

“This Dog Means Life”: Making Interspecies Relations at an Assistance Dog Agency

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Avigdor Edminster

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May, 2011

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Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to my true love Ariel Cafarelli for her amazing love, inspiration, and encouragement. I am also unendingly thankful for the love and support as well as the very generous technical assistance and perspicacious reading of Jessie Lawson. Thank you to Pinkus O'Possum, Etta Poinsettia, Mischa Moishe, Grady and Cian McDonald-Shapiro, Crystal Brinkman, Gander Bohley, Melissa Koch, and the rest of my family. Thank You Universe.

I want to thank my colleagues from the Anthropology Department at the University of Minnesota. Many thanks especially to Ritika Ganguly, Vinnie Kutty, Ursula Dalinghaus, Sa'ra Kaiser, Naheed Aaftaab, Eric Bangs, Gun Shin, Nate Meyer, Ali Moyer, Ju-Young Lee, Murat Altun, and Jenny Immich.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and advice of my committee members Stuart McLean, Hoon Song, David Valentine, and Joachim Savelsberg, as well as that of David Lipset and Jean Langford.

I am extremely grateful for the Graduate School's provision of the Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for 2010-2011, as well as the assistance, time, and candor of my informants.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my multispecies family writ large.

Abstract

My ethnographic informants at an assistance dog agency say that dogs and humans can read each others' minds, have saved each others' lives, hear for one another, and are family and business partners. These clients, assistance dogs, staff, and volunteers have uniquely intimate, interdependent interspecies relationships despite the power of absolutist distinctions between humans and other animals. I explore how my informants understand and create shared and unshared dimensions between them as they also navigate and change ideas about the family, workplace, and larger society. Explored in tandem these relationships and cultural domains illuminate the anxieties, ambiguities, and securities experienced in both. Central to this project are the ways that shared embodied relational meaning emerges as my informants make meaningful lives together.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban and suburban homes, in the United States and elsewhere, increasingly house domestic animals who are understood to be family members. At the same time, growing numbers and kinds of assistance and therapeutic animals are changing our ideas about what constitute “working dogs.” Though lines separating humans from all other animals are often treated as self-evident and absolute, this dissertation, focusing on relationships between and among humans and dogs at an assistance dog agency, shows that these interspecies relationships are changing ideas about personhood, family, and work as well as interspecies sociality.

My research focuses on participants in the work of an assistance dog agency located in a large Midwestern urban area. As of this writing the agency has trained over 300 hearing, mobility, autism, and diabetic assist dogs that have been paired with clients. Dr. Ed Eames, one of the founders of the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (IAADP), an umbrella organization for service and assistance dog agencies, estimates that as of 2009 there were 30,000 working assistance dogs in the United States alone (National Federation for the Blind website). The agency around which I focused my research is an IAADP affiliate. I conducted a total of 21 months of fieldwork working with this community. I initiated my research as a three-month pilot project

during the spring and summer of 2007. But, most of my research took place from fall 2008 through winter 2009. I attended training classes as well as outreach, fundraising, and volunteer events at the agency and at regional businesses and public spaces. I have spoken with approximately 100 individual clients, staff members, and volunteers. I have consulted a wide array of written and filmed materials put together by agency staff and volunteers, including internet list services used by volunteers. This variety has allowed me to perceive different facets of my informants' experiences, from the expression of viscerally-felt fears of strangers to detailed instruction on proper techniques for fundraising and educational outreach.

Central to my informants' experiences are ideas about what constitutes a "full life." Especially significant are ideas regarding ability and dependency, which dovetail with powerful desires for security and success of family and career. Many of my informants characterize a full life as being free of dependence on other humans. This freedom undergirds successful family and career life and, in turn, gives rise to freedom from fear.

Perceived differences in ability as well as in species membership bear heavily in my informants lives. Species lines, like those delineating dis/ability, gender, race and class, are reliant on schemas of difference (and similarity). Though the clients, assistance dogs, and volunteers manifest these ideas as well, they also experience, and describe their experiences with one another, in multivalent ways that are better understood by attending not to how dogs and humans, or clients and staff, are different or similar, but rather to that which is understood as shareable or unshareable in a particular circumstance, with

whom, and with what results. My use of the terms “shareable” and “unshareable” provides more analytical flexibility than ideas about fixed similarity or difference. Using these terms I am able to make more fine-grained observations about the contextual and relational nature of these social distinctions, allowing for insights into dimensions of intimacy, trust, and social cohesion that would otherwise be invisible.

When a client explains that she and her dog partner know what the other is thinking or that she and her partner have personality traits in common, when shared commitments or unshared values or abilities are felt to be cogent, even critical in relations between humans or dogs, or dogs and humans, what is at issue are not merely differences and similarities between those beings, but the sharing or lack of sharing itself. Attending to my informants’ experiences of what is shared and unshared, with whom and when, highlights the circumstantial and shifting nature of such cogent elements. For example, in one moment a daily routine shared by a dog and human, and the trust and care it engenders, far outweighs perceived differences in verbal capacities. Or, in a given instance the lack of shared physical capacities between a client and volunteer may be felt as a palpable gulf, outstripping all other shared abilities, shared friends, interests, commitments, and so on. Attention to that which is experienced as shareable and unshareable highlights the relationships between those doing the sharing or not sharing. As such these notions underscore social possibilities in their changefulness. And above all they underscore meaning as relational.

The clients, assistance dogs, and volunteers at this agency have uniquely intimate, interdependent, interspecies relationships despite powerful ideas about human-animal

distinctions which might seem to preclude such relationships. Using ethnographic methods, I argue that the expanding realms of interspecies relations far exceed dichotomous human/animal distinctions. My work combines anthropological insights regarding the cultural variability of how we understand personhood, family, and work with insights from interdisciplinary animal studies and ethology.

As is the case with all ethnographic research, the perspectives and experiences of my informants are at the center of my work. I explore what are often the most taken-for-granted elements of their daily life in order to gain insight into broader cultural realities and processes. I have undertaken my project to elucidate shifting ideas about personhood, human-animal relations, and sociality in North America as well as to explore how unique experiences of humans and assistance dogs who work and live together are reflecting and shaping these ideas. These interspecies teams report sharing thoughts, homes, work, love, hardships, and perceptions. In the present work I investigate the contexts in which such elements of social life are understood as shared or unshared, and with whom. These elements may include the abilities of dogs, or humans, to speak, reason, walk, hear, or hold a job. What people believe to be shareable or unshareable, with whom, and in what contexts are key distinctions that shape social life. Shared characteristics, attributes, and experiences are used to determine eligibility for kinship and occupation, as well as to make determinations regarding someone's trustworthiness and value.

The present work argues that my informants' relationships reveal much about the practical, daily navigation of species divisions and the very changing nature of ideas

about personhood. I show how my informants' experiences of new kinds of work and domestic partnerships are expanding the acceptable parameters of interspecies sociality. My informants, like many others, express heightened concern over the security of their homes and jobs, so I explore what it means that many of them feel much safer relying on dogs than turning to other humans for support. I examine how dogs and humans who "team up" manifest changing ideas about who is considered a person, who "counts" as a member of a community and why, and how and when they are accountable to one another. While my informants' lives are shaped by potent stigmas regarding disability and the fear of dependency on others, they are simultaneously engaged in interspecies relationships, their descriptions of which contradict widely held assumptions about personhood and interdependence. My research illuminates the very attribution of personhood as this emerges or recedes within webs of relationships. Most dramatically, this includes the attribution of personhood to dogs.

While in recent years there has been some groundbreaking anthropological work on social relationships between humans and non-human animals, especially in Arctic hunter societies, (Ingold 2000, Nadasdy 2007, Willerslev 2007), my work presents a very different focus, on urban and suburban North America. My informants express particular fears of dependency on others and of violence against themselves that are characteristic of these urban and suburban environments. I draw on Richard Sennett's (2006) and Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) work on the cultural imperatives born of market forces and that of Arlie Hochschild (1983) regarding emotional work to elaborate on the character and import of the fears and pressures at work in my informants' lives. Dovetailing these

concerns with anthropology of human-non-human animal relations allows for important insights into the manifold and sometimes paradoxical values and pressures embodied in these human-assistance dog teams.

My work here is an extended ethnographic contribution to the recently reinvigorated scholarship on interspecies concerns, and human-(non-human)animal boundaries. While scholars such as Donna Haraway (2008), Jacques Derrida (2004), Barbara Noske (1997), and Cary Wolfe (2009) have done important work on ethical and philosophical matters regarding human-animal relations and distinctions, my work takes a different turn in the ethnographic dimensions it can lend to these concerns. Taking seriously my informants' experiences, my work also explores how interspecies families cast a new light on previous anthropological paradigms for exploring kinship, including ideas about "fictive kinship." Here my work builds on but departs from other scholarship on kinship such as that of Carsten (2003) Weston (1991) and Rapp (1987,1992). I ask, "How is it and what does it mean for contemporary life in the United States that people describe dogs as like sons or as business partners?" Thus the present work is a contribution to the anthropological literature on personhood, as well as kinship and work, as I explore how current ideas about these fundamental matters shape and are shaped by relationships between humans and assistance dogs.

I build on ideas of shareability to introduce the "likening" process, as when an informant says that a particular dog is "like a son" to him. Whereas the distinction between metaphor and literality is often presented as an opposition between the fictional and real, the analytical notion of "likening" helps to focus on the creativity and

imagination that are always at work as we live out and make sense of social changes. I explore what is being mobilized and what is at stake in claims such as that of a volunteer who said that clients are “not like us.” These examples suggest that metaphorical /literal distinctions both reveal what is understood to be possible and are themselves socially and situationally variable. Whereas in the above example of a client who says that the dog she lives and works with is “like her son,” I saw no reason to conclude that she intended this as a metaphorical expression, although other interlocutors, both casual and scholarly, have been inclined to cast this and similar expressions as metaphor. Paul Nadasdy, an anthropologist who has also studied multi-species relations in the Arctic, argues for not reducing human-animal sociality to metaphor. Though I agree with him in spirit, it is equally critical that metaphor itself not be cast as a reduction. I detail how the meaning-making at work in processes of “likening” defies the dichotomous view of the literal versus metaphoric, and the true/false opposition implied therein. As we will see in much more detail in Chapter Three, as social possibilities change so too do ideas about what is metaphorically or literally true. Thus metaphor and literality as labels themselves describe attitudes towards certain meanings. Attention to likening shows how creativity and the processual subtend all meaning-making, not just the putatively metaphorical or poetic. It is the process of making meaning within socialities that is central to our purposes here.

Given the importance of categories such as human, animal, and person for my present purposes, I have struggled mightily in my choice of words. After an initial period of research it became quite clear to me that the agency’s human staff, clients, and

volunteers spoke of and treated the assistance dogs and those in training, in terms generally reserved for humans, and were more precisely treating them as persons, as beings of social significance. This treatment, including how dogs are spoken about as well as to, contrasts dramatically with dominant notions of human exceptionalism and profound human-animal disjunctions. Given these surprising findings I at first attempted to refrain from using human-animal distinctions, as these *a priori* categories seemed to undercut rather than help elucidate the experiences and understandings of my informants themselves. After some time and helpful prompting from my committee members, it became clear to me that while my informants were in fact engaged in all sorts of interspecies socializing which included the attribution of personhood, mutual significance, the making of shared meaning, and so on, those informants themselves used the terms “dogs” and (less explicitly) “humans.” Over the course of my research it became increasingly clear to me that dog-human distinctions and characterizations are important in the daily expressions and understandings of my informants, but these do not preclude highly regarded social relations, kinship claims, mutual regard, interdependence, and daily work together.

Given all of the foregoing I use language in keeping with that of my informants. This includes the descriptions/distinctions of “dogs” and “humans.” At the same time, and perhaps with more difficulty, I have tried here to avoid referring to humans as “people”, or “persons”, as a default category that would then instantiate the use of “person” as a category that excludes dogs. In other words, while my informants do generally distinguish between humans and dogs, these distinctions frequently undercut,

rather than reinforce, the status of “person” as exclusively human. Thus I have avoided the default reference to humans as “people” in order to better reflect the more expansive interspecies sociality of my informants. This makes for sometimes awkward phrasing, but better describes the interspecies community emerging from the agency’s work.

In “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” Jacques Derrida says of the word “animal” that it

“is a word that men have given themselves the right to give...And they have given themselves this word at the same time according themselves, reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the name, the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very thing that the others in question would be deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: the Animal” (Derrida, *The Animal*, 124-5).

At times in the present work where distinctions between humans and other animals are themselves at issue, I use the phrase “non-human animal” rather than “animal” because while it may be more unwieldy it does not recapitulate (at least in the same manner) the sense that humans are not animals, for the sake of comfortable shorthand. The comfort of such shorthand is itself inextricable from the human exceptionalism that my informants’ lives often, though not always, contradict. It is precisely because of the shifting characterizations and attributions by and of my informants that such care with language is demanded in discussion here.

Throughout my research I have considered the assistance dogs and those in-training to be my informants as well as the human clients, staff, and volunteers. This has remained true, but has also presented countless challenges. For one, over time it has become clear that I was unable to commit myself as thoroughly to attending to the dog

participants as I had originally intended. Because of our shared verbal language, and other familiar social cues, the expressions of my human informants impressed themselves on me more forcefully even as I attended to both humans and dogs. These challenges were and are themselves interesting, as in this too we can describe the join of meaning-making, shareability, and sociality. Though a shared verbal language was relatively easy to attend to, especially while jotting down notes, I also carefully watched, listened to, and felt the kinesthetic and not-only-verbal communication and meanings that emerged in the dog-human relations discussed here. As we shall explore throughout, my informants are engaged in meaning-making that is thoroughly embodied. I would love to return to this research with the primary purpose of attending mostly to the dog participants, in order to reach for something closer to parity of treatment. Such an undertaking would benefit from further methodological preparation drawing from ethological insights, among others. This does not negate the insights that anthropological methods can offer. However to ignore the extensive work of those who work with and study dogs would undermine the potential of engaging more extensively with dogs as ethnographic informants. Additionally the creative mutual interrogation of ethological and anthropological as well as other approaches will surely prove useful for exploring multispecies sociality with its expanded multiplicities of bodiment, meaning-making, and possible relations. Ethology's (historically) entrenched expectations regarding a lack of shared verbal language between "human scientist" and "animal subject," may actually offer insights on working through and appreciating all kinds of embodied differences. While anthropology's concern with the expressive, creative, and always social elements of living may help to destabilize the

locked-down functionalist regard for the activities and lives of non-human animals.

Though these fields are fairly well predicated on their mutual exclusivity, as we shall continue to see my informants live in, and emerge as part of, social embodied worlds of the more-than-human.

I hold that creative and illuminating scholarship regarding what Ralph Acampora calls “cross-species conviviality” demands critical engagement with the very boundaries of fields such as anthropology and ethology, as well as incorporating their insights (Acampora, 118). Another challenge arising from working with dogs as informants has presented itself forcibly in my writing process. I have had to be very careful in my invocation of “informants.” As with the notion of “people,” I have tried to refer to “my informants” in such a way as to not exclude dog participants. At the same time, of course, one does not have to have in mind all of one’s informants to write about some of them in any given context. Thus I do not want to disavow my sense of having dogs as informants for the sake of simplicity in writing, or because of uneven results in my interactions with them. Attending to dog participants, which is also a fundamental undertaking for my human informants, I should add, has strengthened my understanding of the mutual regard at the very heart of my informants’ experiences.

I also use the word “species” especially in reference to “interspecies” relations. I use such terms because they reflect the kinds of distinctions many of my informants mobilize, and the kinds of dominant distinctions that are unavoidably manifested, even when challenged, by my informants and those around them. Though in some sense I know that my use of the word reifies the privileging of species as fundamentally

important, and in so doing undercuts the shared dimensions of my informants' lives. I hope that I have managed to strike some balance. I make reference to "species" because the force of discourse of species, like that of sex, race, and disability, outstrips the extent or meaning of its putatively biological coherence (or lack thereof). The "discourse of speciesism," as Cary Wolfe describes it, is founded on "the institution of speciesism—that is the noncriminal putting to death" of animals based solely on their species" (Wolfe, *Animal*, 7). Though Wolfe explains that the violence of discourse and institution of speciesism disproportionately affect non-human animals, he avers that such speciesism is mobilized "to mark any social other" (Wolfe, *Animal*, 7). Because of this "[w]e all, human and nonhuman alike, have a stake in the discourse and institution of speciesism; it is no means limited to its disproportionate effects on animals" (Wolfe, *Animal*, 7).

Donna Haraway addresses herself to the meaning of "species," and she uses the word as part of exploring what she calls "companion species" (Haraway, 2003). She explains to her readers that she intends "companion species with four tones simultaneously resonating in the linguistic historical voice box" (Haraway, CSM, 15). These are the tones of species via evolutionary biology and history, the use of species to signify Aristotelian philosophical categories, specie as in shit and gold, and as she describes it, "the transubstantiated signs of the flesh...the corporeal join of the material and semiotic" (Haraway, CSM, 16). My own use of "species" reverberates with such tones as these and with our ongoing enactments and reconfiguring of speciesism.

In his response to Derrida's "The Animal That Therefore I Am More To Follow) David Wood takes to task Derrida's neologism *animot*. Wood explains that

“[Derrida] attempts to speak the plural of animals in the singular, and continually to remind us of how language is affecting our access to this complex world. It is an attempt to displace ‘animals’ or ‘the animal’ in our linguistic habit structure with a term that would disrupt the pattern of homogenization. It is a delightful word, but that may be the problem. We may precisely need tough new habits, reflecting all that is now visible of the horizon of violence stretching out before us, not a dainty new *indecidable*.” (Wood, 134).

As I see it, certain “delightful” neologisms can be extraordinarily useful, as we engage in “tough new habits.” Such new ways of speaking (especially to one another) can be compelling, even revelatory. In fact new ways of speaking can be such “tough new habits.” And “tough new habits” can be ways of speaking, as we shall see when my informants enact interspecies “talking with,” as Nurit Bird-David calls a certain quality of mutual attention (Bird-David, 77).

While I do not find *animot* to have the same effectiveness (my lack of facility with French surely contributes to this), Haraway’s “companion species” is such a neologism that helps with, and embodies such “tough new habits.” Haraway says of “companion species” as “that notion, which is less a category than a pointer to an ongoing ‘becoming with.’” (Haraway, CSM, 16). But Haraway, like Wood, clarifies that it is with not only labels or even words that we must concern ourselves. She asserts, “it is patterns of relationality...that need rethinking, not getting beyond one troubled category” (Haraway, CSM, 17). In my approach, as in the being-as-doing together of my informants, verbal talk, like so many other expressive modes, manifests our embodied signification and making meaning we do together. The present work is centrally

concerned with just such patterns of relationality, and these of course include all kinds of “talking with,” embodied by words, as well as touch, intention, and much else.

My informants have become interanimalic family, friends, and coworkers. In so doing they have cultivated and embodied many a “tough new habit” of the kind Wood alludes to. My informants’ significance to one another emerges and recedes in work and play, fear, love, and interdependence. Such relationalities exceed “one troubled category,” such as “human” or “animal” even as such categories are further incorporated, contested, and remade in my informants’ doing-as-being together.

The first chapter “Work and Family” introduces my informants’ experiences of working together and living together in interspecies families, and as teams. I explore conceptions of the dogs’ (and humans’) “careers,” characterized as they are by recourse to business jargon and reflecting what David Harvey (2000), Richard Sennett (2006), and others would describe as neoliberal economic changes. Given the pressure to embody success through autonomy and career, the vaunting of independence exists in a seemingly paradoxical tension with the interdependence of the teams, and the intimacy and affection which come to underwrite them. “The bond,” as my informants call it, between assistance dogs and their human clients exists at the heart of this paradox. I consider “the bond” as felt experience and descriptor, as a primary embodiment of emerging interspecies possibilities. In this chapter I explore the import of my informants’ experiences in interspecies families for kinship theory and vice versa. Here I engage in fruitful dialogue with kinship theory such as Janet Carsten’s work on “cultures of relatedness” (2000) and Kath Weston’s (1991) on gay and lesbian kinship and changes in “what makes a family.”

Just as the staff at the agency are professionally engaged in “making relationships,” so too I describe how my informants work of togetherness instantiates their kinship.

