

The Effectiveness of Dogs as Companions and as Therapists

Fall Literature Review Thesis Proposal

## **Abstract**

Background: Due to intimate interaction between humans and animals, human – animal bonds formed, leading to the domestication of the dog. While originally used as alarm signals for any potential danger, the relationship between humans and dog expanded to include a field of several other functions of the dog. As a result of the dogs' relatability, dogs were not only kept as pets, bred for shows, and trained for hunting, but they are also used for the mental wellbeing of humans in the fields of companionship and therapy. Method: PsychInfo will be the main source for articles along with bibliographies from these relevant sources in the area of dog companionship and dog therapy in the fields of dog therapy in hospitals, schools, college campuses, the elderly, and pain management. Results: reporting of any common themes found in the human – dog interactions across all fields, and any other smaller themes. Reporting of any benefits or nonbenefits.

## **Introduction**

- The interaction between humans and dogs has gone back many generations to when our early ancestors and wolves started interacting. As wolves and humans became more and more accustomed to each other's company, a human – animal bond started to form (Hines, 2003, p. 7).
- Humans and dogs are both members of social groups, in which socialization is an essential part of everyday life. Once the human – animal bond grew stronger, humans domesticated dogs for various uses. Domestication was enabled due to the social compatibility, unlike other species of animals.

- While dogs were domesticated primarily for hunting and protection against other predators, the domestication of dogs has spread and formed other categories: various pedigrees for pet shows, seeing – eye dogs, pets, and mental and physical therapy.
- A number of studies have shown that interaction with dogs in pet ownership and therapy reduces stress (Barker et. al., 2010, p. 80).
- Additionally, interaction with dogs and forming a human – animal bond has shown to have cardiovascular benefits during and before stress (Campo, Uchino, 2013, p. 237).
- Companionship humans receive from dogs has become so embedded in their daily lifestyle that the love extends as far as considering dogs as part of the family (Crawford, Worsham, & Swinehart, 2006, p. 98).
- Since dogs have become so beneficial as stress relievers, the therapeutic aspect of dogs has lead to more healthcare facilities providing animal assisted therapy (AAT) to their patients (Ernst, 2014, p. 1).

Barker, S. B., Knisely, J. S., McCain, N. L., Schubert, C. M., & Pandurangi, A. K. (2010).

Exploratory study of stress-buffering response patterns from interaction with a therapy dog. *Anthrozoos*, 23(1), 79-91.

Campo, R. A., & Uchino, B. N. (2013). Humans' bonding with their companion dogs:

Cardiovascular benefits during and after stress. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 40(4), 237-259.

Crawford, E. K., Worsham, N. L., & Swinehart, E. R. (2006). Benefits derived from

companion animals, and the use of the term "attachment". *Anthrozoos*, 19(2), 98-112.

Haubenhofer, D. K., & Kirchengast, S. (2007). Dog handlers' and dogs' emotional and cortisol secretion responses associated with animal-assisted therapy sessions. *Society & Animals, 15*, 127-150.

Hines, L. M. (2003). Historical perspectives on the human-animal bond. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47*(1), 7-15.

Lucidi, P., Bernabò, N., Panunzi, M., Villa, P. D., & Mattioli, M. (2005). Ethotest: A new model to identify (shelter) dogs' skills as service animals or adoptable pets. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 95*, 103-122.

Minatrea, N. B., & Wesley, M. C. (2008). Reality therapy goes to the dogs. *International Journal of Reality Therapy, 28*(1).

### **Literature Review**

#### **1) Dog therapy**

##### **a) College campuses**

Adamle, K. N., Riley, T. A., & Carlson, T. (2009). Evaluating college student interest in pet therapy. *Journal of American College Health, 57*(5), 545-548.

Daltry, R. M., & Mehr, K. E. (2015). Therapy dogs on campus: Recommendations for counseling center outreach. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 29*(1), 72-78.

Somervill, J. W., Kruglikova, Y. A., Robertson, R. L., Hanson, L. M., & MacLin, O. H. (2008). Physiological responses by college students to a dog and a cat: Implications for pet therapy. *North American Journal of Psychology, 10*(3), 519-528.

Wells, M., & Perrine, R. (2001). Pets go to college: The influence of pets on students' perceptions of faculty and their offices. *International Society of Anthrozoology, 14*(3), 161-168.

##### **b) Classrooms**

Friesen, L. (2010). Exploring animal-assisted programs with children in school and therapeutic contexts. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37, 261-267.

