimidation and harassment if AODA related? I am so frustrated!” (2015).

I have only called the police once in the almost 19 years of having a guide dog. Back in 2006 or so, I went to an Indian restaurant with Huib and Cessna. The restaurant had a sticker on the door that said “Seeing Eye Dogs Permitted,” or something to that effect. Despite the sticker, when we went inside the hostess said we couldn’t have Cessna in the restaurant. I explained that she is a guide dog and that the Ontario laws permit her to accompany me. He kept saying that pets were not allowed and that the health inspectors would take away their restaurant license if she came in. I showed him the identification card her school had given me, but he refused to look at it, and continued to ignore what we were trying to say. If it had not been for the sticker, I would have just walked away and

not returned, but I felt they should not have the sticker on their door if they were going to be discriminatory. When the officer came, I explained the situation and he went into the restaurant to talk to the manager. After a while, he returned and said the manager would allow us to come in with Cessna, but that they wanted us to sit near the back of the restaurant, away from the buffet and other patrons. We thanked the officer and left.

Once business owners, the general public, and service dog handlers themselves, have been adequately educated about the regulations, then bylaw and police officers need to do their part and enforce those laws. If, at this point, persons with disabilities who use a service dog continue to face barriers when attempting to participate in their community, then it is time for new or revised legislation.

Conclusion

Using my experience as a raiser, trainer and service dog handler, I examined the perceptions and personal narratives of service dog handlers, focusing on owner-trainers when possible. To structure the presentation of my thoughts, I organized my discussion based on the information a potential service dog handler should know. I started by examining the terms, 'therapy dog,, 'emotional support animal' and 'service dog,' and clearly outlined the purpose of a service dog. I then looked at what an individual needs to know once they have decided they would benefit from a SD, discussed the protections and responsibilities of a handler versus a business owner, and examined the social

side of a service dog partnership. Finally, I wrap up my examination by looking at the controversy that exists between programs and owner-trainers, and analyzed the two main solutions being put forth to minimize the access challenges faced by service dog handlers, and outlined the actions I feel need to happen prior to considering certification or policy changes. Using social media, I was able to share the real lived experiences of service dog handlers in order to thoroughly discuss their thoughts and suggestions about what changes need to take place.

Persons with disabilities who partner with service dogs face significant barriers when attempting to access their community. Whether it be at work, school or in public spaces, many handlers, specifically those with a disability that is not easily identified, experience challenges on a daily basis. Despite the presence of service dog regulations in most provinces, business owners, the general public and many service dog handlers themselves, do not know or understand their rights or responsibilities, leading to problems and misunderstandings. Once the different groups have been adequately informed about the policies, the police and other regulatory officials need to step in and do their part in enforcing the rules. With a good education and awareness program, along with strict enforcement, it should become less difficult for service dog handlers to move freely within their communities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Dogs and humans have enjoyed a long and mutual companionship, archeological digs have found evidence of early dogs residing with humans (Walsh, 2009). Dogs were trusted herders and hunting partners, but they did not begin to reach their current status as respected family member until the late nineteenth century (Walsh, 2009). Pet owners tend to be less lonely, have higher self-esteem and exercise more than people who did not own a pet (McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, & Martin, 2011). Pets meet the needs of their humans by providing companionship, protection, emotional support, and physical exercise (Walsh, 2009). Today, pet ownership has become a booming business, with two thirds of Canadian households earning over \$60,000 per year owning a pet (IPSOS, 2013). In fact, according to Walsh (2009), pet owners are spending more per year on their pets than the gross national product of many developing nations.

This thesis sought to determine what service dog handlers, particularly owner-trainers, feel constitutes a 'service dog' in Canada. This project tried to involve persons with disabilities, while also avoiding the possibility of censorship or silence. By collecting messages from social media, this project was able to capture the lived experiences without worrying about participants changing them to fit within society's expectations. Society is not structured to be accessible for all, so when 'accommodations' are made, it is 'expected' that persons with disabilities will show gratitude and not express their true feelings. This thesis

shared my personal experiences, as a raiser, trainer and service dog handler, and offered a glimpse into the lives of other service dog handlers as they attempt to take part in their communities.