Chapter Two, “Towards Security and Success,” is composed of three parts. In the first part, “Professionalism,” I describe the impact of notions of professionalism on my informants. In particular I explore how agency staff and volunteers as well as assistance dogs are exhorted to behave “professionally.” I discuss the expectation and valuation of professional comportment in philanthropic work. Additionally I explore the particular effects of such professionalization given the centrality of “building relationships” for the agency’s participants. In this I am aided by the insights of Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) scholarship on emotional labor. In the second part of Chapter Two, “Security and Fear,” I explore various experiences of imperilment and how my informants strive for a sense of productivity and purpose in a quest for security. Here I describe how notions of dependence and independence are central to characterizations of full personhood. I contrast my informants’ experiences with Donna Haraway’s (2003) opposition between “the economy of affection,” in which she considers most domesticated dogs and cats in North America to be trapped, and “skillful functioning” in the job market. We see that “the bond” exceeds these oppositions, and how conditionality inheres in both. Part three, “Social Bridges and Character Witnesses,” describes the variable reception of agency clients, staff, and assistance dogs in interactions with strangers. Here I explore how assistance dogs act as character witnesses for clients whose perceived disabilities make them otherwise scary or unapproachable. This reception is itself threatening for the

clients. In this section I elaborate how “special dogs” such as these at once enhance the status of their human partners and are bearers of a kind of contagious personhood. In the ways that the agency’s assistance dogs have special and highly regarded skills they are both like and not like other dogs. Their social reception both reflects and enhances a changing social regard for dogs in general.

Chapter Three, “Likening: Doing Relations, Being Significant,” joins the discussion regarding metaphor and literality with that of personhood in the service of taking human-nonhuman sociality seriously. Having been confronted with the perception that my informants were engaged in “metaphorical” relationships with one another, I use this chapter to interpolate a non-oppositional view of metaphor and literality with ideas about the attribution of personhood as fluid and processual. I engage with anthropology of human-animal relations such as that of Tim Ingold (2000) in his attempts to subvert the separation of “Thing” from “Being,” Eduardo Kohn’s (2007) discussion of other-than-human selves, and Nurit Bird-David’s (1999) animism as relational epistemology. Enhanced by Ralph Acampora’s (1999) phenomenological discussion of “interspecific conviviality” and Terence Turner’s (1991) assertion of the situational attribution of metaphoricity and literality, I show how for my informants, as for all of us, meaning is relational and embodied. This includes the meaning of personhood and being of significance. I propose the notion of “likening” to clarify the creative relational meaning-making at work in such emerging social possibilities such as my informants’ interspecies families. Likening, as such, is a process. By attending to likening I show how meanings are made, from what, with what consequences. Likening undermines the opposition

between the metaphorical as fiction and the literal as true. We see that meaning-making is always creative, just as the fields of relations out of which personhood and significance emerges are always changeful.

In Chapter Four, “Making Meaning: The Shareable and Unshareable at Play,” I discuss the experiences of my informants, especially as they train for assistance dog team work. I explore the details of their methods and experiences with their emergent understandings of one another. We continue to consider the always-embodied nature of meaning-making, in particular the orientation towards an expanding consciousness of embodiment and the polymorphous nature of communication that is demanded of my informants. I consider the work of the assistance dogs, clients, staff, and volunteers to offer critical insights for understanding interspecies socialization. In this exploration of the strategies of interanimalic meaning-making and trust-building I draw on the insights of Vicki Hearne (1982,1995), philosopher and dog trainer, regarding making interspecies coherence and the syntax of relationships. I also engage with the work of primatologist Barbara Smuts (2001) and her conception of mutuality, as well as Barbara Noske’s (1997) scholarship, including her attention to other-than-human sensory modes to elucidate how my informants come to understand and trust each other with their lives without a shared verbal language, and with other differences. It is central for the interspecies socialization of the agency’s teams that the humans become attuned to other-than-human meanings and other-than-human ways of being. I explore various strategies that my informants use to these ends. Using the insights of Gregory Bateson (1972) and Donna Haraway (2003, 2008) regarding play as metacommunication and those of

ethologist Marc Bekoff (2002) pertaining to play in canid socialization, I explain how it is that play, and even “fun,” can be so important for interspecies training together, and for becoming mutually intelligible. This chapter details the processes that enable my informants, dog and human, to make meaning and meaningful lives together, and in so doing enact new social possibilities.

BACKGROUND

When I began my research at the agency that pairs assistance dogs with human clients, it was in a mixed-use neighborhood in a medium-sized North American city. The neighborhood surrounding the cinder block, one-level building the agency shared with a small technical publishing company is mostly light industry with a few bars and restaurants nearby. There are residential streets a few blocks away, a multi-ethnic, mixed income, but predominantly working class neighborhood. The agency’s half of the building was approximately 4,000 square feet. The front entrance had a modest reception area with a front reception desk, and like all the agency’s furnishings, the style was reminiscent of a hotel in its neutrality. The executive director’s and the development director’s small offices were visible from the front. A walk down a hall and around a corner took visitors to the training room, the largest single space in the building, as well as the kennel. There was also a very large storage area, a kitchen, and a room absolutely crammed with cubicles for the remaining staff. There was a meeting room that is used for

open house presentations and other events. It probably held no more than 40 people seated comfortably, and was outfitted with beige carpet and white walls, decorated with prints of paintings of Labrador puppies and other dog-related posters, as well as framed photographs of teams the agency has paired. The agency also had an outdoor area, fenced all around and fronting a large parking lot which serves neighboring businesses. One half of the outdoor area is paved and the other half is a gravel-filled run set up for the dogs to “do their business” as the staff put it. The outdoor area was a bare bones affair with nothing but rock, pavement, and chain link fence.

Harvey Anderson (all names used are pseudonyms) founded the agency in 1987, but the agency did not place any dogs with clients until 1989, when 3 hearing dogs were placed with clients. A hearing dog is trained to recognize a repertoire of sounds and alert her human partner to them. These usually consist of sounds such as doorbell and telephone, as well as someone at the door. In 2009 the agency paired 30 assistance dogs with human clients. This was a record number for them and further demonstrates their recent growth. Over the past 20 years they have paired almost 300 teams of humans and dogs. In 1995 the agency began to train service dogs, mostly mobility assist dogs who are trained to help clients brace themselves and navigate. They are often trained to push automatic door and elevator buttons as well as to retrieve dropped items from medication bottles, wallets and keys, to forks and pens. In the past few years since 2007 the agency has started to train and place autism, diabetic, and seizure assist dogs as well. The agency has 16 paid staff members, though they had 10 when I first visited the agency. Approximately 200 volunteers give their time to the agency over the course of a year.

When I first visited the agency, staff and volunteer presenters highlighted the fact that many of the dogs that they train are rescued from shelters. The agency's literature states that around half of all the assistance dogs they train come from shelters, though this number seems high to me. It is primarily, though not exclusively, hearing dogs that are adopted from shelters. As the proportion of dogs the agency trains to be hearing dogs has diminished, so too, I would imagine have the overall number of dogs acquired from shelters. Most of the puppies are donated from breeders, and the majority of these seem to be Labrador retrievers, either black or golden, as well as a few Labradoodles (Lab-poodle mixes), and others. The puppies usually get placed with fosters between 9 weeks to a year old. The agency asserts in informational materials for donors that golden and Labrador retrievers, German and Australian shepherds, standard poodles,¹ and collies are the "preferred breeds" for assistance dogs, though any dog with the right temperament and health will be considered. Since any donated puppies must have parents who are certified by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals to have healthy hips and elbows, and particular breeds are preferred, clearly these criteria favor puppies from breeders.

The puppies are raised by volunteers who commit to care for and train the puppies until they are placed with a client. Usually this takes from 6 to 18 months. There are other volunteers who "foster" the puppies or dogs on a short-term basis. These arrangements do not involve expectation of training and usually last from 2 to 6 weeks. People also volunteer as emergency fosters for a few days to a week. Lastly volunteers act as "breeder" caretakers for select mothers of puppies trained by the agency. These dogs will

eventually be formally given over to the fosters after the dogs are no longer being used to breed puppies for the program.

The long-term puppy raisers are required to come to at least one class a month at the agency as well as to attend socialization events once a month. The classes are run by Dan, the puppy training coordinator, often with help from one or two dedicated volunteers. There are three levels of classes: early beginning, intended for very young and/or very new dogs, beginning, and advanced. Puppies and their trainer-raisers are advanced through these classes depending on how quickly they are meeting benchmarks of learning. Dan holds test sessions approximately every few months to assess whether dog-human teams should be going to more advanced classes, should be working on particular issues, or are ready for placement with a client. The teams are expected to work on training diligently at home and in public, using the classes as guides. The agency provides capes and leashes but the volunteers are expected to pay for the food, basic veterinary care, and other daily expenses. The agency tries to secure donated vet services for x-rays and more complicated assessments. The training staff and volunteers also hold “socialization” events at places like malls and large chain restaurants. Volunteers are expected to show up to such events whenever possible, as they offer the kind of training situations to which the volunteers should be exposing the dogs. These group events also allow for the dog-volunteer pair to be evaluated in public.

Before the beginning of each class the dog is weighed, and Dan and various volunteers usually make queries and assessments of the dogs’ overall health, appearance, and well-being. The state of the dog’s weight, nail length, collar and cape fit tend to be

checked on right away. Every puppy and dog is fitted with a cape, which drapes over their back and is secured under their chest. The cape is embroidered with the name of the agency and proclaims that the dog wearing it is training to be a service dog. Graduated dogs also wear a cape, often of a different color, also embroidered. These invariably explain that the wearer is “a working dog.” Some also proclaim, “Please do not touch.” Dan and other facilitators usually ask the arriving puppy-raisers about any problems or issues. At this time volunteers usually also ask for advice or for this or that to be looked at, from the fit of a harness to an abrasion or lump. Sometimes volunteers will consult one another about how they may have handled a given issue such as dogs who are reluctant to “do their business” on wet grass or for tips on nail trimming, bathing, or car rides. There is also a puppy raiser listserv. that allows volunteers and interested staff to have on-going conversations about these kinds of topics as well as to keep track of events and class schedules.

Up to three training classes are held each week at the agency, usually between 5 and 9 pm. Each class is an hour to one and a half hours long. Sometimes two classes are held back to back. The classes often though not always start with introductions by all present after the attendees check in with the evening’s teacher. The volunteers sign in on a clipboard with their name and the dog’s as well as the dog’s weight and ID number, which is assigned by the agency upon the dog’s adoption. This number also corresponds to a microchip implanted in the dog. For the rest of the dog’s life the agency remains listed as a secondary “owner” when the microchip is read. The classes are attended by anywhere from 3 to 20 volunteers with dogs. The teacher often, after introductions, has

the pairs begin the class with a simple exercise like having the dog “settle,” wherein the dog lies on her side, letting the human check her ears and play with her paws and otherwise staying calm while being handled. The teacher usually goes through 20 exercises or so, depending on how the class goes.

Other common basic exercises are “sits” and “stays,” dogs and humans walking together with a “loose leash,” and “recalls,” in which dogs are asked to sit and stay until the dog’s human partner, from some distance away calls the dog to come to them. More advanced exercises include the dogs being asked to ignore various distractions such as food on the floor, loud noises, or playful puppies set loose, while accompanying their human partners through a walking course. More advanced classes also work on pulling ropes to open doors and drawers as well as more challenging retrieval items and pushing door plates and elevator buttons. Hearing dogs are trained to respond to sounds individually by staff trainers and clients, and not in group classes such as these. The three main levels of classes are intended as the foundation for individualized training with clients which comes later.

Puppies are occasionally fostered by prisoners at a regional federal penitentiary. Here the dogs are placed for shorter periods of time and live with their human partners in their cells and stay with them as they work at jobs within the minimum security prison. The prison program is highly regarded by agency staff who often point out how well trained the dogs that come out of that program are. The prisoners volunteer to be puppy raiser-trainers and are picked with the input of the prison warden based on their record.

Sometimes if a dog needs extra training or intensive attention he will be sent to the prison, where it is understood by the agency staff, that he will get “24-7” attention.

When someone wishes to apply for an assistance dog through the agency, they must request and then complete an application and submit it along with a fifty dollar application processing fee and two letters of reference. One reference is expected to pertain to the applicant’s condition and need for an assistance dog and is written by a doctor or social worker, and the other should be written by a non-family member attesting to the applicant’s ability to care for the assistance dog and how she would benefit from working with one. All applications are reviewed by either one or both of the two staff who focus primarily on clients, with consultation from other staff. Applicants are then interviewed by the client liaison staff.

If an applicant is deemed suitable for keeping up the training and care of an assistance dog, including taking financial responsibility, and also seem likely to benefit from working with such a dog, the agency staff then begins to look for the best partner for the applicant. This may take only a few days or maybe several months. In the case of autism assistance dogs the wait may be up to a year or two. Once a “match” is found the dog and client meet at the agency with client liaison staff. Thus begins what can be a slow series of meetings to ascertain the viability of matching. Sometimes client and assistance dog meet several times at the agency before moving forward; other times the client and dog are paired overnight or for a weekend or over several afternoon visits to see how they interact over a series of lengthening visits. Once the pair seems likely to

work well together, the dog moves in with the client and they begin intensive training together for 2-4 weeks, with follow-ups as needed.

When the trainers decide that the pair is ready, they will be tested for final certification. There are two parts to the test. One tests the assistance dog on her competence with what she was trained to do; the other tests the client's "control over the dog in public." Once the pair is certified they are expected to attend the next graduation ceremony held by the agency. The ceremonies are held in spring and fall. The newly graduated pairs are often showcased in the agency's quarterly newsletter, written by staff and volunteers. Once the client and assistance dog team have graduated they may continue to call on the staff for advice and consultation. Additionally, the agency reserves the right to check up on the teams and the welfare of the dogs. There was a controversial episode several years ago in which the agency reclaimed an assistance dog because the dog continued to be deemed unhealthily obese even after staff members had attempted to intervene and in order to help clarify dietary and exercise expectations for the dog. While the dog-client teams are intended to function on their own once paired and trained together, the agency considers the well-being of the dogs and the teams to be their on-going responsibility. Additionally many clients volunteer for the agency and thus maintain an abiding connection with its work and others involved in it.

CHAPTER ONE:

Work and Family

In this chapter I explore how my informants describe and experience their interspecies relationships in terms of family and work. Work and family figure largely in my informants' descriptions of their lives. The work lives of dogs and humans are characterized with reference to individual careers, ideals of independence, and a competitive job market separate from the domestic sphere of emotional bonds and intimacy. Yet as we will see, my informants' experiences together also belie such separation of work and home, even as such characterizations continue to exert pressure on their lives.

We will explore how these dog-human teams live and work together and how “the bond” resulting from, and manifesting, their mutual attention and care enables successful work together. In its capacity to describe the emotional and committed nature of these relationships, “the bond” is also central to the experience of these teams as family. I will engage various anthropological ideas regarding kinship to further elucidate the ways that these interspecies teams make family in their work. Here too we will explore how these relationship become significant in daily, intimate doings. These teams become understandable and trustworthy in the emerging significance of daily being-as-doing together. It is this very shared, and always embodied doing together that makes these teams family. Likewise the emotional and relational import of such daily doing together is what makes their work together efficacious. Such is the paradox of these interdependent relationships intended to promote independence. Thus just as my informants are manifesting changeul ways of conceiving family and work they also illuminate dominant ideas about family, work, and other social possibilities.

The relationships between clients and assistance dogs are understood through reference to various kinds of important cultural domains, such as family or work. These are often drawn on in combination. Even in a single discussion a dog may be described by a client as “like a son,” or by a trainer as “advertising himself” for assistance work, or as undergoing a “career change.” In all such examples, the cognition, will, and capabilities as well as the sociality of the dogs are highlighted. At other times the dogs are discussed in ways that objectify them or highlight their lower status in a distinctively anthropocentric hierarchy. This is expressed when Deb, a trainer, suggested that the volunteers bring their dogs into what is seen as a passive and subordinate physical position by “bring[ing] them down like a steer,” to “let them know who’s boss,” or when Deeann, a staff member, very pointedly reassured visitors on a tour of the agency that they “keep human and dog stuff separate” in the agency’s kitchen.

So while dogs and humans are often set apart from one another and sometimes spoken of in ways that underscore a hierarchy dominated by (particular) humans, it is equally the case that folks involved in the agency discuss and regard dogs in other dramatically contradictory ways. A great deal of emphasis is put on the importance of being able to work and live independently, of being a productive member of one’s community. Gaining independence from other humans is fundamental to what volunteers and staff hope to help the agency’s clients obtain. The primacy of such values is certainly in circulation in reference to the dogs’ work and their careers. Their work confers on the dogs a great deal of attention, regard, and often respect. Additionally this work is of course central to the agency itself.

The Work of Career

The ability to work is portrayed as the source of security and fulfillment. The dogs' relationships with their own work are framed as a "careers." These are characterized as freely, individually, and independently entered-into life paths of skill-building and personal attainment that may include service provision for the agency's clients. In fact when explained as part of the dogs' "careers," the provision of service is thus understood not only as something the dogs have chosen to do, but which they continually choose to do. Of equal importance, this notion of a career is understood to confer benefits on the dogs, including presumably the satisfaction of a job well done and a career they thus enjoy. The agency's volunteer training manual contains side-by-side lists of "correct" and "incorrect" terminology for referring to the participants in their programs. "Client" and "team member," for instance, are "correct," while "recipient" and "owner" are "incorrect." Also included in this list is the declaration that "career change" is the "correct" phrase for describing a dog who has gone through the training program and who, for whatever reason, was deemed unsuitable as an assistance dog.

"Career change" thus stands as the proper description, while "flunked" is listed as "incorrect." It is worth noting that many of the agency's volunteers live with "career change" dogs. The precise nature of their "careers" after "career change" isn't always clear, but conceivably could involve being understood as a "companion animal," a "family member," or perhaps even a "pet." Because a career is by definition here the undertaking of an individual, such "career" terminology in the "career change" of a dog frames the perceived unsuitability of the dog for assistance work as a choice made by the

dog her- or himself rather than as a judgment made solely by agency staff. Yet it is the staff of the agency who redirect the dog to other life circumstances.

The importance of what is understood as dogs' choices and desires is reflected in a former director of training's statement that when meeting and evaluating potential assistance dogs she "look[s] for the dog who advertises that—that they want to help a human." The dogs' careers are characterized by independence, free choice, and personal reward. "Career" thus highlights professional identity and does not carry the same associations of laboring, constraint, and financial necessity as "work" or "jobs" do. Additionally, use of "career" terminology diminishes potential association with other historical frameworks for understanding "working dogs." To an extent this suggests a higher status for assistance dogs, whose careers are based on higher status skills and are thus professionalized. This kind of career terminology also echoes the contemporary rhetoric that Zygmunt Bauman (2000), Cosmo Howard (2007), Richard Sennett (2006), and others explain helps to craft all workers in neoliberal ordering into "independent" or "free agents" seemingly unloosed from previous social and institutional arrangements. Such "independence" also entails the insecurity found in "compulsive and obligatory self-determination" (Bauman, 32). As Richard Sennett has it, the same socio-economic restructuring that promotes "independence" in this sense and to this extent, also produces "diminishment of informal trust among workers" (Sennett, 63). What obtains is that "loyalty is dead' and each vigorous employee ought to behave like an entrepreneur" (Sennett, 65). The rhetoric surrounding the careers of these assistance dogs, as well as the

fundamental touting of independence for clients and assistants alike, manifests these trends as well.

The status of a guard dog or herding dog relative to that of a hearing dog or seizure alert dog is perhaps comparable to what a bouncer or farm hand is to a paramedic or social worker. It is important to keep in mind that the help assistance dogs provide is understood to be precisely what their human partners by definition cannot do. This is in marked contrast to many, though not all, other kinds of “working dogs.” (While many “working dogs” may do work that humans do not want to do, such as guard property vigilantly or carry waterfowl in their mouths, many assistance dogs do what the humans they work with may very much wish they were able to do.)

While human personal care attendants might seem a good human analogy for assistance dogs, I suggest that this analogy would be misleading. It is precisely the dogs’ perceptual skills, rather than what gets understood as physical laboring, such as feeding and bathing a client, that renders this particular analogy inaccurate. Assistance dogs may be trained to carry objects, open doors, retrieve, and do many other physical tasks, but their work and the perception of their work far exceed these acts. The fact that their abilities and their own experiences are understood to remain elusive to human understanding may in fact help to boost their status as “professionals.” After all, the unaided ability to hear outside of human range, somehow anticipate seizures, smell blood-sugar levels, or calm the inconsolable are not abilities most humans would lay claim to. These skills carry a relatively high (if also ambiguous) status. And thus in this context these skills are “professionalized” as they emerge as acknowledged possibilities

in worlds of interspecies sociality. But because these abilities also bear an aura of the super-human, they reemphasize some of the perceived differences between humans and dogs as beings of very different kinds.