Gee, N. R., Harris, S. L., & Johnson, K. L. (2007). The role of therapy dogs in speed and accuracy to complete motor skills tasks for preschool children. *Anthrozoos*, 20(4), 375-386.

Jalongo, M. R., Astorino, T., & Bomboy, N. (2004). Canine visitors: The influence of therapy dogs on young children's learning and well-being in classrooms and hospitals. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(1), 9-16.

**c) In hospitals, dentists, doctors office**

Barker, S. B., Knisely, J. S., Schubert, C. M., Green, J. D., & Ameringer, S. (2015). The effect of an animal-assisted intervention on anxiety and pain in hospitalized children. *Anthrozoos*, 28(1), 101-112.

Chur-Hansen, A., McArthur, M., Winefield, H., Hanieh, E., & Hazel, S. (2014). Animal-assisted interventions in children's hospitals: A critical review of the literature. *Anthrozoos*, 27(1), 5-18.

Cole, K. M., Gawlinski, A., Steers, N., & Kotlerman, J. (2007). Animal-assisted therapy in patients hospitalized with heart failure. *American Journal of Critical Care*, 16(6), 575-585.

Kaminski, M., Pellino, T., & Wish, J. (2002). Play and pets: The physical and emotional impact of child-life and pet therapy on hospitalized children. *Children's Health Care*, 31(4), 321-335.

Marcus, D. A., Bernstein, C. D., Constantin, J. M., Kunkel, F. A., Breuer, P., & Hanlon, R. B. (2012). Animal-assisted therapy at an outpatient pain management clinic. *Pain Medicine*, 13, 45-57.

Schwartz, A., & Patronek, G. (2002). Methodological issues in studying the anxiety-reducing effects of animals: Reflections from a pediatric dental study. *Anthrozoos*, 15(4), 290-299.

**d) The elderly**

Chur-Hansen, A., Winefield, H. R., & Beckwith, M. (2009). Companion animals for elderly women: The importance of attachment. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 6, 281-293.

Hargrave, C. (2011). Behavioural first aid advice for elderly pet owners. *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, 26(10), 365-367.

Kaiser, L., Spence, L. J., McGavin, L., Struble, L., & Keilman, L. (2002). A dog and a "happy person" visit nursing home residents'. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 24(6), 671-683.

**e) Physical Pain management**

Marcus, D. A., Bernstein, C. D., Kunkel, F. A., Breuer, P., & Hanlon, R. B. (2013). Impact of animal-assisted therapy for outpatients with fibromyalgia. *Pain Medicine*, 14, 43-51.

**2) Companionship**

Arkow, P. (2013). The impact of companion animals on social capital and community violence: Setting research, policy and program agendas. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, XL(4), 33-56.

Bennett, P. C., & Rohlf, V. I. (2007). Owner-companion dog interactions: Relationships between demographic variables, potentially problematic behaviours, training engagement and shared activities. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 102, 65-84.

O'Haire, M. (2010). Companion animals and human health: Benefits, challenges, and the road ahead. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 5, 226-234.

Slatter, J., Lloyd, C., & King, R. (2012). Homelessness and companion animals: More than just a pet? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 75(8), 377-383.

Staats, S., Wallace, H., & Anderson, T. (2008). Reasons for companion animal guardianship (pet ownership) from two populations. *Society & Animals*, 16, 279-291.

Stewart, A., & Strickland, O. (2013). A companion animal in a work stimulation: The roles of task difficulty and prior companion-animal guardianship in state anxiety. *Society & Animals*, 21, 249-265.

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-animal bonds I: The relational significance of companion animals. *Family Process*, 48(4), 462-480.

Wood, L. J., Giles-Corti, B., Bulsara, M. K., & Bosch, D. A. (2007). More than a furry companion: The ripple effect of companion animals on neighborhood interactions and sense of community. *Society & Animals*, 15, 43-56.

### **3) Dog – human interaction in other countries**

Lem, M., Coe, J. B., & Haley, D. B. (2013). Effects of companion animal ownership among canadian street-involved youth: A quantitative analysis. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, XL(4), 285-304.

Lubbe, C., & Scholtz, S. (2013). The application of animal-assisted therapy in the South Africa context: A case study. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 43(1), 116-129.

### **Summary and Discussion**

A summary of all the key findings of each section in the literature review will be stated. If any common themes are found, they will be discussed in this section.

Additionally, if any implications for any of the findings are noticeable they will be analyzed and explained. In contrast, if any future research possibilities are eminent they will be discussed in this section. The same treatment will be given to any current and ongoing research that may lead in a positive direction.