Summary of Findings

In order to determine what constitutes a ‘service dog’ in Canada, this thesis included a literature review, a government document review and a content analysis along with the methodology of autoethnography. Even though dogs are frequently the centre of investigations related to the human-animal bond, the labels used to describe their function within the studies often varies. In addition, the literature tended to focus on specific populations such as older adults, or particular groups of individuals such as children with autism. More research needs to be conducted to determine what terminology should be used and how each activity or practice should be regulated.

The government document search was used to locate information on the ways in which service dogs are defined in the Canadian legislation. Within Canada, each law can be placed into the category of broad human rights or more targeted regulations. Provinces such as Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, do not have specific service dog policies, whereas British Columbia and Ontario have the *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, respectively (see Table 3.1). Through a thorough examination of the policies relating to service dogs in each jurisdiction, three

main problems were identified. First, there are a number of different terms being used across the country to name a 'service dog.' For example, Ontario and Manitoba use the term 'service animal,' whereas Prince Edward Island employs 'assist animal' and Yukon uses 'seeing eye dog.' Most of the terms can be easily understood, but in some cases misunderstandings can occur, creating unnecessary problems for the public and individual service dog handlers.

Second, there is an issue with the definitions or lack of descriptions available to explain the terminology. For instance, in all three Ontario laws, "reliance on a guide dog or other animal" can be found within the definition of disability, but the policies do not clearly explain what is meant by this statement, leaving it open to interpretation (Government of Ontario [GO], 2005; GO, 2001; GO, 1990). In comparison, Manitoba's *Human Rights Code* uses 'service animal' within its definition of disability, and then provides a clear description of what is meant by the term, offering business owners a more concrete understanding (Manitoba Government, N.D.).

The final issue relates to the variations in expectations and penalties prescribed by each regulation. For example, in Alberta, both the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* and *Service Dogs Act* give service dog trainers the same open access rights as persons with disabilities who use a service dog (Government of Alberta [GA], 2007; GA, 2000). Meanwhile, provinces such as Ontario, do not address service dogs in training, so trainers are not guaranteed the same public access (GO, 2005). Once the laws in each jurisdiction were analyzed, it becomes clear

that Canada needs a common language with concrete definitions and universally accepted policies, so that Canadians who choose to work with a service dog, whether it be program-trained or owner-trained, can freely take part in their communities.

The data analysis section of this thesis looked at the perceptions and personal narratives of service dog handlers, specifically owner-trainers, to explore the problems they face and the policy changes they feel needs to take place in order to minimize the barriers. From the hundreds of statements found on social media written by service dog handlers and the general public, lack of understanding in regards to the laws and an absence of enforcement by the police and other officials were common themes. Often, the immediate solution proposed to minimize problems are new or revised legislation, or certification, but if people are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, and the laws are not being enforced, then how will these proposals solve anything?

Limitations

The methods used in this thesis, as well as the sample used to collect data have their problems. Literature reviews can be limited by the parameters set when searching for articles. Since I am blind and rely on a screen reader, I also ignored any studies I could not locate in an accessible format. Most of the information from the past 10 years can be found in an accessible electronic format, but there were some occasions where this was not possible. In order to

make sure that no information was missed, I did ask a McMaster University librarian to assist me in locating an accessible copy of a study that appeared within a number other articles.

Government document searches can also be a challenge and create limitations. For example, it can be possible to miss policies and misinterpret wording within documents from time to time. In order to make sure the chances of missing a document is minimized, multiple online sources to identify what regulations each jurisdiction had that related to service dog use were employed. In addition, I asked other service dog handlers about the laws they were aware of within their province. Finally, to limit the possibility of interpretation mistakes, a third party read over chapter and highlighted potential concerns.