While this kind of professionalization of assistance dogs is extremely common, clients, staff, and volunteers at the agency describe assistance dogs in various ways depending on the context. While career terminology is used frequently it is also often tinted with and characterized by emotional descriptions as well, thus making for a somewhat surprising mix. Maxine started working with Calico after she began struggling with a neurological disorder. Maxine's partner Andy reports that Calico "loves her" and Maxine chimed in, "I believe too that he feels connected. He feels like he is supposed to help me. He understands that and he really works with me." This kind of emotional and perceptual connection felt between human and dog partner is at the core of their work together. This connection is also what inspires the description of the team as sharing a family relationship.

Central to the mutual attention that gives rise to the dutiful desire to help, such as that between Maxine and Calico, is an implied parity, a sense of shared concern and regard between human and dog. We will see this over and over. Even in Maxine's interpretation of Calico's experience we can behold that Calico is not alone in carefully attending to her partner. Given this mutual regard and the level of profound intimacy that the teams share, it may be not particularly surprising that participants tend to use kin terminology to describe their relationships, but of course interspecies families would also seem to contradict the expectation that families are biogenetically constituted and that

humans and non-human animals are beings too different in kind to actually be family to one another. In fact by some reckoning true friendship may in fact be a dubious proposition in these cases as well.

Jim Volkner is a veteran and father of two who uses a wheelchair because of progressive muscular dystrophy. He says, “ I am 61 years old. If you told me that a dog would be lying in bed with me and lick my face I’d tell you you’re crazy.” Jim recounts a time soon after Manny came to live with him. Jim was lying in bed and Manny got up on his bed and “just looked at me for a long time, then I rubbed his ears and Manny started licking me. That’s when I knew I was the alpha male and he was the servant...er part of the pack....You are the boss...I can’t describe it.” During my interview with Jim he says that he “can’t describe it” or can’t “put it into words” several times when explaining his feelings for, and relationship with, Manny.

When I ask Jim if it is different for him to have Manny in his life than his experiences living with “pet” dogs in the past, he explains that yes, there is a difference, because “he’s part of the family, where I go he goes. My friends know that. If they want to see me they see him.” Lest we draw the conclusion that this state of affairs is due to the purely practical matter of Manny accompanying Jim everywhere, Jim has also said “If we love each other, we want to be together all the time...” he stopped talking for a moment and then said, “I’m tearing up.” Jim’s describes his relationship with Manny as family, as the relationship of servant to master, one in a pack hierarchy, and one of great love in which the company of the beloved is always desired and enjoyable. In fact when I asked Jim to describe his typical day with Manny he started with a description of the

daily tasks of caring for Manny, including feeding and walking him, and then he explains, “and generally have a good time all day long...he knows he’s working all day long.” Just as Jim describes his relationship with Manny in seemingly contradictory ways, here too work and having a good time are not only not mutually exclusive but they are necessarily bound up with one another.

Jim is just one of countless clients of the agency, as well as staff and volunteers, who assert that the dogs want to work, that they love to work. Or as one staff member explained, they temperamentally, psychologically, “need jobs.” The discussion and assertion of the fact that the dogs want to work and enjoy their work is ubiquitous. Marla, one of the coordinators of services, says of the dogs, “they all want to work.” She asserts that “they like having a job.” When I asked Jim what he thinks makes his work with Manny successful, he immediately stated, “the bond.” He continues, “Manny loves to work...and work for me. I’m sure he likes the attention. You know he’s a dog. He gets a treat. He’s still a working dog.” Jim’s explanation of how it is that he and Manny get along so well together in their daily lives, and particularly in meeting Jim’s needs, illuminates critical dimensions of these human-assistance dog relationships.

Jim’s description helps us to understand Manny’s experience of his life with Jim as well as the experiences of many other assistance dogs. Jim describes very consistent care-taking of Manny’s needs for food, exercise, and grooming. He also makes clear that Manny, like most assistance dogs, is engaged all day long in activity with a companion. Jim explains that among his many tasks Manny picks up dropped items for Jim, opens drawers and doors, and rises to counter level to help Jim with his shopping. These are

activities that hone Manny's skills. They provide him with mental and physical exercise. As Rosie, the kennel manager at the agency, made sure I understood one day as she explained the training activities for the dogs in the kennel and trips to the dog park, "mental exercise is as good a workout as physical exercise." So Manny, like other working assistance dogs, is very active, mentally and physically. He is well-regarded, both loved and respected, and well cared for. He is also interacting with his primary companion, Jim, almost all the time. As Jim makes clear, Manny gets a lot of attention, eye contact, touch, talk, and responsive regard, as well as treats and exercise. Many of the assistance dogs I have met do seem to "like to work," as countless people involved with the agency reiterated over the course of my fieldwork. I concur that when treated well, most assistance dogs do seem to enjoy their lives with their human companions.

While everyone involved with the agency seems perfectly comfortable referring to the jobs, work, and careers of Manny and every other assistance dog, it is also clear that the work that they do contradicts, yet illuminates, the ground of contemporary notions of work in the United States. Most notions of work used to explain the activities of assistance dogs are predicated on models of paid work within a market economy. The kinds of "careers" that the dogs have are not only understood in terms of post-/industrial work which would take place outside of one's home and away from one's family, but also in terms of post-industrial and neoliberal trends in which each worker is on his own in an increasingly competitive insecure, and unregulated job market--a market which is technologically changeful, economically volatile, and increasingly not unionized, or de-unionized.

These are the conditions of work that are evoked and reflected when dogs are explained as “advertising themselves” or “proving themselves” in showing how they want to work. The new dictates of the labor market are also at work in the idea of a “career change” in which a dog ceases to be an assistance dog, but as the phrase makes clear, the dog still has a (changeable) career nonetheless, regardless of how the dog might actually be living. Richard Sennett avers that the “new version of talent is not content-specific,” rather workers are evaluated in terms of their “potential” (Sennett, 115). When a dog ceases to work as an assistance dog, but is described as undergoing a career change, rather than for instance, “retiring,” the dog’s life is cast as coterminous with career. Additionally Sennett describes “failure” as “America’s greatest social taboo...our unmentionable subject” (Sennett, 102). Such shame is exemplified when agency staff exhort volunteers to remember that dog’s never “fail” or “flunk” training, they only make “career changes.”

In certain contexts the “work” of assistance dogs may be described using a brief and concrete job description involving simple tasks. The kennel manager once broke the work of the dogs down for me into just such components. She described the jobs of a hearing dog and an autism assistance dog as “learning six sounds and to be a companion...and calmness and to be an anchor” respectively. This description is exceptional in most ways. Those involved with the agency tend to express rather more expansive versions of the work of assistance dogs and their teams. Compared to the usual more holistic characterization of the work of assistance dogs, Rosie’s description echoes the decontextualized breaking down into component parts of work that is

fundamental to the routinization of industrial mass production. As such it evokes a diminishment of worker skill. After all, learning “six sounds” or “calmness” seems a more limited achievement than training to be a hearing assist dog.

The Bond

What we see with Manny and Jim is that the “work” is not in fact limited to these few tasks. In the story that Jim tells of “the bond” forming between himself and Manny, the bond is indicated by Jim rubbing Manny’s ears and Manny licking Jim’s face. It is the bond, he and many others say, which allows them to work together so well. The physical affection and constant intimacy that typify their relationship and most of these client-assistance dog teams are as much a part of their “work” together as the specific tasks themselves. In fact it is “the bond” itself which ensures any and all success in their work together. In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* Gregory Bateson asserts that “When your cat is trying to tell you to give her food...What she does is to make movements or sounds that are characteristically those that a kitten makes to a mother cat.” He continues,

“If we were to translate the cat’s message into words, it would not be correct to say that she is crying, ‘Milk!’ Rather she is saying something like ‘Mama!’ Or, perhaps still more correctly, we should say that she is asserting ‘Dependency! Dependency!’ The cat talks in terms of patterns and contingencies of relationship, and from this talk it is up to you to take a deductive step, guessing that it is milk that the cat wants (Bateson, 367).

In this example what the cat expresses is inextricable from the relationship that binds the cat and the reader-cum-cat’s-companion together. The meaning of the cat’s message in motion, touch, and sound is of a relationship, in both senses. The movements and sounds assert and enact a relationship. Additionally these become meaningful, as

communication, within a historical relationship between the cat and the reader. In just such a way, in the relationships between human clients and assistance dogs the work and bond *make each other possible*. One client of the agency describes something like Bateson's kitten conversation. When I asked her about the mutual understanding between herself and her assistance dog she said, "we are both dedicated and the love grows every day. He is so attentive and intuitive. He looks into my eyes and then when he needs something from me he just stares at me...I [go through] everything he needs." The understanding between them is growing with their "love" as well as those deductive steps of emerging relational meaning that Bateson points to.

When Jim describes his relationship with Manny in terms of servitude, love, pack life, family, and jobs it is because the "work" that they do together and the "bond" that enables it exceeds readily available models of work or family and love, especially as separated from one another. This lack of readily available models is powerfully amplified by the fact that the relationship is between a human and a dog. In trying to find words to express a profoundly important relationship Jim, like many others, struggles with the existing vocabulary for relationships and shared activities, especially between "human" and (non-human) "animal." Jim says over and over that it is hard to describe his relationship with Manny even as he draws on all kinds of existing and accepted frameworks. But by drawing on seemingly contradictory models of relationships, such as family and servitude, or in his assertion that Manny is "a pet, but he is not a pet," we can begin to understand that for Jim's purposes there may not be enough words, or readily shareable categories, with which to express the specific kind of relationship being

enacted as Manny licks Jim's face and Jim rubs his ears. This is especially true as this relationship is one between human and dog, an interspecies relationship, in which the emotion, including love, and the work of daily life are inextricable.

Thus the unique power of assistance dog-client relationships is explained and evoked by reference to "the bond" between clients and assistance dogs. As a frequently used term "the bond" refers to powerful, emotionally charged, somewhat inaccessible, and foundational elements of these relationships. The term is used variously to describe a relationship, a shared world, and an emergent quality. In its characterization of the client-dog relationship "the bond" marks out a coherent dimension of relating even as it may be understood to be opaque or resistant to rational explanation. As such "the bond" acts as a meaningful reference that allows social space for the traffic of the otherwise mysterious and ambiguous elements in these human-dog relationships. The conceptual space of "the bond" allows for the very possibility for the kinds of otherwise potentially unsettling physical, perceptual, and emotional intimacy between dogs and humans that the agency's work and the client/dog partnerships are founded on and encourage, such as shared perceptual and cognitive work, and deeply felt partnerships.

"The bond" between assistance dog and client is invoked and described to fully authorize the efficacy of the agency itself and its teams, as well to authorize those elements of client-dog relationships which are most ambiguous and potentially unsettling. It is important to note that while there is much variety in how various cultural domains, relationships, and beings are characterized, there are some noticeable disjunctions between the official descriptions and explanations of dog-client relationships by the

agency staff and those of the clients. For the most part agency staff, while underscoring the power of “the bond,” tend to accentuate the nature of the client-dog team as a work relationship. The clients themselves tend to elaborate on the emotional or familial nature of the dog-human relationships as well, sometimes in ways that staff seem more loath to acknowledge, even while continuing to affirm the work of the team.

The sociologist Leslie Irvine writes of her fieldwork at an animal shelter that people adopting dogs and cats often spoke of “the connection” that they felt between themselves and the dog or cat that they were bringing home. She explains that she puts the phrase in quotation marks because it was the phrase consistently used by her informants, but also because she sees its common usage as “demonstrat[ing] the existence of an emotional vocabulary pertaining to interactions with animals.”(Irvine,107). Irvine recalls Goffman and others as she explains that this emotional vocabulary is part of the larger “emotional culture.” Irvine explains that “The contemporary American emotional vocabulary includes rather traditional and straightforward words such as ‘love’ and ‘anger,’ but it also includes newer terms, such as ‘freaked out,’ ‘stressed’ and ‘blown away’.” Thus she says, “As new emotional states emerge within a culture, new vocabularies arise to describe them. ‘Road rage’ is an example. The notion of a ‘connection’ with animals is likewise a reflection of a particular time and emotional culture” (Irvine, 108). I would suggest that connections such as these have only expanded and multiplied since the writing of Irvine’s book.

Irvine does make clear that the perception that “the animal liked them” was essential for the adopter’s feelings of “connection” :“The affection signaled a

‘connection’—or at least the potential for one” (Irvine, 109). Irvine’s “connection” here is markedly similar to my informants’ use of the phrase “the bond.” And I concur that its consistent use speaks to emergent emotional states. In the case of “the bonds” between assistance dogs and clients of the agency these emergent emotional states are perceived to be fundamental for clients’ well-being, as we have seen. But while there are obvious and important similarities between what Irvine describes as her informants’ experience of “the connection” and my informants’ expressions of “the bond,” there are important differences. Where Irvine highlights the perception that a dog or cat “likes” the human in question, my informants’ discussion of “the bond” is understood as a fundamentally *reciprocal* dimension of the relationship, as well as one which is not limited to affection, but involves growing closer by navigating daily life together, physically, practically, perceptually. “The bond” is also not an immediately given experience. “The bond” may initially form more quickly or more slowly, but it is understood to grow and strengthen over time.

The great variety in models called upon to articulate relationships between client and assistance dog also characterizes the explanation of training. Before continuing I will explain some basic details about the training and placement process. The agency procures puppies from breeders (usually they are donated), as well as “adopts” dogs from shelters. These are cared for or “raised” by “foster families” or “puppy raisers.” All of the dogs who train to be assistance dogs through the agency are cared for and their initial training is done by volunteers, and some also live with and are trained by prisoners through a program at a local prison. The volunteers/puppy raisers are required to bring the dogs to

classes at the agency approximately once a month and work with them at home on all their tasks. The puppy raisers who are in prison are visited by a staff trainer who works with them in the prison. These dog-human teams are tested regularly and advanced through various levels of classes. When a dog is eventually placed with a client the training is personalized for the client's needs, and professional trainers from the agency's full-time staff and contracted consultants work with the client and dog intensively for a number of weeks.

During training the dogs are spoken to and spoken about in so many different kinds of ways: as dumb beasts, subordinates, best friends, beloveds, pets, students, and so on. The dogs may be characterized in various ways depending on the context of activity and the character of the relationship, if any, between the speaker and whoever is being spoken about. Because the work and the bond are inextricable, we shall see that the training of the dogs relies on emotional communication and investment; in other words it depends on building relationships that make the training meaningful. Training is meaningful only as communication, trust, and accountability emerge between dog and human. I will discuss this at some length in Chapter Four.

At any class one can hear the exhortation to "make it fun" or "get those tails wagging!" Volunteers are pointedly prompted to sound enthusiastic and encouraging rather than monotonous and stern as they initially teach the dogs to come when called. As Dan, the primary trainer, explains, "making it fun" and "getting tails wagging" is key to keeping the dogs from "shutting down" during training. Since one can't "make a dog do this [work]" they must want to do it. As we learn, they want to do this work at least in

part precisely because it is made to be “fun.” But in turn it is also true that this “fun” does not inhere merely in the task or activity itself but in the relating with the human who shares the activity. The “fun” is made and communicated in emotional and physical exchange. An activity, such as tugging a rope, retrieving a dropped set of keys, or waiting patiently until called, is made to be fun precisely to the extent that it is communicated as fun for both parties, hence that it is shared. When Dan, the trainer, exhorts volunteers to “make [an activity] fun” he primarily means that the volunteer must express exuberance, enjoyment and encouragement, and these underscore their shared attention to the activity itself.

During exercises referred to as “distractions,” in which dogs are encouraged to ignore toys all over the floor while walking a circuit around the training room with their partner, Macy, a long time volunteer shouts after the dog has done well, “Make it a big party, big party! Big Party!” Within minutes of that advice another dog has not come when called several times by his foster. When he finally comes to his human beckoner Macy makes sure to say to the volunteer, “be happy with him still!” She explains later, “Try to make coming back to you way funner than anything else...even if you are really peeved, never punish for coming.”

Not only must the human partners in training make a “big party” with their words and bodies but they are encouraged to feel, to “be happy” with their dog partner. Macy is a markedly attentive and perspicacious trainer whose success keeps pace with, and seems to be an outgrowth of, her remarkably unflagging regard for her dog partners. Her example makes it clear that encouragement, in fact “fun” and “happiness,” must be made

and *felt* for training to be successful. And of course this training forms the basis of the life-long work that assistance dogs will undertake with human partners.

During the same class meeting Marla said to a volunteer, “Sharp correction is OK. If you need to drop your tone that’s OK...Like you would your kids, so they know ‘Oh, mom is serious.’” Here the correction is of course not signaling “fun,” but it nonetheless grounds the training, and fundamentally the communication, in an abiding emotional relationship. Marla teaches the volunteers how to “correct” by asking them to do so from the position of mother, here symbolically embodying unconditional love, caretaking, as well as discipline. When I asked Marla how she understands her relationships with the dogs she works with, she unhesitatingly said, “as students.” While this may be so, it is also clear that she understands the importance of teaching a very positive and necessarily *emotional* approach to training. If this is not necessarily loving, it should look and feel very similar to love. It should be affectionate. Marla clearly does not hide her emotional attachment and feelings for the dogs she raises; she explains that she will “need wine and chocolate” and that she “will cry when Hal leaves [to go live with his first client].” (This is exactly what happened.)

But she explains that because of his training he is “ready to go...he needs a job.” And she further explains, “the dogs need to be happy, the clients and the dogs need to really like each other.” She continues, “They are students...they are not going to be mine forever...[I am] just helping them to be somewhere where they will be happy and really well loved.” What Marla explains here could be easy to overlook but is extremely important. It is not just the case that she mobilizes seemingly disparate schemas,

including those regarding student-teacher and parent-child to explain unique and unprecedented kinds of relationships, though that is also true. Yes, for Marla the dogs are her students and she trains them for work. But what Marla shows us here needs some careful attention.

Marla further underscores that for the agency's partners, work and happiness and liking and loving are inextricable. Additionally, while she characterizes the dogs as her students, in her description of what this student status means we can descry much that exceeds an American classroom. It is paramount that in explaining the dogs as her students she says first that they will "not be [hers] forever" and that she is helping them be "somewhere where they will be happy and loved." Thus what is most important that these dogs learn from Marla, as her students, is being in intimate communicative and relationships with humans (or at least beings somewhat like Marla). While Marla could have foregrounded any number of skills or elements of her pedagogical relationship with the dogs, like authority, attention, or loyalty, she underscored love and happiness. This is not just ideal outcome but part and parcel of what underwrites the work these dogs are being trained for.

When I asked Dan, the primary puppy trainer, what the most challenging part of his job was he said that "the hardest part—telling people the bad news—like Simon here," as he pointed to the dog who had been sitting with us throughout our interview that day. Apparently Simon had been doing well especially in his training at the prison but according to Dan he had gotten very close to his trainer in prison and since leaving him had started to manifest troubling behaviors. Especially worrying to Dan was Simon's new

anxious timidity. Dan continues to explain what is most challenging to him by saying, “I was going to say the paperwork but that is just annoying...” He talks about how hard it is because “puppies die, volunteers get breast cancer, how hard that stuff is,” coping with pains and hardships, supporting others. He is clearly getting choked up as he discusses this. What is hard about his job is enough to make him cry. It is emotional. In fact what he describes as the hardest or most challenging part of his work is precisely that which makes his work successful. It is hard precisely because he cares, because his work is to “create relationships” and so too take care of them. In doing this emotional work Dan is at risk for emotional pain. The rewards that emerge from, and go into these relationships are his as well.

When I asked Dan what made his work rewarding, he said, “seeing the dogs with the clients. There is always this question mark and then when you see them all gelled together.” As he said this last part he made a gesture in which he brought his two hands together, linking fingers. This gesture and the notion of “all gelled together” reaffirm the particular, though difficult to articulate, phenomena of “the bond” as more than the sum of the many schemas called on to describe it. It is also absolutely paramount for each team, for each staff member, for the agency’s work in general. What is most rewarding is to see the bond in action, as beings all “gelled up” together.

According to his parents, Hank and Kate, ten year-old Jasper was been diagnosed with “autism spectrum disorder.” Jasper and Mac, a white lab, were paired in 2008. Kate and Hank assert that Mac has changed the lives of everyone in their family, not just Jasper. As is the case with every parent of an autistic child that I heard from, Jasper’s

parents were deeply relieved by the “peace of mind” Mac provided by anchoring Jasper and keeping him safe in public. However what is also at the heart of their life-changing relationship is the companionship that it provides Jasper, who Kate explains, “seemed frozen in time as his peers continued to advance.” Not only does Kate refer to Mac as a “family member,” but at their graduation she explained that Jasper refers to other family members’ dogs as “cousins.” While there is something like an implied siblingship between Mac and Jasper, some other clients describe their dog partners in terms of being their kids.

Tammi Kent describes her relationship with her hearing dog partner, Jake, as “like having a child.” She also explains in the same breath that their relationship is “very therapeutic and helps me a lot. When I come home, I can take my hearing aids out and not worry about missing any important sounds.” While her assertion that having Jake with her is like having a child is fairly straightforward, the latter part of her description may not square with most dominant North American notions of what it means to have a child. Rather than a locus of responsibility (for others), the image of Tammi taking out her hearing aids points to Jake as a source of security. He will take responsibility for her.

Alma Mitchell has been working with Tag, her mobility assist dog since 2005 and she describes him as “like her son.” Jim too, as we will recall, mentions that Manny is “part of the family.” Jim also said that having Manny is “like having a teenager around the house.” And this has “changed Hazel’s (Jim’s partner’s) outlook” too. These are just a few of the countless descriptions of assistance dog-client relationships which are characterized as familial. But as I have said, they are described not only in this way.

Family descriptors are mixed with ones signifying deep friendship and most pointedly daily work relationships. In North America it is certainly not uncommon to hear dogs being referred to as “part of the family.” While “part of the family” signals an important intimacy and, it is still rather vague. However, a dog being like a human’s son or a cousin, points to an understanding of interspecies familiarity that seems to contradict dominant biogenetic models of kinship. Such models would certainly preclude dogs with human parents and humans with dog cousins. Additionally, the fact that assistance dog-client relationships are not described only using terms drawn from biogenetic models of kinship makes this further interesting and important. As Irvine’s insights help us to descry, there is something emergent here, new kinds of relationships with new kinds of meanings.

Not the least of these emergent elements is the sheer quantity of relationships between dogs and humans that are asserted to be familial. The people who assert the realities of their interspecies families demand these be taken seriously. So too do the standards of anthropological methods. On one hand humans and dogs as “family” is a fairly acceptable possibility; on the other hand with greater degrees of specificity and commitment this kind of assertion runs counter to powerful and dominant notions of human-non-human distinctions and the criteria they are grounded in. So for example whether a dog can really be like, let alone be, the son or cousin of a human, is certainly a questionable proposition. My human informants consistently assert and live out their familial relations with dogs, and thus are changing ways of conceiving of family and interspecies sociality. At the same time of course the particular ways that familial

relationships are drawn, and drawn on, as my informants enact their relationships also help to illuminate dominant notions regarding family.

Making Kinship

In her book *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human*, philosopher Kelly Oliver addresses the “role of animals in philosophies of man.” In a chapter discussing Marcel Merleau-Ponty she introduces him by way of Heidegger’s assertion that “our kinship with animals is both more proximal and more distant than our kinship with divinity, in that we are separated from them by an abyss” (Oliver, 211). According to Oliver, in stark contrast with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, especially in his *Nature* lectures, underscores a “fundamental kinship among all living beings through our shared embodiment, which includes reflective and unreflective consciousness” (Oliver, 218).

Merleau-Ponty understands mind and bodily being to be inextricable. He refuses subject-object splits between subject and environment. As such, bodily experience, movement, and behavior are relational and responsive. As Oliver explains of his philosophy, “man is not the only being who interrogates being. For Merleau-Ponty, behavior itself is a form of interrogation. He describes movement as a way of questioning and responding in relation to the environment and others and the body” (Oliver, 216). She continues, “[b]ehavior both addresses itself to the world and others and responds to them. Action...is an interrogative style of being. If behavior is a style of questioning, then asking and answering questions is no longer the privilege of man, a la Descartes” (Oliver,

217). Embodiment here refutes Heidegger's abyss separating humans from all other animals.

For Merleau-Ponty, and in contrast to Heidegger's abyssal kinship, "strange kinship," as he puts it, "is not based on descendants or generation but on a shared embodiment in a shared world, even if the style of body and the style of inhabiting the world are radically different" (Oliver, 222). Oliver asks, "How can we imagine a kinship that is based on embodiment and not on generation? And if we can, does this mean that animals can be our brothers and sisters or even our parents and children?" (Oliver, 222). Winona LaDuke relates a story of an Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) girl who encounters her grandmother turning into a giant sturgeon, or *Name*. Her grandmother says, "Look at my belly. Do you see the red stripe there? From now on, our family will be living here as part of the sturgeon clan. Please carry me to the lake, so I can live" (LaDuke, 228). LaDuke highlights the "river connectivity" that *Name* embodies, and teaches, precisely as a relative. She asserts that "relatives are part of us. So it is that a community related to a fish by its history of lakes, habitat, and continuous survival realizes that its recovery as a community is tied to the recovery of the sturgeon themselves" (LaDuke, 229). Such always-embodied connectivity is the inescapable basis of being relatives here. My informants' experiences too affirm interspecies kinship in a myriad of ways.

Familial descriptors figure largely in the explanations and discussions of clients' relationships with assistance dogs. In addition, ideas about family also have an implicit and problematic centrality in the descriptions of my informants' lives. For all these reasons I have been compelled to explore how my informants' experiences might be

elucidated by, challenge, and contribute to anthropological literature on kinship. In this undertaking I have found Janet Carsten's elaboration of "relatedness" most helpful.

Carsten pursues "[David] Schneider's... position, which focused on the "meanings" of kinship rather than on formal properties. (Carsten, 9). Carsten's edited volume *Cultures of Relatedness* offers multiple examples for innovative ethnographic explorations of "what 'being related' does for particular people" and "of the implications and the lived experience of relatedness in local contexts" (Carsten,1).

Given the fact that my informants routinely upset and affirm dominant notions of kinship in using them to describe interspecies relationships as well as mix these with descriptors from domains often thought to be of categorically different kinds, like work and friendship, Carsten's approach to relatedness is most appropriate. As she explains it, "[r]ather than beginning with a domain of kinship already marked out, the authors in this volume describe relatedness in terms of indigenous statements and practices—some of which may seem to fall quite outside what anthropologists have conventionally understood as kinship" (Carsten,3). The relationships between clients assistance dogs and others here manifest the fact that "indigenous statements and practices of relatedness are infinitely more dynamic and creative (or destructive) than an analysis of kinship predicated on a straightforward division between biological and social domains would imply." (Carsten, 24).

I will use Carsten and other contributors to her volume to explore the particularities of my informants' "culture of relatedness," as theirs too "may offer new possibilities of understanding how relatedness may be composed of various

components—substance, feeding, living together, procreation, emotion—elements which are themselves not necessarily bounded entities but may overflow or contain parts of each other or take new forms” (Carsten, 34). Barbara Bodenhorn, Karen Middleton, and Kath Weston’s respective work on the very active making of kinship will be useful for our purposes here. My exploration of what is happening and at stake for my informants as they understand themselves to be part of working interspecies families concurs with Rayna Rapp’s assertion that “when we assume male-headed nuclear families to be central units of kinship...we accept an aspect of cultural hegemony instead of studying it. In the process, we miss the contested domain in which symbolic innovation may occur. Even continuity may be the result of innovation” (Rapp, 1987, 129). My informants’ interspecies relationships clearly demonstrate the very lively innovating that is part and parcel of their lives together.

While diverging in many ways from biogenetic ascribed models of descent, even while mobilizing and coexisting with these, the meaning of my informants’ “being related” to one another is so often born and made strong in the elements Carsten elaborates above, such as living together, emotional connection, and eating together. Bodenhorn’s work on Inupiaq kinship, “He Used to Be My Relative” offers insightful echoing of some of the important themes expressed by my informants regarding client-dog relations. She writes, “[A]cting” is what “renders kinship ‘real.’ In curious ways, then, ‘labour’ does for Inupiaq kinship what ‘biology’ does for many other systems” (Bodenhorn, 128). Not only does Bodenhorn here point to a rendering of kinship based in “action,” specifically “work” rather than “biology” (alone), but her research may help us

to identify the ways human statements that cat or dog companions “are family” or “are like family” may be understood by way of a “passive” morphological resemblance based on the norm that in ideal/ healthy American households is constituted by the nuclear family. Therefore the “likeness” to family of a dog or cat may be taken as a metaphor or analogy based on affectionate co-residence, or even “likeness” in the sense of a kind of pathetic “mimicry” rather than an active and cultivated trust, mutual care, work, and love.

Jim and Manny’s, like Calico and Maxine’s, daily engagement with one another, their eating, travelling, and working together, is the very instantiation of how the team’s bond and work make each other possible. Every day Manny and Jim attend to one another, and others, together. They do for, and with, one another. Thus we can see that what Karen Bodenhorn writes of Inupiaq kinship is also true of my informants’ interspecies teams, “Daily life is intensely social...[it] must be constantly reconstructed: kinship bonds [must be] renewed and kept viable through a myriad of reciprocities...It is this labor—the work of being related—rather than the labor of giving birth or the ‘fact’ of shared substance that marks out the kinship sphere from the infinite universe of relatives who may or may not belong.” (Bodenhorn, 144). Rather than seeing work and family as potentially contradictory schema with which the clients of the agency make sense of their relationships with assistance dogs, we can see how the labor the team is engaged in together is constitutional of their making family together. As Bodenhorn concludes, “labour ,” then, plays a tremendous role in defining social relations and their identities,...it enacts kinship” (Bodenhorn, 144).

As we will continue to see, kinship, families, and shared homes are always already full of, and are manifestations of, labors. Kath Weston reminds us, following Thorne and Yalom, “The Victorian depiction of family as a domestic retreat from the working world disguises a variety of labors, from housework and childrearing to the more intangible emotional work believed necessary to sustain relationships” (Weston, 212 [referencing Thorne and Yalom, 1982]). Clearly the labor described above is able to be rendered less visible to the extent that it is unremunerated labor, not sold within the market economy. This is also precisely the kind of work of (making) kinship that the clients and dogs engage in together. One of the most distinctive elements of the work and kinship of client-dog teams is that the work put into the relationship is intended by agency staff to allow clients to be more productive workers and consumers; this entails the incorporation of the dogs into much, if not all of (as these dogs are not paid with money) the symbolic field of the capitalist market. However, the emotional work that goes into being not only family but a strong working team is here, too, rendered less visible in the agency’s official descriptions.

The work of making family, or the being-as-doing together that is central to my informants, is also that which may mark a deviation from biogenetic models of kinship in which family is “given” rather than made. And as we will explore further in Chapter Three, although this deviance from certain models is what gives rise to the assessment of these interspecies families as “metaphorical,” we can see instead the making of family in daily labors, and as Karen Middleton puts it, “incorporated practice”(Middleton, 112). Middleton writes about “How Karembola Men Become Mothers” in southern

Madagascar. Given the centrality of questions of literal and metaphoric truth, for our purposes her approach is particularly salient. She asserts, “rather than characterize the statement [of male motherhood] as literally meant or of metaphoric power, I find it useful to explore how this idiom of relatedness is given existential reality by being conjoined with incorporated practice.” (Middleton, 112). Rather than entirely sidestepping the question of “fictive kinship,” we can take seriously the way we make kinship in concert with, and in contrast to, contested norms such as an idealized “American family.” The unmarked ideal family that is seen as “literally” a family is no less *made* for being so. The incorporated practices and daily labors of family-making also include the very articulation of whether relationships manifest “literal” or “figurative” kinship.

This ethnography of socially ambiguous and changeable possibilities for interspecies family relations and their recognition benefits from conversation with Kath Weston’s ethnography of gay and lesbian families, *Families We Choose*. In that work Weston sets herself the task of addressing the questions, “What is all this talk about gay families? [and] What is the relation of a newly emergent discourse to social movements and social change[?]” (Weston, 2). She makes it clear from the start that she is “interested in family not so much as an institution but as a contested concept, implicated in the relations of power that permeate societies” (Weston, 3). The emergent familial discourse surrounding interspecies relationships of my informants and many others echoes a number of important themes in what Weston documented with her informants in the mid-1980s. In both cases the contestations and breakthrough concepts that seem to have gained social purchase regarding the acceptability of candidates for family are mutually illuminating.

Weston describes her project as made up in part by exploring the “ideological transition that saw ‘gay’ and ‘family’ change from mutually exclusive categories to terms used in combination to describe a particular type of kinship relation” (Weston, 22). This kind of change is happening now when “dog” and “family” are used together to describe deeply important and *personal* relationships rather than the chattel style ownership described by the phrase “the family dog” on par perhaps with “the family car.” Weston describes the change in perception of “gay” and “family” as mutually exclusive to mutually inclusive terms. She explains that many of her informants’ initial perceptions of being gay entailed being lonely and without family. She writes, “people who equated their adoption of a lesbian or gay identity with renunciation of family did so in the double-sided sense of fearing rejection by the families in which they had grown up, and not expecting to marry or have children as adults” (Weston, 25) One of Weston’s informants recalls, “[m]y image of gay life was very lonely, very weird, no family”(Weston, 25). Her description of the tragedy of gay elders, who are necessarily alone because gay people are by definition without family, is reminiscent of images of the (weird) loneliness attributed to old “cat ladies,” “loners” who prefer the company of dogs, or others whose sociality tends toward other species as much or more than to the company of other humans.

One important shared element of these images of marginal socialities is in the sense of aloneness despite evidence to the contrary. While there are plenty of differences, the point I want to make here is that just as Weston points to a categorical shift in which “gay” is no longer seen to exclude family and bring on loneliness, so too do emergent

forms of interspecies families allow for a togetherness of dog and human that is seen to dispel, rather than constitute, a pathetic isolation. In both cases former outliers from the family are seen instead to have families of their own, and in these shifts we see that the category of “family” maintains itself as that which precludes loneliness.

Weston describes a sign held up at the 1987 Gay and Lesbian march on Washington that read “Love makes a family—nothing more, nothing less” (Weston,107). She makes it clear that this view of family was much championed by her lesbian and gay informants whose rights as partners and parents were (and are) being contested. She details how love is

“repeatedly invoked...as both the necessary *and the sufficient* criterion for defining kinship. Grounding kinship in love deemphasized distinctions between erotic and nonerotic relations while bringing friends, lovers, and children together under a single concept. As such, love offered a symbol well suited to carry the nuances of identity and unity so central to kinship in the US, yet circumvent the procreative assumptions embedded in symbols like heterosexual intercourse and blood ties,” (Weston, 107).

In many ways Weston’s elaboration on emergent schemas for understanding and articulating lesbian and gay families echoes and affirms my informants’ experiences as members of “non-traditional” (and marginal) families. These two (not mutually exclusive, and very broadly speaking) kinds of families are similar in that they are both anchored in “love” (as well as choice) as the family-making criteria. However, the fact that the service dogs and agency clients and others that I have worked with become family with one another through their work together is a key difference. Many of my informants might easily claim that “Work makes a family,” yet their work cannot be disentangled from love and affection. And here it is critical to underscore again that the

nature of the work, and its larger context, is crucial. The work that clients and service dogs engage in together *is* mutual attention. The central work of assistance dogs consists in helping clients with their daily and very personal concerns. This is also reciprocally true of clients' care for their dog partners, and this in turn highlights the fact that this assistance and care is generally thought to be appropriately expected only from family, and that to a very limited degree. That clients and assistance dogs do come to trust in such consistent mutual care, and without judgment at that, only strengthens the sense that there is no truer family.

According to Weston the families her informants make which are born of love are given authority, as family, through acts of care and persistence over time. Despite the relative paucity of institutional rituals and civic and religious acknowledgement of gay and lesbian families, Weston writes that “offers of assistance, commitment to ‘working through’ conflicts, and a common history measured by months or years, all became confirming signs of kinship. By symbolically testifying to the presence of intangibles such as solidarity and love these demonstrations operated to persuade and to concretize, to move a relationship toward reciprocity while seeking recognition for a kin tie” (Weston, 113). The caring labors of assistance dogs and clients also “concretize kin ties,” even while the labors they carry out may be initially conceptualized and often enrolled to address an ideal of *independence* in the marketplace, quite distinct from the domestic sphere where family is found.

When Jim says that his kids/family are “doing their own thing” as they are “supposed to,” even as Manny is at home being co-worker and family to him, he

articulates the ideal that a healthy family is one in which fathers of grown children are not reliant on, or perhaps even overly involved with, their grown children. As Rayna Rapp asserts in “Family and Class in Contemporary America,” “[n]uclear families are under cultural constraints to appear as autonomous and private. Yet they are never as private in reality as such values might indicate. The ideal autonomy of an independent nuclear family is constantly being contradicted by the realities of social need, in which resources must be pooled, borrowed, shared” (Rapp, 57). Let us recall Jim’s assertion that his friends know that where he goes, Manny will too, precisely because they are family. Contrasting this assertion with his sense of the propriety of nuclear families’ separateness and their eventual transformative cytosis points again to the distinctiveness of these interspecies families and partnerships.

Dogs and humans here make families that do stick together, that “do their thing” together, with an abiding intimacy made especially strong in the case of assistance dogs through the various labors of daily living. Manny and Jim pool resources in a profound way, and assistance dog-human partnerships cum interspecies families highlight the ideals of independent nuclear families *as well as* their contradictions, as Rapp presents them. Rapp carefully distinguishes between households and families. She explains that “[h]ouseholds are the basic units in which labor power is reproduced and maintained” (Rapp, 54). According to Rapp “the family is the normative, correct way in which people get recruited into households. It is through families that people enter into productive, reproductive, and consumptive relations” (Rapp, 51). Rapp points out how making a

family demands more time in the market and heightened wage earning even as the family is cast as the escape and support for life in the marketplace.

Yet her insights also help us to see the processes by which intimate relations of the household are made into family by way of the family's normative power as locus of affection and implicitly of other resources. As Rapp puts it, "the concept of family is a socially necessary illusion that simultaneously expresses and masks recruitment to relations of production, reproduction, and consumption" (Rapp, 51). The dog-human families that I have worked with certainly demonstrate how "[o]ur notions of family absorb the conflicts, contradictions, and tensions actually generated by those material, class-structured relations that households hold to resources in advanced capitalism" (Rapp, 51). They do so in part by highlighting rather than hiding the labor, the "support" and "mutual aid" that goes into daily living for most of us, though of course not all equally. In their inextricable combining of affection and work, resource pooling *as* affection and vice versa, and in the face of expectations to the contrary they vividly exemplify such absorption of contradictions and tensions that Rapp describes.

Dogs and humans are becoming family partly through this process by which families are transformed from households. This is particularly true of my informants' families precisely because of the very extent of their pooled resources. They are also becoming family perhaps also to the extent that dog-human partnerships both allow for and also demand, greater engagement with the world of production and consumption. Assistance dog labor, and the bond with clients that enables it, is to a large extent mobilized and inspired by the expectation that humans be able to function independently

(from other humans) in the marketplace as worker-consumers. However the effects of the intimacy of co-residence and the emotional strengths of “the bond” exceed this functionality as well as contribute to the household-cum-family metamorphoses of these putative work partners.

Dog-People

Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern’s study of English kinship “Including Our Own” highlights connotations of ownership and belonging central to their informants’ expressions of family. They write that “[t]here is a moral propriety to the indigenous English concept of ‘ownership’ which suggests that it is as natural to (want to) possess things, as part of one’s own self-definition, as it is to be part of a community or to belong to a family.” (Edwards and Strathern, 149). The reification and propriety ascribed to ownership they explain, “gives rise to proprietorial identity being claimed over a large range of animate, inanimate, and quasi-animate entities such as one’s past, the place where one lives, inheritance, family names and so forth” (Edwards and Strathern, 149). While visitors to the agency as well as new volunteers are admonished that clients are not “owners” of their assistance dog partners, dogs are also generally understood to be legally “owned” by humans even as “ownership” terminology is seeping out of use in reference to human-dog relationships.