Within chapter three, critical disability theory was utilized and content analysis to interpret social media information, and autoethnography in the presentation of my personal experiences. By using a theory to come up with initial categories for the research, rather than allowing the data itself to highlight the major themes, it is possible I missed some important information. Using a theory allowed me to structure my research more, which provided parameters for the data gathering process. Added to this, by using social media as the data source, the most up-to-date information on the topic was able to be included, but it also means having to navigate through the sea of personal opinions and, at times, misinformation.

Finally, through the use of autoethnography, I used my personal experiences to critically assess the perceptions of service dog handlers and the general public. To help validate claims and assertions, I incorporated comments of service dog handlers from social media, and shared examples from the popular media. Even though I tried to minimize the side effects of my familiarity with the topic, and personal involvement with the community itself, my thoughts and assumptions may still be reflected within my analysis and the conclusions drawn. Autoethnographic writing uses the author's personal experiences to promote the understanding of a particular social issue (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnographers must be conscious of the fact that the meaning readers attach can vary because people interpret things differently depending on their personal perceptions (Ellis et al., 2011). With this in mind, I recognize that project findings are not perfectly generalizable; however this does not mitigate the truthfulness or validity of any opinions or claims. Despite my knowledge of the issue and the inclusion of others in my research, understandings can differ between readers depending on their values or personal narratives. This limitation is important to acknowledge because a researcher who has a personal attachment to an issue can have experiences or attribute meanings that might not be shared by others.

Key Recommendations

Based on the findings of this thesis, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Researchers and policy-makers need to work together to develop a universal language to use when talking about service dogs.
2. Governments must educate the general public about the difference between a 'companion animal,' 'emotional support animal,' 'therapy dog' and 'service dog.'
3. Handlers must stay informed about their rights and responsibilities while working in public with their dog.
4. Governments need to make sure all business owners understand and are aware of their rights and responsibilities related to service dogs and their handlers.
5. Police and other officials must know their responsibilities associated with enforcing the service dog laws.
6. Governments should only turn to policy creation if education and enforcement are tried and prove unsuccessful.

Future Directions for Research

The intimate relationship between dogs and humans may be centuries old, but research into the bond is still relatively new. As such, the partnership between a service dog and their human handler is even newer. I was concerned with understanding what service dog handlers, particularly owner-trainers, feel

constitutes a 'service dog' in Canada. While conducting research for this project, a number of additional topics emerged. Studies need to be conducted to learn about the public perceptions surrounding service dogs, so that policy-makers can develop policies that will balance both the needs of persons with disabilities and the rights of the public to feel safe and secure. With the expansion towards a broader understanding of what constitutes a 'service dog,' comes a need for research into the ways a dog can or cannot assist an individual. Currently, in order for a service animal to be legally recognized, the dog must perform tasks that will minimize the effects of their handler's disability. Therefore, a service dog is only for individuals with a diagnosed disability. Additionally, a more liberal understanding of what constitutes a service dog, can lead to public confusion and scepticism towards individuals who owner-train. According to the findings from this project, a more narrow definition is not the answer, more education and regulation enforcement are suggested. Informing the public about the purpose and importance of a service dog will help to reduce the fears associated with the unknown. Added to this, police and other officials need to do their part in enforcing the rules, making sure the 'real' service dog teams are given equal access, while the 'pretenders' are penalized.

Finally, throughout my research I also came across discussions about pets in public spaces. Some people believe the public access problems faced by persons with disabilities who rely on a service dog could be eliminated if everyone was permitted to have their pets accompany them, while others see this

move resulting in more safety concerns. Personally, I would rather see a well-behaved pet be given access to public establishments over a poorly mannered service dog. There appears to be a trend towards allowing individuals with a psychiatric disability to have an emotional support animal in places such as university dorm rooms. Many wonder why these students are permitted, while other students are told they cannot have their pet. Studies need to investigate whether having pets in public spaces should be allowed and what the disadvantages would be if it were to occur.