Despite these changes in the use of strict “ownership” terminology, it is still common for clients as well as many of us to be asked about “our dogs.” And perhaps somewhere between these two meanings of possessives are descriptions such as “my little helper.” The attribution and recognition of belonging-to may more strongly or weakly

proceed from an understanding of dog as property, but ambiguity in meaning also points to interesting multivalencies of belonging-to in Euro-American notions of kinship. I would suggest that while “dog” is not a kinship term in the way mother, father, nephew, or daughter is, as interspecies families are taken more seriously and taken for granted, the meaning behind the “your” in , “What is your dog’s name?” might be understood as more analogous to the “yourness” of “your children, cousins, and/or partner”, than the “yourness” of “pure” ownership of furniture or stock, despite or in tandem with the fact that dogs are still legally owned.

Part of what is useful for our purposes in Edwards and Strathern’s essay on proprietorial identity is their exploration of the often enmeshed, rather than separated, experiences of ownership, kinship, and belonging. They explain that “if persons belong to one another through what belongs to them, then these mediators may be other persons, possessions, individual characteristics—in short things material, or immaterial, human, or non-human” (Edwards and Strathern, 153). Putting aside for a moment further ways in which clients and assistance dogs do and do not belong to one another, Edwards and Strathern’s insights help us to highlight some of the meanings that undergird the notion of “dog people” as a group and “dog person” as a descriptor. Rich in often unacknowledged hybrid imagery and other ambiguities, “dog people” and “dog person” generally are labels or descriptors that at minimum convey an affection, comfort, and some basic knowledge of dogs as a group and their particular ways. Dog people, then, are defined by their possession of traits and experiences gained from experience with dogs as well as feelings towards them.

Regardless of the amount of experience with dogs a “dog person” may have, they cannot dislike dogs. However, the label of “dog person” is not used to merely describe someone who really likes dogs but has no real experience with them. That being said, there is a fairly clear sense that “dog people” are defined by affection as well as familiarity and knowledge of dogs as a unique kind, and the possession of these attributes and experiences make “dog people” into a unique kind of people. Thus, following Edwards and Strathern, “dog people” belong to one another, by virtue of their ties to dogs and their shared experiences and understandings with them.

In addition to the proprietary identity at work in every day use of the notion of “Dog people,” it describes a category or class of people characterized by a bond that is itself categorical, and exceeds that which obtains between the individual human and dog. An even larger scale of this is described when people, as they often do, remark on and evoke the co-evolution of domestic dogs and humans as giving rise to the relationships between human-dog partnerships. In this view the natural outcome of dogs’ co-evolution with humans is to help humans (though rarely have I heard people comment on the other side of this “co-evolution”). Such is exemplified when the narrator of a 2009 documentary film about service dogs explains that “dogs are born to care about us” (*Through a Dog’s Eyes*). Janet Carsten, citing Strathern’s work on “assisted reproduction” and the role of ideas about “choice” in the creation of families, explains that “[k]inship has a critical role in these shifts in knowledge practices precisely because, in the English view, kinship is defined as being the meeting place of nature and culture” (Carsten, 10). I would argue that domestication is seated here too.

Dog domestication, as my informants and many others describe it, be they dog people or not, highlights work of human ingenuity and sociality, as well as the machinations of genes and other evolutionary players. Domestication is a concept that tends to underscore shared sociability as well as a conspicuous asymmetry in the effects and teleological demands of our co-evolution. In this view, dog breeding as an activity clarifies that dog domestication may be more of a positive by-product of human progress than symmetrical and synergistic co-evolving. Carsten explains that “[k]inship perform[s] a kind of dual function—it [is] based in a nature that [is] itself regarded as the grounding for culture, and it also provide[s] an image of the relation between culture and nature” (Carsten,10). What Carsten says of kinship here is most certainly true of dog domestication for many of my informants. It is the evolutionary and species-grounded substrate which allows for individual relationships. As such it both naturalizes and structures the shape and meaning of those relationships.

A version of this story might be limned thus: assistance dogs, like dogs in general, want to help humans because they evolved to do so by virtue of learning how to be good companions for the benefits this conferred on them (such as scavenged food, affection). In keeping with these ideas, the contemporary family relationship between human and assistance dog is understood to spring from this co-evolutionary mutual belonging (that which weighs far heavier on the dog side of the family). In fact dog domestication in this example is evoked and described as a kind of (secondary?) kinship. In so doing it relies on and strengthens the notion that kinship springs from and models, the meeting place of nature and culture. Additionally, these notions regarding dog domestication mean that

dogs may “belong to us” in yet more ways and so enhance proprietary identity in relation to dogs (at least for those who feel themselves to be dog people, as well as those who claim to own dogs).

This elaborated understanding of what it means to be a “dog person” in light of Edwards and Strathern’s “proprietary identity” lends new import to the way that Edna Hannock answered a question I put to her about support people in her daily life, specifically any friends she has. Given the fact that she is chronically ill, I had expected that she might relate her sense of support and friendship to those who might offer her care and assistance such as those who made frequent visits to the hospital or helped with other potentially trying episodes. In fact her answer referred to a friend she speaks with regularly on the phone. Edna relates to her as someone who also has dogs in her life. She said, “[I have] one friend who lives in Arkansas. We can talk about our dogs forever. My other friends, they don’t want to hear about my dog. They like him, but...[Natalie and I] both have medical things to talk about and Natalie is always there for me.” Thus Edna’s first response is to tell me about her closest friendship by explaining that they can talk about their dogs forever.

While their shared relationships with dog companions is not the only thing they have in common, as Edna makes clear, it is certainly central to Edna’s experience of their closeness and her ability to count on Natalie. Dogs are for Edna the central connector in her friendships, precisely because Mocha is so important to her. The centrality of her relationship with Mocha for her sense of self and livelihood is further manifested by her recollection that she has told her husband never to make her “choose” between Mocha

and him. As she put it, “The emotional bond goes way beyond words—if I go into too much my husband gets jealous.” In response she warned him not to “make [her] choose.” She told me that he responded simply, “I won’t.” For both Edna and Jim their dog partners are as close, maybe in some ways closer than their human partners, and this is very much due to the work that they do together of being engaged in mutual care all day long.

Doing Togetherness

Whereas the demands of other work or expectations of independence or other limitations keep Jim’s other family members “doing their own thing,” and Edna’s husband is unable to help her in certain ways, with this perhaps engendering jealousy, Mocha and Manny are cherished and share in almost every moment of their partners’ lives. Again it is through the work of togetherness that family is made and vigorously felt. In becoming family with dogs my informants all became (if they were not already) “dog people,” and so too belong with and to dogs (themselves also dog-people) and other human dog people.

Weston, Carsten, Rapp, Strathern and Edwards, and others discussed here all help us to descry the emergent sense-making and contradictions that surround the interspecies families of my informants. David Schneider asserts in *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, that “robbed of its grounding in biology, kinship is nothing” (Schneider, 112). Weston responds that, “after examining discourse on gay families, however, it would be more accurate to say, robbed of its relation to biology, kinship is nothing” (Weston, 211). As she explains, “[f]amilies we choose are defined through contrast with biological or blood

family...by retaining biology on one side of the symbolic opposition between straight and gay families, this same discourse removes procreation from center stage without dissolving kinship into the whole of social relations” (Weston,211). The changing parameters of family reflected in and made possible in “families we choose” is an important element in the conditions making interspecies families a recognizable possibility. Unlike Weston’s examples, my informants’ interspecies families are not predicated on a consistent contrast with “blood family.” There is however in the use of specific terms such as “son” or “cousin” an evocation of the authority of “biological or blood family” even as the family’s criteria are remade. The exact “relation” to biology, as Weston has it, is not as clear in this case.

The experiences of Mac, Jasper, Kate, Maxine, Calico, Jake, Tammi, Mocha, Edna, and all the others herald new kinds of interspecies families and the shifting of ideas regarding kinship. That there is also more to these relationships and these intimacies than their acceptability as “family” relation, is important. It is fundamental that their intimacies (evoked and described again and again as “the bond”) are experienced as made in family as well as work. In “Is There a Family? New Anthropological Views,” Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako warn us that “confusing ideal with reality, we fail to appreciate the deep significance of what are, cross-culturally, various ideologies of intimate relationships” (Collier, Rosaldo, Yanagisako, 31). My informants have transformative experiences of “the bond” as that which gives rise to and strengthens the experience of being family and work partners with assistance dogs. However it is also the case that “the

bond” describes that which falls outside the clear purview of either of those domains of experience or associations.

The bond which enables these relationships is a flexible term, and it certainly exceeds either family or work alone. In her book on neighbors and neighborhoods, *Belonging in America: Reading Between the Lines*, Constance Perin writes, “we may think in categories, but we act on meanings” (Perin, 22). For my informants the bond expresses the meaning of intimacy, of nuances of affection and attention, trust, and skills-in-togetherness. It is in kin terms that these experiences gain purchase and authority without neglecting their dimensions as emotionally important. And their relationships are characterized by a particular coterminousness of work and love, family made in training.

Manny, Jim, Edna, Mocha, and Marla answer Kelly Oliver’s question regarding the possibility of animals as kin with strong and intricate affirmations. In the shared substance of life-making together, my informants’ kinship is made strong in the daily labors of caretaking and profoundly shared navigation of the world together. Taking analytical lessons from Carsten, Bodenhorn, LaDuke, and others we can see the making of kinship out of the critical sharing of life-giving activities and substances. This is a doing-together that manifests and strengthens the embodied making of meaning together. The agency’s clients and their service dog partners are profoundly reliant on one another and their lives are remade in their partnerships. The partnerships consist of living together in the daily tasks and explorations of life, at home, in public, at work, and at social events. Family terms are mobilized to explain these shared experiences, mutual regard, and mutual care at least in part because those are the relational terms which carry the

heartiest load of affection, intimacy, and commitment for those who use them. And these are essential to how just about everyone I have encountered during my research characterizes these interspecies partnerships. Crucially, the work of these partners is often concerned with the physical work of daily living. Doing this work together is highly communicative, intricately physical, and often intuitive. Partners become attuned to one another, and these are life-changing skills honed in talking, moving, touch, and mutual attention of being together.

These teams do not take much for granted in their learning one another and togetherness. Their profound differences and the lack of surety or clarity due to learning how to communicate are also what induce a mutual attention that builds exceptional intimacy, trust, and care. This exemplifies what Oliver says of Merleau-Ponty's "strange kinship": that it "neither erases all differences between animals and humans, thereby making them identical, nor erases any similarities between them, thereby making them radically separate. Instead strange kinship allows for an intimate relation based on shared embodiment without denying differences between lifestyles or styles of being" (Oliver, 222). Middleton explained of her Karembola informants' "idiom of relatedness," especially of "male motherhood," that it "is given existential reality by being conjoined with incorporated practice," (Middleton, 112). My informants too are engaged in this mutually constituting and mutually reinforcing conjoining of verbal expressions of kinship with daily physical expressions of kinship. Middleton, Bodenhorn, and Carsten here are offering important insights which use indigenous statements to move anthropological scholarship on kinship away from a "pre-given analytic opposition

between the biological and the social” (Carsten, 4). Jim and Manny’s, Mocha and Edna’s relationships exemplify the kind of making of relatedness that Carsten illuminates, that is the “lateral” relations of “shared embodiment in a shared world” (Oliver, 222). As we interpolate Carsten’s relatedness with Oliver’s remarks on Merleau-Ponty’s strange kinship, my informants’ experiences of the deepened kinship of physical intimacy and daily work asserts itself as ever more unarguable, though it is argued daily nonetheless in words and deed as they work through life together. This must be the case at least partly because these families are marginal and questionable by virtue of species as well as made “strange” by way of the stigma/s of disabilities.

The kinship these teams make is born explicitly from work. On one hand we see that the dogs and clients are very much imbedded in the market economy and feel the pressures and insecurities that it instantiates in the daily lives of all who live by its dictates. On the other hand we see in the working relationships of the assistance dogs and the agency’s human clients models of togetherness in which the work and the emotional relationship, the familiarity and love are inextricable. They are in fact mutually constitutive and coterminous. Jim describes the sense that he and Manny “generally have a good time all day long...he knows he’s working all day long.” For the agency’s partners these experiences are inextricable despite the general American expectation, born of market economic relations, that work and pleasure, and fun and jobs, (as well as home and work and family and coworkers) are on the whole rather more mutually exclusive. And they are certainly not necessarily inextricable, as they very much are for teams (cum family) such as Mocha and Edna.

When Jim asserts that Manny “loves to work” it is precisely *because* it is “for [him]” as he says. Most importantly, the love of the work itself cannot be removed from the relationship within which it is embedded. The relationship between the partners is also made meaningful within a daily life of “work” together. This work consists not only in what may be most easily seen as door opening, medication retrieval, and alerting a client to the sound of telephone or smoke alarm, but more broadly consists in mutual regard and reliance, and plenty of activity together including in eating and grooming, affectionate touch, and long peregrinations together. These are the works of their kinship.

CHAPTER TWO:

Towards Security and Success

The clients, staff, and volunteers of the agency make frequent mention of their aspirations for security and success. The present chapter is concerned with what my informants consider key to making themselves safe and more generally to securing themselves, physically and socially. As discussed in Chapter One, work and career figure largely in my informants’ lives. Here we will explore further notions of professionalism and the impact of work that is emotional and relational, often total for my informants. Professionalism and career success seem to promise security. In the present chapter I also explore the underlying sense of the ubiquity of insecurity, of dangers, as well the sources of trust and security for the teams, staff, and others from the agency. The vaunting of independence over dependency is central here too, yet again we will explore the continuing paradox of the inflated value of independence in an interdependent world of

sociality. I elaborate on the ways notions of ability and species impinge on or enhance the security and regard of the clients, staff, assistance dogs, and volunteers of the agency.

PART ONE: PROFESSIONALISM

Marla began her work as client services coordinator after years as volunteer foster and trainer. Shortly thereafter I spoke with her and asked her how her new job was going.

She confided,

“This might sound kind of silly, but last week I was so mentally and emotionally wiped out because...I stopped and tried to figure it out...with all my other jobs, I had a tremendous amount of responsibility with HR and payroll and stuff like that, I could be totally slammed for two days...but to have to talk as intensively with someone as I did last week...I don’t know if I have ever done that. I am trying to convey so much information to make sure this works and that the dog is happy and that they are going to be a great team. I didn’t realize until Saturday...I am so tired...It’s a lot of emotion. It’s a little...Working with numbers... I can run payroll for like 100 people. This is a lot different.”

Just as it is for Dan it is the emotion itself, the intensive relating and the investment in relationships, that is hardest for Marla. That this would be the case even though “this is her job” is reason enough for Marla to think she sounds “silly.” Though her work consists of relationship-making she is still deeply affected by specific expectations regarding service provision and business and professional comportment within which it could be seen as silly, and perhaps even weak, to be exhausted by “talking” let alone “feeling.”

Despite the explicit elements of acknowledgement by Harvey Anderson, the executive director, and others that the agency “creates relationships,” the agency is run and presented with meticulous cultivation of a sense of professionalism. As we shall see, just as the dogs are said to “advertise themselves,” the agency itself takes great pains to

control its image and so be able to constantly advertises itself carefully. There is a profound tension between the carefully monitored professional image and imagery of the agency and the emotional complications of the field of relationships it would lay claim to. Though Marla feels silly being so exhausted by the emotional work she does, engaging communicatively and emotionally with the agency's clients and the assistance dogs is central to her ability to do her job well to. She does this to help them begin an emotionally and communicatively forthright relationship. The complications, pains, and even the untidy elements of all this relating exists in a sometimes striking contradiction to the images put forward by the agency. The coexistence of these seemingly disparate elements and experiences seem to be most uncomfortable, and stressful, for agency staff. Agency volunteers also feel a lot of stress around "doing things right," and are constantly concerned about harming the dogs they are entrusted with, as well as being worthy representatives of the agency.

Volunteers and staff manifest clear striving to contribute to the strong reputation of the agency, even as the pressure to do so can be quite stressful. Marvin, a new but very outgoing client of the agency, told me that long before he considered working with an assistance dog personally he had definitely noticed that "the blue-vested service dogs are more well-behaved, more professional, than the other company in town here." The agency staff also wear matching bright blue polo shirts embroidered in black and white with the agency's name and logo. At every event that the agency hosts its signature colors of bright blue, white, and black assert the agency's coherence in balloons and ribbons, in the curtains on the graduation stage, and in their promotional materials. Once while

spending time with the kennel manager as she took dogs to local stores as part of their training I was struck by the completeness of the uniforms worn by human and dog. While Rosie wore her uniform, each dog she worked with was outfitted in a bright blue cape embroidered with the agency name and logo and a specially embroidered collar with the agency name on it, also in the bright blue. Strung between dog and human were matching blue leashes and harnesses.

Rosie, the kennel manager, once explained to me that because the polo shirts have short sleeves they do not cover two small matching tattoos she has on both of her upper arms. She told me that these tattoos “upset” the executive director and so she tries to keep them turned away from him when they are in the same room. She also says of the uniform that “they are especially emphasized when there are visitors at the facilities” but from her perspective the dirtiness and hairiness of her work makes the bright blue polo shirt and khaki pants a terrible choice of uniform for someone managing a kennel. She says that she has to wash her clothes many times a week or she would have to go to work in dirty clothes, which would clearly undermine the point of the uniform. She told me that much to her chagrin the uniform looks like those worn by workers at a popular discount store. She said, “I can’t tell you how many times I have been at Jumbo with a dog, in a cape and all, and people have still asked me where something can be found.” While the uniform may be an annoyance for her at times she is also deeply invested in her burgeoning career, and her work with this well-regarded agency is key to that.

Rosie explained to me once that she was breaking up with her boyfriend, whom she lived with. She was probably going to have to move out of her house, where she had

a garden she had been tending carefully. She asserted, seemingly as much to herself as to me, “if I am really serious about this dog training thing then I need to be out training dogs all the time and not gardening and cooking.” Even though she also said that she would be glad not to have the responsibility of their house and of being her boyfriend’s “part-time housewife” it was clear in her tone that she thought her career and her domestic pursuits were in conflict. As she put it, if she was indeed serious about her career she needed to be engaging in it “all the time,” so her personal relationships and her domestic life would have to suffer. Like Rosie, Dan also expressed both gratification at his professional affiliation with the agency and the enormity of his commitment to it.

I first met Dan at an open house for the agency right after he had been hired on. He was choked up from a film that had just been screened and was full of emotion about the work of the agency. He was clearly inspired and expressed great encouragement about my interest in the agency as well. As he told me approximately two years after our first meeting, he had originally been in auto parts and but decided he “wasn’t going anywhere.” He took vocational aptitude tests that, as he explained it to me, clarified that he “loved dogs and teaching,” and after much networking, reading, dog-care, and work as a trainer he ended up at the agency. He confided that “most people around here don’t know I have only been doing this since 2004.” From his description of it, his home as well as his life became overrun with dogs and his work with them as he has pursued this new career. He reported that in a two or three year period he had 65 dogs in his house for private classes.

When I asked him if it was all worth it, he said, “ Depends on the day, sometimes...working nights and weekends and holidays and the volunteers who call when you are on vacation.” Knowing how much he cares about the work he does and how much he care he puts into the dogs, this answer is particularly striking. As Rosie does, Dan understands his new(ish) career as a dog trainer to exclude a “personal” life outside of or without incorporating elements from his work. This is so even as the work he does as an employee of the agency *is* personal, emotional, and often takes place in his home. Because his work is with the dogs and relationships more broadly, his work ends up with him all the time. He often has one or more assistance dogs in training who stay at his house, and they frequently accompany him all day.

Not only do individual staff at the agency clearly care about their burgeoning careers but they, like many volunteers and clients as well, understand the agency itself to be an expanding enterprise, and one they are clearly proud to be part of. As of this writing the agency is moving to a facility around ten miles away from its original location. The new building is nearly five times the size of the original building. One of the staff explained that she believed that a loyal and anonymous donor single-handedly gave the agency the money for the purchase of the land (four acres) and the building (22,000 square feet). The staff member said, “she really takes the agency to heart.” In the agency newsletter the director simply describes the new facility as “purchased.” A great deal of the work remodeling and outfitting the facility is being donated as well. For volunteers and clients as well as staff the feeling that their bright futures are linked to the success of the agency is apparent.

Marla described to me an improvement in the efficiency and coherence of the training program since she first became involved only two years ago. She continued, “I think the dogs we turn out next year, I think you’ll be able to see a difference between them and the dogs we sent out last year... They are just going to be much more polished... and say now we can have ten dogs in runs over here, in the new building for first stage they are looking at 30 maybe 35... and it has to be structured, it has to be a lot different.” For Marla as for Rosie and others, this expectation about the nature of change is not merely regarding moving the agency into a larger facility, but expresses the excitement, as well as the anxiety, of a growing enterprise.

The pressure that Dan and Rosie feel in committing themselves entirely to their jobs is underwritten by the sense that staying competitive by being ever-responsive to the demands of the job is fundamental for their success. The agency had recently replaced their training director, Jane, and Marla explained her replacement this way as part of a larger shift in the agency: “the organization is growing... I am sure you’ve been exposed to new companies and stuff but you reach the point where everybody has to change or you don’t get any bigger, and that’s at the point where these guys are and with Jane these people wouldn’t have been able to get any bigger.” Marla is espousing the valorization of flexibility, mobility, and fluidity that is, as Richard Sennett and Zygmunt Bauman explain, emphasized in neoliberal business rhetoric. As Richard Sennett puts it, “in work terms, a person’s human ‘potential’ consists in how capable he or she is in moving from problem to problem, subject to subject, the ability to move around in this way resembles the work of consultants, writ large” (Sennett, 115). For the agency staff, the promise of

improved work and a growing organization is matched by the perils of a changeful work environment, such as the possibility of being jettisoned as an obstacle to success.

A conversation with Rosie revealed a great deal of future-imagining of the agency's work. Though Rosie was at times clearly discussing official plans for the new facilities, at other times it was unclear to me how likely the ideas she shared with me would be realized, and whether they were simply visions inspired by national conferences and conversations with other staff, or whether these were well-outlined plans authorized by the executive director and board of directors. For example Rosie talked about mass trainings at hotels and at their new facilities with the clients paying some money for these (they pay nothing currently), thus saving the agency cost to pay trainers to work one or two clients at a time.

Rosie also described the expansion of their breeding abilities at the new facility. But she expressed fears about "people ruining it." It was clear that she fears clients ruining the success of major expansions that she was describing to me. She clarified that the ruin she feared was one brought on by "clients not following through with their part in the team." In fact she suggested "maybe if there is more buy-in [monetarily] then there would be more accountability." This suggests a dramatic departure from touting the philanthropic nature of the agency's work, including the fact that dogs, training and supplies are provided free of charge to clients because, as the agency mission states, they want every person who wants and needs an assistance dog to be able to work with one.

The agency has never had its own on-site breeding program. Dogs have always been donated or adopted from shelters. And this fact is touted in brochures and at events.

Final training sessions usually take place in individual homes and are highly personalized, this being a far cry from the mass centralized trainings Rosie speculated about with me. As it stands the current placement training is tailored to the needs and skills of one assistance dog and one client learning to work together. For example with hearing dogs the dogs learn to identify the specific sounds of a particular telephone, smoke alarm and door bell and alert the client to them, as well as learning directives to alert specific other people in the household should this need arise. The idea of mass trainings, let alone in hotels and charged for to boot, is a stark departure from the current training programs.

While some of these changes may very well come to pass, the fact that Rosie imagines and celebrates changes such as these is important in its own right. She shares an image of success that like Marla's allusion to new companies makes no distinction between the agency and any other growing business. Success here means increased productivity judged quantitatively. Mass trainings would mean greater numbers of dogs and clients that can be processed (paired and trained) at one time. Despite the agency's history of providing assistance dogs for free, this too is undercut in Rosie's vision. In this case, while it may not explicitly be to fatten the profit margin, she mentions the appeal of charging clients a fee because this will, she believes, be a measure of the care and accountability they will demonstrate *as* clients of the agency. Here she straightforwardly uses money to metonymically evoke professional conduct in a business relationship. Any fee they pay will demonstrate concretely their care, or rather "investment" in their own success and so also that of the agency, and hence they will be less likely to "ruin it."

The idea that the clients could somehow ruin the expanding enterprise of the agency on one hand seems ludicrous, but on another hand it makes perfect sense. If the clients do somehow fail to take their work with the dogs seriously, or mistreat the dogs, or otherwise reflect badly on the agency, the agency's reputation and therefore its viability will suffer. The fact that the agency is a philanthropic enterprise rather than solely a business one is elided in the foregoing. Their stated goals include "enhancing quality of life for people with disabilities" and "creating partnerships" as well as doing so "free of charge" to the clients. This mission underscores the relational and philanthropic elements so central to the agency that would not seem easily reconciled with the vision of commercial success drawn on in the preceding examples.

Yet business models and capitalist ideals pervade the agency's work and its participants' experiences. At one open house at the agency Calvin Jensen, a board member, introduced the executive director. Calvin is, as of this writing, the treasurer of the agency and a finance executive of a medical clinic. He said that he got involved with the agency "not only" because he "loves dogs" but because "everyone here is a pro." Not only did Calvin repeat this assessment of the agency staff as "pros" several times but he asserted that the agency is a "highly effective and efficient organization." Jensen followed these statements up with the fact that the organization "helps create relationships...[and] that is a gift that keeps on giving." Here the models of business efficiency seem to coalesce seamlessly with relational ideals and philanthropy. In fact Jensen's description suggests that the former can assure success of the latter. But what

does it mean if capitalist models of efficiency are seen as complimentary, perhaps even necessary guards for effective caring relationships?

While the ramifications of the mingling of ideals of caring interpersonal relationships with professionalism will be discussed further on, let us here explore the character of this mix as this board member mobilizes it. He is a finance executive who is also a board member, and as such his introduction of the executive director at the open house serves as a testimonial, as all introductions of this kind do. In this case he was chosen precisely because of his expertise in business and financial matters. According to his testimonial the agency and those who make it work are successful to the very extent that they are “professionals.” Despite the fact that the agency volunteers provide an inordinate amount of the work as well as material resources and the fact that the agency raises money by donation, the testimonial here underscores the primacy of “professionalism.” This professionalism as it is used here is the very paradigm of trustworthiness, of competence. It is taken from the realm of paid work, from the very type of career orientation in a market economy that is used thoroughly to characterize the assistance dogs.

According to the logics at work within and around the agency I would suggest that the agency’s efficiency inheres in “creating relationships,” because as Calvin Jensen makes it clear these relationships are precisely “gifts that keep on giving.” As any visitor hears, the relationship is the very product that the agency creates. Yet the relationship is also designed to be self-sustaining. The training that goes into the relationships between clients and assistance dogs helps to ensure its longevity by guiding them in right

experiences of, and behavior in, these relationships. Thus the training of the assistance dogs and clients in partnership manifests and maintains professional standards that can be self-sustained by the “team” through the years. The initial investment of work and resources by the agency and its volunteers here gives rise to a self-sustaining partnership between dog and client.

I would argue that the partnership is self-sustaining precisely because of the mutual attention and intimacy between assistance dog and client in all endeavors. Paradoxically this mutual attention and emotionally saturated intimacy is such that divisions between professional work, family, and friendship are troubled . Thus the “professional” “efficiency” that obtains here does so precisely as the “teams” themselves defy professional/amateur divisions. This holds true not only in terms of the work of the “teams” themselves but in the training of the dogs, done more often than not by non-professionals. Efficiency in this context describes making relationships which can then sustain themselves, as long as relationships are experienced in the correct ways. The work gets embodied and transferred from volunteers to clients and dogs. This can then be maintained and so “keep on giving.”

Again, it is important to keep in mind that even though volunteers and prisoners do the lion’s share of the training of the dogs, ideals of “professionalism” are in constant and authoritative circulation around the agency and those who work with it. It is without a doubt a philanthropic enterprise, yet in its goals and its methods, strong ideas about business success, career, and profit assert themselves. Success is determined by using standards of business success, especially those in keeping with neoliberal shifts. Market

logics then will keep the philanthropic endeavors here at their sharpest and most effective. What Calvin Jensen points to in his introduction is that this holds true precisely to the extent that each participant is “a pro,” and that all participants conduct themselves professionally.

Making (and taking) community concern and commitments over with capitalist methods is the subject of Matthew Bishop and Michael Green’s book *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World* which was later renamed as *How Giving Can Change the World*. The “Philanthrocapitalist” website proclaims, “[f]or the past century, we have looked to governments to tackle these problems [poverty, climate change, social problems]. But their track record has been, at best, mixed...A new approach to solving social problems is needed, based on innovative partnerships between business, nonprofits and government” (philanthrocapitalism/synopsis). Bishop and Green explain further that “philanthrocapitalism” offers

“a new way of doing philanthropy, which mirrors the way that business is done in the for-profit capitalist world... philanthrocapitalism describes at the macro level the ways in which capitalism itself can be philanthropic, working for the good of mankind. It is not just that, at its best, capitalism drives innovation which tends to benefit everyone, sooner or later, through new products, higher quality and lower prices. The winners of capitalism increasingly see giving back as an integral part of being wealthy... [Philanthrocapitalism] uses the rich as a lens to look at how society is changing the way it solves its biggest problems, by bringing together business, nonprofits, governments, social entrepreneurs and philanthropists in innovative partnerships. *Giving* has a crucial role to play, not least as *the risk capital* that catalyzes many of these partnerships.”(philanthrocapitalism/about/faq my italics).

The proponents of philanthrocapitalism consistently oppose the efficiency and effectiveness of capitalism with the failures of government, to the exclusion of any other ways of looking at community undertakings. At its core its advocates are strong

proponents of the privatization of community resources, including even commitments to the community. It is this kind of philanthrocapitalist logic that animates Calvin Jensen's testimonial because the work done at the agency is exactly the "risk capital" that catalyzes partnerships and so "keeps on giving." The very impulse to give is here identified as "capital." What Bishop and Green and others who advocate its goals do effectively is translate everything into a language more coherent within capitalism. At its core philanthrocapitalism avers that nothing good can evade capitalist cooptation and use for its justification. Scott Cutler Shershow explains in his book *The Work and the Gift*, "the new philanthropy transforms the gift into work by managing and evaluating charitable practices like any other investment" (Shershow, 133). Thus the impulse to care, to help, as well as the affective and emotional elements of philanthropy are ultimately if not reducible to, then made effective only if informed by the vigor of capitalist know-how.

The maximization of profit and competition are cast as exclusively positive and benign elements for shaping solutions to "problems" that are implied to be agreed upon as universal truths. The notion that global capitalism may be the primary cause of the problems gestured to is certainly not dealt with in such accounts as Bishop and Green's. The inadequacy of government and notions of "poverty" and "climate change" rendered autochthonous are called upon to indicate the scale of problems capitalism can vanquish. The staff of the agency labor daily under the premise that professional behavior and comportment are absolutely critical to their personal success as well as that of the agency.

Like the “bond” itself, the meaning of professionalism is nuanced and dense with import. It is also essential to my informants’ experience of their daily lives.

At a graduation ceremony for new teams Deanne Denning was awarded a plaque of appreciation for her 10 years of service to the agency. She and Harvey Anderson smiled as they each took hold of the plaque on stage and posed for photographs and for the video camera, both systematically recording each step of the agency’s graduation ceremony. Deanne, the current volunteer coordinator, is also in charge of event planning. I first met her at a volunteer orientation event after a tour of the facilities. She presided over the orientation with a stern rigidity even as she offered a friendly countenance to attentive participants. She handed out literature, and as we sat in the agency’s training room converted to accommodate the meeting, Deanne listed upcoming events. Not all volunteers were new, as some of the other attendees talked about their experiences at the last county fair and the home and garden expo. Deanne fairly quickly corralled attention and went over the dos and don’ts of staffing booths for the agency. She started by telling us all, “don’t accost people in wheelchairs and assume they need service dogs.” She explained that apparently last year some volunteers had done just that and that was “really rude.”

Deanne went over the training materials, small booklets as well as material printed from websites. One page contained side by side lists of correct and incorrect terms pertaining to people with disabilities, clients, and assistance dogs. These included “incorrect” terms such as “confined to a wheelchair,” “owner”[of an assistance dog], and “replacement [dog]” (as well as those I mention elsewhere) paired with their “correct”

counterparts: “using a wheelchair,” “partner/team member,” and “successor dog.”

Beyond describing each of these examples, Deanne carefully explained the importance of proper comportment while staffing a booth. She asserted the need to smile, and described how to use body language to communicate properly. She exhorted volunteers not to “fraternize” among each other nor to eat, drink, or leave their food and drinks visible. She explained the proper amount of literature to offer to people and when to offer it. She underscored the mandatory nature of proper dress, which consists of khaki pants and the agency sweatshirt worn over a collared shirt.

During this exposition on volunteer propriety a volunteer named Sandra scooted down quietly from her chair to the floor in order to pet a puppy being fostered for the agency. Deanne looked at her disdainfully and looked also a bit shocked. She said quietly but quite commandingly, “get up.” Despite the thoroughly chiding and disciplinary tone of the volunteer training as a whole, Deanne ended the training with the surprising proclamation that “staffing the booth is a lot of fun!” This presentation, like other events and interactions I witnessed, clarify the importance placed on careful presentation and the centrality of perceived professional comportment for those representing the agency.

Arlie Hochschild’s insights regarding emotional labor in *The Managed Heart* offer an important perspective on the interplay of emotional relationships and professional comportment that characterize much of the work of staff at the agency. Hochschild studied the work experiences of flight attendants as well as bill collectors in her important analysis of “emotional labor.” She writes that “[t]he claim to control over a worker’s physical appearance was backed by continuous reference to the need to be

‘professional.’ In its original sense, a profession is an occupational grouping that has sole authority to recruit, train, and supervise its own members”(Hochschild, 103). She explains that her informants did not at the time of her research fit that description. However, she continues, “[l]ike workers in many other occupations, they call themselves “professional” because they have mastered a body of knowledge and want respect for that” (Hochschild, 103). This characterization certainly holds true for the assistance dog trainers and others whose work it is to “create relationships” through the agency. Their work, as well as public recognition of the arena of their expanding expertise in human-dog relationships and training is growing. Their claims to professionalism reinforce and are reinforced by this expansion of purview.

However the use of the term professionalism does not merely describe the attainment of skills, nor a level of general experience in a field. Hochschild explains, “Companies also use ‘professional’ to refer to this knowledge, but they refer to something else as well. For them a ‘professional’ flight attendant is one who has completely accepted the rules of standardization. The flight attendant who most nearly meets the appearance code ideal is “the most professional” in this regard” (Hochschild, 103). What Hochschild illuminates in the preceding passage is the use of professionalism to mean precisely a highly standardized and controlled comportment. As such it describes presentation rather than knowledge or experience. This professionalism describes precisely appearances such as those that Deanne too explains are essential for volunteers. In fact for Hochschild’s flight attendants and the agency’s staff, the original meaning of

professionalism as “mastery of a body of knowledge” is partly realized through their appearances, their expression of a very image-oriented professionalism.

Hochschild defines “emotional labor” as labor that “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 7). In the case of airline customers this is, “the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place” (Hochschild, 7). The “proper state of mind in others” for the staff of the agency of course depends on the context. For the most part this would be most generally a deeply moved emotional state inspiring philanthropic giving. Hochschild explores the nature of how people are trained in “emotional labor,” and what she says about this describes quite nicely the work of Deanne Denning in her capacity as volunteer coordinator. “Trainers take it as their job to attach to the trainee’s smile an attitude, a viewpoint, a rhythm of feeling that is, as they often say, ‘professional’” (Hochschild, 4). The nuanced valence and texture of this “rhythm of feeling” is very context-dependent. The professionalism that Denning elicits in her trainees is a mix of rigidity and congeniality that she herself expresses. The apparent laxness of the floor-sitting and puppy-cuddling volunteer is unacceptable, yet the volunteers must also help to express the emotionally bonded and skillful functioning of the agency’s teams, and do so in a way that seems “fun.” When Denning commands a volunteer to “get up” she is clarifying the relevant “rhythm of feeling,” and integral to this is the very appearance of being (self-) controlled.

As I discussed earlier the agency’s staff as well as the volunteers wear a uniform of bright blue and khaki. The dogs as well wear the agency’s colors. Even the puppies in

training wear the embroidered capes, but theirs explain that they are “in-training.” When the puppies are brought in for classes by the volunteers who take care of them (“puppy raisers” or “foster families”), they are weighed and signed in. Usually before class the room fills with volunteers putting blue capes on dogs, and the trainers (both staff and more experienced volunteers) move around the room helping to get them on properly and switching out those that are too small for larger ones, as happens often with the growing puppies.

The trainers also ask after this puppy’s diet or that puppy raiser’s facility with nail trimmers as the dogs’ health and grooming come under scrutiny. On occasion one of the long-time volunteers will actually trim a puppy’s toenails, and stern assertions will be made about the non-negotiable matter of the dog’s diet or other agency’s guidelines. At the end of the class or in the event that a puppy has to leave class to relieve herself her cape is removed. Despite the fact that this sometimes seems like quite a hassle for a quick break for a squirming puppy, this protocol is always followed. I had wondered about the matter of the cape’s strictures for months and never directly asked about it. One evening I had my chance in the form of a breakdown in the order of the classroom.

This occurred at a beginners’ class for puppies and their raisers. Most of the puppies were quite small and young, and two of them were being fostered by staff. One was being fostered by Carla, the new media relations specialist, and the other by Dan himself. There were a few long-time volunteers and a few new folks who sat in the folding chairs around the outside of the training area with myself and family members of those on the mat-covered inner training area. The new people were introduced by Dan

with a friendly and expansive wave, though he could not remember their names. They introduced themselves and nodded to the rest of the class. Dan did however remember that they were “poodle people” and he said so as others greeted these new “puppy raisers without puppies.”

The class got going quickly as usual with exercises involving teaching the puppies to sit, stay, heel, retrieve (or at least pass off an object they have picked up from the floor), and tug on a rope. The class was intensive but the trainers emphasized lots of praise and encouraged both puppy and human to pay lots of attention to one another. Well into the class that night Dan suggested that the teams “switch handlers” including passing leashes to the new and visiting puppy raisers. The puppy raisers did so, and there was some confusion as the participants’ relative ease, or at least familiarity with their partners, was substituted with meeting the unfamiliar. The puppy raisers prompted each other about their charges, giving names and other information, while the puppies meandered about. Dan directed everyone to “short up on the leash.”

Then the tone and shape of the class changed from one of relative order and focus to a mildly awkward confusion. After a few moments Pluto, the puppy Dan had been fostering, hunched down and took a big shit leaving a pile of soft poop on the floor nearly half the size of the dog himself. Sally, a volunteer with another puppy leapt forward and took off Pluto’s cape as another volunteer rushed him outside. Just as Dan said, somewhat shamefacedly, “Must have overdone it on treats,” another puppy, Scooter, began pooping. A stream of solid turds came out as his raiser scooped him up like a baby, cradling him on his back as if to keep the turds in, and raced out of the room in a flash.

While people rushed around getting cleaning solutions and paper towels and taking puppies outside, I asked Sally whether they take the capes off to keep them from getting dirty. I had already noticed that the capes seemed designed to preclude this, at least as far as urination and defecation are concerned. While keeping an eye on the happenings of the room she responded, “mostly don’t want them to go in the cape. Because in public...because it doesn’t look really good.” As she said this Poppy, a littermate of Pluto, started to pee on the mat-covered floor.

So it seems that the puppies learn early, as do the volunteers, that the capes go on when the dogs are working, and they come off when the dog is not. This is a rule that is respected almost unswervingly and automatically even when the “potty break” in question is a short and very pressing one. In frantic removal of the cape even as a dog was actually shitting we can make out the strength of the cape as symbol and signifier of work. It has become apparent that shitting in particular is not a proper work activity, just as eating and drinking are not proper booth staffing behavior. “It doesn’t look very good” in large part because the shitter (and the eater or slouching fraternizer) is wearing the agency’s logo and colors, and is representing the agency. The model of work and high standards of professional comportment that the volunteers are held to is reflected in the early training of puppies in relation to their “uniforms” as well. While I have heard people say that the dogs and puppies “know they are going to work” when their cape goes on, because they come to associate one with the other, it is interesting that Sally primarily asserts that the cape is removed is because “doesn’t look very good” for them to be seen wearing it in certain circumstances, rather than for the sake of associative training.