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Table 2.1: An International Review of Terminology used in Service Dog Peer-Reviewed Articles

CITATION	TERMS	COUNTRY
Burrows, Adams & Millman, 2008	service dog, autism service dog	Canada
Burrows, Adams & Spiers, 2008	service dog, autism service dog	Canada
Chur-Hansen Et Al., 2014	guide dog	Australia
Collins Et Al., 2006	service dog	United States
Dawson, 2004	dog guide	United States
Eames & Eames, 2001	assistance dog, guide dog, hearing dog, service dog	United States
Ensminger & Thomas, 2013	service animal, service dog, emotional support animal	United States
Esnayra & Love, 2008	psychiatric service dog	United States
Fairman & Huebner, 2001	service dog	Canada, United States
Fallani, Previde & Valsecchi, 2006	guide dog, assistance dog	Italy
Glenn, 2013	service dog	United States
Hanson, 2005	guide/assistive dog	Canada
Harpur, 2010	guide dog, hearing dog, assistance dog	Australia

Huss, 2005	service animal, emotional support animal	United States
Huss, 2009	service animal, assistance dog, emotional support animal	United States
Huss, 2012	service animal, emotional support animal	United States
Kwong & Bartholomew, 2011	assistance dog	Canada
Luck, 2014	service animal, emotional support animal	United States
Mac Lagan, 2010	service dog	United States
Mills & Yeager, 2013	service animal, assistance animal, guide dog, hearing dog, service dog, emotional support animal	United States
Ng, James & Mcdonald, 2000	service dog	United States
Nunley, 2013	service dog, psychiatric service animal, service animal	United States
Parenti Et Al., 2013	assistance animal, service dog, assistance dog, guide dog, hearing dog, seizure alert dog, emotional support dog	United States
Redden, 2015	service animal, service dog, emotional support animal	United States
Rintala, Matamoros & Seitz, 2008	assistance dog, service dog, hearing dog	United States

Rothberg & Collins, 2015	service dog, service animal, emotional support animal, psychiatric service animal	United States
Shubert, 2012	service dog	United States
Sutton, 2015	service dog, emotional support animal, guide dog	United States
Taylor, Edwards & Pooley, 2013	service dog, psychiatric service dog	United States
Viau Et Al., 2010	service dog	Canada
Walthall, 2012	service animal, guide dog, hearing dog, service dog, support dog	United States
Waterlander, 2011	service animal, service dog, autism service animal, autism service dog	United States
Whitmarsh, 2005	guide dog, assistance animal, service dog	United Kingdom
Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008	guide dog	South Africa
Yamamoto, Lopez & Hart, 2015	assistance dog, service dog, guide dog, hearing dog, service animal, emotional support animal, psychiatric service dog	United States
Zapf & Rough, 2002	service animal, service dog	United States

Table 3.1

Review of Terminology within Service Dog Legislation Across Canada.

Jurisdiction	Name of Legislation	Terminology
Alberta	<i>Alberta Human Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog or Service Dog
Alberta	<i>Blind Persons' Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog or Hearing Dog
Alberta	<i>Service Dogs Act</i>	Service Dog
British Columbia	<i>Guide Animal Act (repealed)</i>	Guide Animal
British Columbia	<i>Guide Dog and Service Dog Act</i>	Guide Dog and Service Dog
Manitoba	<i>Manitoba Human Rights Code</i>	Service Animal
Manitoba	<i>Service Animals Protection Act</i>	Service Animal
New Brunswick	<i>New Brunswick Human Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog
Newfoundland and Labrador	<i>Service Animal Act</i>	Service Animal
Northwest Territories	<i>Northwest Territories Human Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog
Nova Scotia	<i>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog or Hearing-Ear Dog
Nova Scotia	<i>Blind Persons' Rights Act</i>	Dog guide
Ontario	<i>Ontario Human Rights Code</i>	Guide Dog or Other Animal
Ontario	<i>Blind Persons' Rights Act</i>	Guide Dog
Ontario	<i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i>	Guide Dog or Other Service Animal

Prince Edward Island	<i>Prince Edward Island Human Rights Act</i>	Assist Animal
Saskatchewan	<i>Saskatchewan Human Rights Code</i>	Service Animal
Yukon	<i>Yukon Human Rights Act</i>	Seeing Eye Dog