Here as elsewhere the volunteers and staff seem keenly aware of their appearance and its effects. Self-objectification and heightened awareness of public relations in a general sense are powerful elements of the agency's mores. The chaos of the shitting frenzy is embarrassing and disturbing to the humans because it doesn't look (or smell) very good and signifies the antithesis of professionalism. I surmise the reason for the shitting frenzy's occurrence has to do with another kind of disorder, the incoherence experienced by the puppies. The puppies were being asked to attend to particular people and these pairs were learning to understand each other's communications. This emerging sense, made relationally, fell away in awkward uncertainty as leashes were unceremoniously handed over, and with them the puppies they were attached to. The order that would demand restraint from shitting and pissing where training was taking place is contiguous with the sense made in mutual attention and communication between puppy and foster during this training. As I see it, the passing off of the leash signaled a change in sensibility, a dropped melody, a broken gaze, that opened the possibility for other activities.

Nikole Shukin, in *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, interrogates Gregory Colbert's photo exhibition *Ashes and Snow*, which features, as Colbert intends it, humans and animals in moments of spiritual and sensual communion. Shukin calls on Slavoj Žižek's notion of the "pathological" to detail how "cultural and biological diversity are aesthetically detached from the realm of political struggle as they are in Colbert's private museum, they turn into floating signifiers purified of what Žižek calls 'pathological substance'" (Shukin, 200). Shukin explains that "for Žižek the

pathological indexes a world composed of material bodies posing a threat of ‘real’ alterity in their excessive *jouissance*, or unassimilable ‘kernel of Otherness’” (Shukin, 200). Just as the capes that the puppies wear (and the sweatshirts that the volunteers wear) mark and direct them to professional comportment, the piles of shit remind us of the sense-making between puppy and foster that is distinct from the imposed order of trainer alone. The “material body” of shitting, (as well as eating, flopping down on the floor...) expresses an alterity to professionalism. It is “Otherness” here, unassimilable. With the removal of the cape, or the agency sweatshirt, dogs and volunteers no longer reflect on the agency to the same extent, and any excessive *jouissance* as might be expressed in shitting or eating is allowable. Dan once announced to a class of puppy-raisers, “we are testing you as well, your handling skill with people watching you. People are watching you all the time when you are out in public with [the dogs].” Here the ubiquity of observation is further mobilized to instruct on comportment.

The level of self-awareness in the service of public image that I have been pointing to here is most dramatically manifested in the graduation ceremonies, as I briefly mentioned in describing Deanne Denning’s award reception. The following description of a particular graduation ceremony is typical of all that I attended. There are several tables of greeters at the entrance who ask visitors to sign in and make a name badge for themselves. Agency staff and volunteers as well as Harvey Anderson himself, dressed up for the occasion, say hello and shake hands with those who arrive for the ceremony. The community auditorium that the graduation ceremonies are usually held in is decorated in the colors of the agency, bright blue and white and black. There are tri-color bundles of

helium balloons festooning the stage and entrances, and these in turn match the curtains and chairs. The agency's appealingly simple yet dynamic logo hangs from banners near the stage. There is a podium stage right and a film screen stage left.

After all the guests have been seated and the lights are dimmed, Harvey Anderson, in a black suit with a dark shirt, takes the stage near the spot lit podium, flanked by an ASL interpreter who is the most brightly lit of the two. Harvey greets the audience and announces that "this year marks the 20th anniversary of the agency's service to the community." He explains in his customary fashion that "Our dogs retrieve personal dignity. They fetch amazing things" and that "graduation is the culmination of all our work." He thanks all those who helped them to achieve this graduation, explaining that almost everything that goes into the agency's work, from the vet care and the training to the dogs themselves, are donated. Anderson then introduces Lizbeth Hapsberg, a board member with white hair in a stylish blue grey suit and silk scarf, who will introduce the graduating teams.

As Liz introduces client-assistance dog teams, video clips are played on the film screen to one side of the stage. These are clips taken from videotaped final testing of the teams to evaluate their readiness for graduation. The testing is usually done in the client's home. We watch as the film silently tracks Tanner, a golden lab, as he pulls open a door using a tug-rope and alerts Martin's wife that Martin needs help. "Martin was diagnosed with MS in 1997," Liz begins, and she proceeds to explain something of Martin's needs and life circumstances as well as something about Tanner. She says, "Martin says of Tanner, 'he's a real thinker, I enjoy having him on my team.'" At the end of the film clip

and introduction Tanner is invited on stage, wearing his cape, escorted by his foster family, whom Liz introduces. They walk up onto the stage from below while a staff member escorts the client from backstage. Everyone meets center stage; a staff member puts a special mortar board hat on the assistance dog and put a chew-toy diploma in her mouth. They shake hands with the client, and everyone looks to the photographer at the foot of the stage, who snaps a group picture. Then the foster family departs and staff, client, and assistance dog pose for another photo, often prefaced by re-wrangling of mortarboard or ensuring the “diploma” is still being held. The graduates smile into the camera and everyone claps. It is common for the diploma- and hat- wrangling with the graduating dog to elicit laughs no matter how often it happens.

The graduation ceremony can often feel like watching an unfolding series of photo opportunities taken and taken again. Because the graduating teams and their agency escorts smile and face the camera and stand posed for it, rather than for the assembled audience, it is easy to feel that the ultimate audience is elsewhere. Thus rather than to commemorate the graduation with assembled friends, family, and supporters, the graduation ceremony itself then is an elaborate backdrop for filmmaking and photo shoots, material from which will be used in other venues. This feeling is mirrored and expanded by the use of video footage from the testing during the ceremony. The self-conscious posing of graduating teams makes one wonder whether the final testing itself is staged so that it can be filmed and played during graduation.

Rather than merely recording the (of course carefully staged) ceremony, the photographing and videotaping of posed graduates and agency staff figure so largely that

one wonders whether this is the main goal of the event. In *The Culture Of New Capitalism*, Richard Sennett discusses the marketing techniques of what he calls the new economy. Here he accentuates the place of the imagination and the evoking of “potential.” Sennett draws on Goffman as he explains that “the most sophisticated forms of publicity are ‘half finished frames’ which invite the consumer to participate by filling in the picture” (Sennett, 149). He builds on the insights of Guy Debord as well as Goffman when he asserts that in this “finishing” the “consumer participates in the act of branding” (Sennett, 149). We can see the ceremony-as-photo-op as a succession of these “half finished frames.” The gathered audience participates in these both as backdrop and witnesses, but we also “finish” the photos in our mind. We finish them as simultaneously present and future witnesses. To be in the audience is to help contribute to the photographs’ successes in these multiple ways.

As the constant posing is built into the structure of the ceremony, and is not merely incidental to it, the audience waits with the photographs’ subjects as their graduation is commemorated. All the photos and film (being both taken and shown) as well as all the perfectly color-coordinated decorations and well-mobilized catch phrases and logos help to create a very effective public relations event. The ceremony advertises, as well as commemorates, the agency with extremely personal, (intended to be “heartwarming”) details and seductively self-referencing simplicity. Additionally it is the potential of the teams which we are asked to witness and invest in. We are enrolled in imagining their brightened future together.

While the emphasis put on controlled appearances and the emotional complexities of the agency's teams definitely exist in a sometimes uneasy contrast, this may help us to descry not a disjunction between emotionality and professionalism but, again, the mobilization of sentimentality as part of the agency's work. Far from undercutting the "reality" of such emotions for those who feel them, this insight merely allows us to understand some of the effects of such organizational mobilizations. As I have already mentioned, when I first met Dan he was crying at the open house. He was moved to tears by the work of the agency and its importance. That evening Dan was a brand new staff member. For that reason he was both visitor to the open house and trainee, and his tears were very real. Two years later Dan explained the emotional difficulties of his job to me. The exhaustion he feels comes from the network of relationships that his work builds. He hurts when volunteers suffer and puppies die. The fact that his work doesn't end in the evenings or on the weekends, or even during "vacations" merely amplifies all this, at times unbearably.

Hochschild discusses such "new dilemmas" of the "advanced engineering of emotional labor" (Hochschild, 187). She explains there are three primary stances a worker takes towards emotional labor, differentiated by the level of distance between emotional work and worker. She says that probably the most harmful stance towards emotional labor (for the worker), is the one in which the worker "identifies too wholeheartedly with the job, and therefore risks burnout" (Hochschild, 187). This is exactly what Marla illustrates when she tells me, "I may be more involved ... than someone who is just doing it as a job." Presumably she is more involved precisely

because she cares and is not merely “doing it as a job.” But here she already highlights the internal contradiction, the confusion felt, in doing something both because one cares and because it is one’s job. Part of what this speaks to is Marla’s own sense that because she cares she will do more than someone for whom it is “just” a job. Some of the volunteers according to Dan’s description of them, “don’t get too close, they stay kind of cloudy.” This describes the kind of distanced stance towards emotional work that Hochschild suggests may benefit workers in the long run. It is important to note that while some volunteers seem as committed as Dan and Marla, their positions as volunteers rather than paid workers make a substantial difference in the level of distress and pain that this work can give rise to.

It is precisely because Dan and Marla care as much as they do that they find themselves shockingly exhausted and sometimes bereft. The fact that the agency is a non-profit organization with the expressed mission to help other people and dogs in difficult situations creates an environment in which staff (as well as volunteers) like Marla and Dan tend to feel even more inclined to give all of themselves, wholeheartedly, to their work. This as Hochschild explains is exactly what contributes to complete exhaustion and a confusion and deadening of one’s own feelings. It took me some time to understand that it was this level of burnout that Dan was gesturing toward when I asked him if he was feeling good about a conversation we were having about his work and he responded, “Yes, it’s fun” and then continued, “I don’t get to think about it (his work) too much...it hurts if you think about it too much.” This is not merely a matter of hurting or becoming tired as we all do sometimes in the context of having caring and loving relationships. For

Marla, Dan, Rosie, and other agency staff their paid jobs at the agency determine the very parameters of these caring relationships. And these relationships are of course part and parcel of the agency's work.

On top of, and in some cases because of, the fact that they care, these staff are expected to behave and communicate, in the relationship-making that is their work, according to the standards of the agency. This further complicates their position vis-à-vis their emotional labor. Hochschild takes care to explain that the tension between self and role is part of what characterizes the particular conundrums and risks of "emotional labor." "[T]he problem of adjusting self to role is aggravated by the worker's lack of control over the conditions of work" (Hochschild, 189). So in Dan's case, because he cares so much about the dogs, clients, and volunteers, he already faces a great overextension of himself, but because he cannot get away from the responsibilities of the job and is technically (not only emotionally) speaking on call almost all the time, his burnout is almost inevitable. The staff often helps to foster puppies as well, and the fact that the needs of these dogs do not end with the work day also contributes substantially to the borderless nature of the work these staff do.

It is precisely this level of commitment that is tacitly (if not explicitly) demanded of professionals at the agency, however. The agency wants to elicit this level of caring and help people mobilize it in just such ways. As Hochschild says, "Institutional purposes are now tied to the workers' psychological arts. It is not simply individuals who manage their feelings in order to do a job; whole organizations have entered the game" (Hochschild, 185). She concludes that "[t]hose who perform emotional labor in the

course of giving service are like those who perform physical labor in the course of making things: both are subject to the rules of mass production. But when the product...is a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship, it comes to belong more to the organization and less to the self” (Hochschild, 198).

What is unique about the agency’s work of is that it demands a career-oriented drive equating professional ambition and comportment with personal success and combines this with a particularly strong philanthropic impulse to “do good.” While the latter is part of the terrain of most social service work the former is not, and while the former is implicit in most business settings the latter is not. The doubleness of these demands has a particularly exhausting effect on staff (and undoubtedly some of the more dedicated volunteers as well) because of the totalizing of this emotional work. The agency’s spokespeople and literature testify to the very fact that they ‘create relationships.” This goes a long way in explaining why Marla is so remarkably tired, why Dan struggles with the hurt of what he understood to be the perfect job for him and why Rosie feels she has to give up just about everything but work if she really takes her work seriously. Ultimately what these three feel is the primacy of the agency as it plays out in their own feelings and hopes, and as they put these to work.

PART TWO: SECURITY AND FEAR

The graduation ceremony is part of the successful “branding” of the agency and the prestige of its work through careful management of the meaning of that work and the

powerful evocation of its emotional content in the hearts of its audience members. The uniforms, reiterative story-telling, and rigid parameters of comportment all contribute to a strong sense of the meaning and uprightness of the agency and those who belong to it. As one client averred, ‘the blue-vested service dogs are more well-behaved, more professional, than the other company in town here.’ Just as Rosie was (wrongly) identified as an employee of Jumbo because of her uniform, the assistance-dog capes communicate a similar kind of corporate belonging, in this case a corporate image that indicated professionalism to clients and others. Clearly the agency’s reputation benefits from the kind of care its staff and volunteers put into cultivation and maintenance of high standards of conduct and controlled communication. In turn clients like Jim Volkner clearly take pride in being affiliated with the agency; and Jim has become a committed spokesperson for it. His testimonials with Senator John Densfield as well as his testimonials at agency events not only benefit the agency but are a source of great satisfaction to him.

On one hand Jim clearly respects and appreciates Manny’s skills, and gives him “90%” of the credit for their success together; “What with him performing in front of senators and then he writes that bill [a bill proposing funding for pairing veterans with assistance dogs].” On the other hand Jim’s own part in that work is a huge source of both pride and purpose. He says of these demonstrations that it is really satisfying to “get to show off your dog’s skill.” This is so satisfying precisely because of the particular power of assistance dog-client relationships. Demonstrations of the teams’ work are important because “that sticks with people: what a dog can do.” The skill of these teams, his

particular partnership with Manny, and the strong reputation of the agency are mutually reinforcing, and for Jim this is transformative.

While he is quick to assert that he “can’t say [Manny] is a life-saver because he [Jim] has always had a life,” he also teared up while explaining that taking care of Manny “keeps me going, puts me in a good frame of mind.” He told me that Harvey had changed the fundraising “appeal letter” this year, titling it “Three Dog Knights,” a reference to Manny and two other recently graduated assistance dogs. Not only was Jim clearly proud of his relationship with Manny being spotlighted, but his wife Hazel also wanted to make sure that I knew of it as well. When he talks about his relationship with Manny and the agency Jim shines with the reflected light of demonstrations of skill and good work, as well as mutual care. His testimonies lend the agency credibility as he enjoys sharing in the agency’s professional reputation. The intricacies of his daily partnership with, and love of Manny, are the beating heart of all the agency’s stories of itself. Simultaneously the reputation of the agency strengthens Jim’s sense of himself, his skills, and his value despite the specter of dependency and uselessness.

Edna Hannock is another agency client whose satisfaction in her partnership with her assistance dog and work for the agency greatly boosts her pride in herself. She works at a department store which takes part in a “shop for a cause” fundraising program. Edna told me that she sold almost 900 dollars worth of coupons benefitting the agency for that event. She also wanted me to know about the presentations she does explaining her work with Mocha. But she wants to do more. She told me, “I need to educate people” (about dogs in general and assistance dogs in particular). She explains that because assistance

dogs do so much more than pet dogs, and go where lots of other dogs do not, they are subject to dangers other dogs may not face. She continues, “the dogs do a lot of things and you’ve got to protect them.” She mentions the dangers of cigarettes, elevators, and revolving doors as a few such challenges. She also says, “I can’t go anywhere without someone saying ‘what a beautiful dog,’ it makes me so proud!” Edna, like Jim and so many others, expresses feelings of great pride in her work with her dog partner, and this is clearly triangulated with the reputation of the agency as a locus of professionalism. For Edna this is in stark contrast with the low points of her self-esteem. When I spoke with her she referred to herself as “an old lady” and worried aloud several times that I surely must think she was a “sicky” based on her descriptions of being in the hospital. While her health problems and use of a wheelchair were topics that inspired these self-conscious fears of how others perceived her, her work with Mocha was a source of pride as well as heightened confidence.

Edna told me a story about being in the hospital after a surgery she had a few years ago. She reported, “afterwards I got really sick and I thought, ‘I’ve got to get through this because Mocha needs me.’ He got me through...and I needed him.” When I asked Edna if she felt a marked difference in what she can do since she and Mocha started working together, she said simply, “I feel safe.” It is clear that for Edna and Jim living and working with their assistance dog partners gives them a sense of productivity and purpose. These are two key sources of a sense of security for clients as well as staff at the agency. Vigilant concern about comportment and striving for professionalism are

particular manifestations of the pursuit of security which these seem to promise by way of successful careers and being valued as members of a community.

Additionally the security that Edna, Jim, and others feel is also based in a heightened sense of physical security, which is crucial for most of the clients and is felt in many different ways. This provision of security exceeds the particular skills or tasks that the dog was originally trained to carry out. Edna recounted the story of getting a CT scan at the hospital. When the machine started to move above her, Mocha crawled up to where she was and lay the front of his body over her, “He lay across my chest...he has bony elbows, like me.” She also told me that he doesn’t like it when she is out of her wheel chair. When I asked her if she knew why that was, she responded matter-of-factly, “He knows I am not safe out of my chair.” Edna is absolutely confident that Mocha wants to keep her safe, and this is a marked contrast from her other experiences of life.

According to Edna, “whenever anyone touches me [Mocha] wants to get in between...not aggressive[ly] he just wants to help.” When I asked Edna if she didn’t feel safe before Mocha, she told me that she “hadn’t realized where I was at with that,” in other words, how unsafe she had felt. When I asked her about her support network, including her family and anyone else she got support from, she said, “I do feel alone. I have friends, people like me...My husband can’t help me with everything, he’s 20 years older than me.” For Edna, it is not that people don’t “like her,” but she still feels alone when it comes to daily support, help, security. Mocha provides those in ways that even her husband cannot. Jim told me that even though the dogs are absolutely not trained as guard dogs he is sure that Manny would “be protective of me if anyone ever came at me.”

Describing their being in public together, he said that Manny “walks proud, with his head up, like a bodyguard.” For Jim and Edna this kind of pride and confidence, their own as well as their partners’, is linked with their committed companionship, and all of these are anchored in a strengthened sense of security, one they did not feel before they were paired with their dog partners.

Many family members of clients, especially parents, express great relief because of their heightened sense of their children’s security after being paired with an assistance dog. The parents of Samantha, a young woman with cerebral palsy, said that they know she is now “safe on her own with Danner by her side.” At a graduation ceremony Liz Hapsburg in her introduction of a young man, Andrew, and his autism assist dog, Redford, said, “the world had become much smaller for Andrew and his whole family ” She explained about Andrew that “ he does not seem to have an awareness of danger,” making everyday activities a source of fear for his family. Now that Redford is with them they not only go out in public more, something they avoided before, but they are planning their first vacation in six years. Before Redford the stress of doing something like that would have been “too much.”

The life-changing relief that these relationships bring to parents is illustrated in the story Shannon told me involving her young adult son, Ben, and his assistance dog Fenzi shortly after they were paired. Ben and Fenzi live separately from Shannon. She told me how Ben had gotten really sick in the middle of the night and couldn’t reach the phone, but Fenzi had reached the emergency call button in his apartment. She said, “that’s when it really hit home that I didn’t have to worry if I didn’t talk to him for a

week. Then I knew everything was good, cause Fenzi would have called if something had gone wrong.” The life-changing effect of the relief from this fear is palpable. Like Andrew’s family’s sense of isolation, Shannon had never known the absence of worry about Ben, since he was born. Just as Edna and Jim feel that their partner is also their protector, the families of Andrew and Ben feel just as much relief knowing their children are safe with Redford and Fenzi.

The executive director tells the genesis story of one of the very first hearing dog clients at the agency, a 70-year-old man, who contacted him after his wife died. He told the director that he hadn’t realized “‘how much [his wife] had heard for [him]’.” The agency was not then in a position to help him, but some time later the man called back in desperation and explained that “ ‘a bunch of motorcycle guys had moved in down the street’.” He said that he was sleeping with a “‘loaded 357 under [his] pillow,’” and pointedly asked the director “‘How long would it be before they realize there is a 70-year-old living alone?’” The agency soon after found a dog for the man at a local shelter, arranged for training, and ultimately placed the dog with him. The director reassured the audience that the man then “‘unloaded the 357.’”

By way of conclusion the director told the audience that when that man died he left money to take care of his dog partner for the rest of her life and to train another dog for someone else. The loaded gun dramatizes the danger of the situation as the man felt it, and sparks fear in the listener. Interestingly, in other contexts the gun alone might be called upon to combat the man’s vulnerability and to reassure the listener. Yet here as elsewhere it is both the perceptual help and the dog’s particular companionship that we

are shown saves lives. The dog brings about the unloading of the gun, and this unloading signals release from fear and danger, vicariously experienced by the listener as well. That the story ends with the man's death and preparations made for the care of his dog partner leads the listener to conclude that the danger and fear remained at bay for him. This story illustrates the kind of lifelong and overarching freedom from fear that the agency promises to deliver through the teams it creates.

Another client explains that she works "downtown" and thanks to her dog partner she is "not scared walking to [her] car." Going through her daily life with her dog partner makes her feel as though she "got an extra set of ears and eyes." This allows her the sense of strengthened perception and so, in effect, an enlarged perceptual self. Sociologist Clinton Sanders writes that "[t]he guide dog is literally experienced as an extension of the blind owner's self" (Sanders, 1999, 57). Although Sanders' description does seem to fit at least part of this woman's experience, assistance dog-human relationships, as my research reveals, are not experienced only in terms of "the extension" of some preexisting personhood. The dog is not necessarily experienced as an extension of the client, but the relationship definitely seems to expand her sense of self and life. In this example and others, such as the woman whose life became "fuller," these partnerships do get described as filling up a kind of "negative space" made by various perceived deficiencies, and so the client's very personhood is enhanced and strengthened. In these examples we are shown the powerful connections and mutual reinforcement between "peace of mind" and filled-out personhood.

Many of the stories that the agency staff, volunteers, and clients tell contain elements of fear and vulnerability out of which the protagonists are rescued by their human-dog partnerships. Additionally it is not uncommon for the very rescuing of the dog and the salvation of the human to be presented as interconnected. For example, another client of the agency tells the story of searching for a service dog. Self-described as “totally blind,” she had worked with guide dogs for years. Then, as she explains it, after a bad car accident she needed to use a wheelchair and she was told that she “couldn’t use a service dog [with her chair] if she was totally blind.” At that point she says she had “given up.” Fortunately for her, the agency’s director of training kept seeing a particular dog as she made her rounds to local animal shelters, and one day, when the trainer accidentally dropped her keys, the dog picked them up. The woman concluded her story by saying that with the retrieval of the keys, “we were both saved.” She punctuated her story with the culminating revelation that her dog partner had been “slated to be euthanized the next day.”

This is the paradigmatic rescue story of the agency, in which two beings’ lives were saved *in their pairing*. The dog was saved from being killed; what the human was saved from is not explicitly stated. But the fact that she expresses the sure parity between herself and her partner here clearly underscores that while what imperiled her was not perhaps an immediate physical death, it was something that *she* understands as equivalent to death. As the client describes it, in this one exchange between the dog and the trainer, both the client and the dog were spared the terror of their further undoing. The client, through explanation of her “worsening” conditions and rejection by other agencies,

describes a decomposition of her life. It is clear that this is not only physical but inescapably social as well.

She presents her position as similar to her dog partner, about to be “put down.” As she explains, the agency “was willing to give us a chance when no one else was.” Just as she explains her own and her dog partner’s simultaneous rescue from peril, she also presents the two of them as being in the same position, as socially abandoned, as needing to be “given a chance.” Again, while she does not explicitly describe what the nature of this “chance” really is, it ultimately involved working together. Their salvation, together, comes with their potential for certain kind of abilities and “self-sufficiency”. In turn, the absence of this kind of autonomy and capability signals and can also *bring on* lack of life, whether diminished personhood or physical death.

Dogs in animal shelters, especially euthanizing shelters, are in unquestionably vulnerable positions. Their quality of life, including freedom of movement and access to food, as well as their continued existence, is entirely dependent on human decisions, whether capricious, thoughtful, rationally calculated, or emotionally motivated. When dogs are adopted they are often seen as “being given a chance” to be a satisfactory “pet” or “companion” to someone, and are thus simultaneously “given a chance” to live. In fact being given a chance to prove oneself in one way or another to humans is the only chance they have to live. The fact that this client consistently asserts the parity of her partner’s position and her own makes it clear that what was, and is, at stake for both of them was equivalent. While she was not “slated to be euthanized” this woman clearly felt her life was at stake.

Given this client's sense of impending doom, and the fact that she felt her life was at stake when her future companion proved herself at the shelter so that they could both be "given a chance" by the agency, it is clear that notions of independence and the efficacy of one's work is foundational for the kind of full personhood and quality of life that is held as ideal in these contexts. The nature of this independence, like much else discussed here, is variable and context-dependent, but it is precisely its shifting nature that allows some people to secure a sense of independence for themselves and for others to lose it.

In the foregoing description the dog's personhood was highlighted by being paired in equivalency with the teller's own. At the same time the woman who told the story underscored her own sense of marginality, vulnerability, and existential dependency by equating herself with someone in a shelter who was to be killed because she was unwanted and unvalued. The kind of independence that is vaunted by agency staff, clients, and volunteers is precisely the kind that a dog in an animal shelter does not have. As the aforementioned client explains of her life before and after being paired with an assistance dog, "I used to have to ask strangers for help...[now] I have more independence." In keeping with this, dependence, especially on "strangers" (such as "biker guys" and anonymous denizens of "downtown"), looms in the background as a profound and ubiquitous source of peril.

Director Harvey Anderson explained to his audience at an open house that he decided to found the agency when he realized that "there was more to life than making money." He said he was inspired by Helen Keller, who, he explained, had declared, "I

may be only one—but I am one.” This quotation highlights a number of central notions that my informants’ work and words often echo. Keller’s words underscore a dynamic tension between what is perceived as deficiency and what is perceived as efficacy. In this declaration, “being one” is an invocation of a singular existence; it highlights a privileged wholeness, autonomy, and corresponding efficacy. Keller’s words describe an ideal relationship between “being one” (person) and “doing” as one (person), i.e., between existence, ability, and productivity. This ideal is articulated after acknowledging the limitations inherent in being “only” one (person) on which this very autonomy must be predicated. Thus given the tension between both the limitations and the efficacy of the individual as such, the director’s use of Keller’s assertion reminds us of the inextricable relation between notions of individual agency and *a priori* collectivity and sociality. The director’s speech foregrounds ideals regarding what one person can (or should be able to) do, and it implicitly evokes ideas of dependence, independence, and interdependence that figure largely in my informants’ perceptions and experiences of themselves and one another. In turn, independence and dependency are experienced viscerally as the bearers of safety and danger.

Donna Haraway, in her very important work exploring how we can be ethically robust “companion species,” asserts that “[m]any of the serious dog people I have met...emphasize the importance of jobs that leave [dogs] less vulnerable to human consumerist whims” (Haraway, 38). She explains that many working dogs may or may not be loved, but their skills are valued; they are “respected for the work they do.”

Haraway maintains that “the status of pet puts a dog at special risk in societies like the one I live in —the risk of abandonment when human affection wanes, when people’s convenience takes precedence, or when a dog fails to deliver on the fantasy of unconditional love” (Haraway,38). For Haraway, then, a working dog’s “value—and life—does not depend on the humans’ perception that the dogs love them”; the dog’s life thus is not dependent on what she calls “an economy of affection” (Haraway, 38).

Working dogs’ lives accordingly then depend “more on skill” and “less on a problematic fantasy” (Haraway, 39). Here Haraway insightfully illuminates the position that many dogs adopted by the agency find themselves in. And her elucidation of “an economy of affection” is incisive. While many of the dogs who were “saved” from shelters by the agency are reflected in her description of the precarious position of being a “pet,” it is also possible to hear in her words an echoing of the same sense of vulnerable dependence on strangers, and being at the mercy of the convenience of other humans, that clients of the agency have felt as well. Rather than their being cared for or remaining alive being dependent on their being loved, Haraway’s working dogs, the assistance dogs of the agency, *and* the clients of the agency are all presented as having escaped a vulnerable dependency through skillful functioning, often framed in terms of maintaining careers. In the case of the clients, skillful functioning may be seen as manifesting a level of self-determination that is not necessarily measured by actually having a job or pursuing a career. However the ability to do so remains entrenched in frameworks for evaluating individual worth such as these.

Self-determination as measured by independence from the necessary help and caprices of other humans is considered an essential component of full livelihood for many clients. It is also clear that any “economy of affection” that dogs may find themselves dependent on is equally dangerous, if not more so, for humans who feel reliance on it. Such is hinted at by the man who believed that for his neighbors, the mere knowledge that he was living alone would impel them to harm him. In an “economy of affection,” that dangerous “fantasy” that Haraway describes, a dog’s safety is ensured only as long as the human believes that the dog loves him or her. A similar sense of the insecurity of any economy of affection binding *humans* in exchange pervades the words of many agency clients. What may underlie the sense of peril that many clients feel in any dependence, especially on strangers, is the fact that they seem to express no *necessary* expectation of affection or care from other community members at all. Real and abiding safety for dogs, according to Haraway, is to be found in productive work, in what she characterizes as being a “functional dog” (Haraway, 39). I would argue that the same is conveyed by and about the clients of the agency and many others.

Haraway says of the approach of writer and sheepdog trialer Donald McCaig, that “it might properly be called love if that word were not so corrupted by our culture’s infantilization of dogs and the refusal to honor difference. Dog naturecultures need his insistence on the functional dog preserved only by deliberate work-related practices, including breeding and economically viable jobs” (Haraway, 39). Here a dog’s value and very life, as she has already made quite clear, is securable only through a “functionality” that is defined by being able to compete within a job market in a shared economy with

humans. Haraway concludes that “[w]e need...McCaig’s knowledge of the job of a kind of dog, the whole dog, the specificity of dogs. Otherwise, love kills, unconditionally both kinds and individuals” (Haraway, 39). By “kinds” Haraway is referring to breeds and/or types of breeds, such as herding dogs or game dogs. The “whole dog” also acknowledges “the herding dog” as a type transcending but characterizing the individual herding dog. The “whole dog” as she uses it refers to what a given dog can do, which *is* in effect who he or she is.

A dog is, in her conception, not merely a “bundle of skills.” Yet for Haraway, as for the puppy-raiser, a dog’s capabilities can be “wasted.” Accordingly these skills and the jobs they are suitable for are the only abiding source of security for dogs as a species, as kinds, and as individuals. Breeds are thus at least partially critical to her vision of this security because they are the outcome of generations of breeding and skill-honing and so help ensure a competitive edge for dogs in a shared economy with humans without the need for recourse to “the fantasy” of affection.

While the “careers” of some assistance dogs seem to reflect a good deal of what Haraway explains and advocates for, the experiences of the assistance dogs placed by the agency as well as the experiences and perceptions of the clients, staff, and volunteers help to underscore that separating “economies of affection” from other economies is not possible, let alone ideal. Additionally, opposing “the reality” of the socio-economic security of jobs or the possession of skills to “the fantasy” and the ultimately murderous as well as infantilizing nature of something one might call “love,” as she characterizes it, is at the very least quite problematic. The same kind of “bond” that clients, staff, and

volunteers describe as essential to a truly efficacious human-dog partnership is that which exceeds the framework of the job market or paradigm of the “career.” While assistance dogs are clearly not solely dependent on “an economy of affection” in the same way a “pet” might be, the various ways that the relationships between assistance dogs and clients are explained make any clear distinction between “economies of affection” and skillful work an uncertain proposition.

If a client views a dog as “a member of the family” or “like a son,” the familial and emotional dimensions of these relationships exceed the strict separation of work, love, and family that Haraway’s framework seems to both take for granted and advocate. Haraway makes an important argument regarding the potentially deadly nature of so-called affection and the place of dogs in a “fantasy world” of human self-absorption and its “pets.” However it is by no means self-evident that the world of “functionality” and its criteria is any safer for anyone of any species. Assistance dogs are still ultimately dependent on humans, whether they are evaluated by how well they do their work as assistance animals or whether by other criteria. The fact that they may well be more needed by those they work with is important, but neither does this fact guarantee their well-being.

The traps and dangers of conditional security are perhaps equally present for assistance animals as for dogs whose livelihood is secured by remaining pleasing as “pets.” This is not to suggest that there are not important differences, merely to point out that there are significant similarities. While assistance animals as “working dogs” perhaps do not face the same threats of “outsourcing” and layoffs as other kinds of workers, like

all kinds of other workers, canine and human, their skilled service provision does not permanently secure their well-being nor their ethical treatment. Additionally, the notion of “functionality” is an amorphous yet potent characterization that renders the clients of the agency, and many others of us, lacking or partial.

Haraway advises that all “ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-strong thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relation. *We are not one*, and being depends on getting on together. The obligation is to ask who are present and who are emergent” (Haraway, 50. *my italics*). Many of the dogs and humans partnered by the agency manage their “getting on together” through relationships that defy any strict separation between the emotional and the functional, working and affection, family and career. These relationships and their “bonds” can also dramatically undermine the atomism which underwrites many notions of personhood itself.

As we have seen in many contexts dogs are treated as persons; in others they are not. Such is the case when articulation of a client’s new-found “independence” working with a service dog obscures the *interdependence* between her and her dog partner that this “independence” is predicated on. Given the pronounced chagrin with which one woman said that she “used to have to ask strangers for help,” it is clear that this kind of dependency is viewed with fear and shame. Working with her dog-partner, she makes clear, allows her “more independence” and yet presumably she is only independent to the extent that she is less reliant on *human* people—that is, in some very context-dependent sense, people like herself. Her relationship with, and reliance on, her assistance dog partner in this particular context is *not* acknowledged as the kind of “partnership” in

which the dog's agency, personhood, or separateness would count in constituting an *interdependency* or a *cooperative* endeavor. Additionally, this new "independence" is considered a radical improvement in her quality of life, and so she becomes "more human" through her relationship with a dog. In this case, however, the dog's existence as a separate being must thus be either negated, overlooked, or subsumed into the woman's own.

In contrast to the highlighting of disability and "unmarking" of the putatively normative, as in Harvey Anderson's open house address, Disability Studies scholar Lennard Davis explains that "all groups, based on physical traits or markings, are selected for disablement by a larger system of regulation and signification" (Davis, 240). He proposes a "dismodernist ethic" of liberation grounded in caring about the body. He argues against "a hypostatization of the normal (that is, dominant) subject," and underscores the "partial, incomplete subject whose realization is not autonomy and independence but dependency and independence" (Davis, 241). The opposition of deficiency/dependency and wholeness/independence, expressed by the agency's executive director and many others, is (somewhat ironically) further troubled by the very relationships that the agency helps to give rise to. The mutual regard and the skill at navigating life together that grows between clients and assistance dogs enlarges the perceived personhood of both partners and so simultaneously renders "independence" a somewhat less straightforward concept. The contingencies that we all face as "we get on together" are no more escapable by committing ourselves to the cultivation of marketable skills than relying on economies of affection. The sheer variety of kinds of relationships

called upon to characterize the “the bond” between human-dog partners, as family, co-workers, and so on, manifests Irvine’s emerging “emotional vocabulary” that is inextricable from emerging relational and social possibilities. These defy any necessary distinction between, or separation of, work and family, affection and skill, or human and animal. But perhaps more importantly these relationships point to possibilities outside of a social safety and mutual regard anchored in the fantasy of atomistic “functioning.”

Powerful notions of ability and independence are mobilized to authorize the personhood of the agency’s clients, volunteers and many others. These same ideas are at work in descriptions of the assistance dogs and those in training. The livelihoods and lives of the clients and dogs as well as volunteers and staff highlight specific ideals of autonomy and career that imply a certain kind of atomistic personhood. Yet the interdependence and creativity that emerges relationally from client/assistance dog teams belie precisely that “oneness” of atomistic life that the director celebrates, even as those very qualities may also be used to illustrate successful if also paradoxical “independence.” The livelihood of the clients as well as that of the assistance dogs is described in reference to various kinds of abilities and notions of autonomy and independence, even while various *interdependencies* are actively and passionately cultivated.

PART THREE: SOCIAL BRIDGES AND CHARACTER WITNESSES

Just as many clients and their families expressed concern for their safety and various fears regarding their treatment by others, it is not uncommon for the same people to express to me the sense that they are perceived as being scary because they are perceived as disabled. Jim illuminates his experiences of being frightening to others when he says, “I have improved social interactions [now that he and Manny are paired]. I get out more. We go out more. People don’t pull their kids away any more from the guy in the wheelchair. Since Manny, people come up and talk to me.” While Jim is clearly explaining that he used to feel that he scared others, surely we hear in his words the doubled-edge of this. Being a source of horror in this way is a source of peril *for Jim* as well. When people “pulled their kids away” from him, he was in such situations treated as a non-person, even as somewhat monstrous. While many of the clients I have heard from consistently express fear or uncertainty at the hands of others, they also describe being treated as Jim does, as inducing fear themselves by virtue of being “different.” These two experiences amplify and reinforce one another, as to strike fear or discomfort in another brings on feelings of being imperiled. In simplest terms the clients express here an abiding insecurity, a sense of not being fully safe and at ease in their communities.

Being with Manny has helped Jim’s reception in the world. He says of being with Manny in public, “[Manny] changes the way people see handicapped people...the dog helps the conversation start. I think people want to talk, but maybe they are afraid of you...They think he can probably talk if he has a dog.” Shannon said about going out with her son Ben, “ We’ll be out shopping and people will ask me ‘what does *he*

want?'...and I'll say, well, his IQ is probably higher than yours, why don't you ask him?...Which I have said, because people really annoy me. It really upsets him." She explained, "That's why I love children, small children, when my son was younger we'd be out in public little kids up to six or seven they'd walk right up to him and ask 'what's wrong with you? why don't you walk ?' and the moms would be shushing them and saying 'that's not polite.' Well, no, that *is* polite, standing over there and pointing, *that's* not polite." Like having people pull their children away from Jim, Ben has experienced many people avoiding speaking or otherwise interacting with him and has had people stare and point at him. For Ben, Jim, and many others who are perceived as disabled, the disability at times seems to position them so far outside the circle of normal sociality that even the most basic person-to-person courtesy of speech or social trust in physical proximity is not expected. They are feared in these situations. This is in diametric contrast to what people report about being in public with dogs.

Shannon says of this difference, "most people don't know somebody who is in a wheelchair or who walks with a cane. And they don't know, they don't feel like they can treat them like anybody else. So if you are at a bus stop you might talk about the weather...with somebody in a wheelchair most people are apt not to say anything." But she explains, "if you have the dog they can talk about the dog and you can have a normal conversation." When I asked Shannon why she thought being with dogs made such a big difference, she answered, "I think people really want to talk to each other, but humans I think are innately afraid of anything that is different. And quite frankly too lazy to figure it out on their own." When I queried her further about this, she said she believes people

interact more with folks using wheelchairs or with whom they might not otherwise talk out of fear of difference because the dog is “like a common bond ... Whether you are in a wheelchair or...you are probably all going to say ‘cool dog’ or ‘what’s your dog’s name?’” Here as elsewhere my informants report people treating them with more respect, concern, and interest in the company of their dog partners. In fact the contrast is so dramatic that we see people who were treated as non-persons before being sought out with interest and warmth, all because of the presence of dogs.

These examples are among countless others I have encountered during my research. They underscore two important elements of dog-human relationships that are especially salient to the agency’s clients. One is that so often for the humans who are accompanied by dogs, their dog companions often act as character witnesses for strangers who would seemingly not otherwise interact with the humans in question. Secondly, the dogs themselves constantly attract warmth, affection, and attention from strangers. Their human companions partake in these vicariously as well. I once asked Shannon, who has also volunteered for the agency, if she has felt treated differently when in public with one of the dogs she has fostered. She responded, “yes, to the point where it can almost be annoying. We tell the clients that we want the dogs to go shopping with you but if you truly need to [get your shopping done] ...[and you only] have half an hour... You might want to leave the dog at home, especially if you have a baby... If you have a puppy... It has taken me half an hour just to get thirty feet inside a store. I have handed out a lot of tour cards... If you tell fifty people [about the agency]... that’s how the whole networking starts.” So for Shannon this ability of the dogs to attract attention and affection from

strangers, can be an annoyance or it can be a great opportunity for public relations for the work of the agency.

Shannon recognizes that the stakes are different for other people. “Now with the clients I think it is a bridge...an icebreaker, it’s like that whole chick magnet thing...take the puppy to the park, everybody will come up and talk to you.” This is in stark contrast to having children pulled away from you or having people speak to your human companions *about* you when you are right beside them. While the effect of being with dogs in public is similar for those perceived to be disabled and those who are not, the differences are felt most dramatically in the gulf between treatment with and without dog companions. This is due in large part to the effects of dogs as character witnesses. For those who are perceived as disabled the effects of having this kind of character witness are dramatic. This is of course partly due to the virulence of the stigma of their perceived disability. Because of the strength of stigmas attached to disabilities, there is a much higher demand for such a character reference than would be required for people who are perceived as “normal” and are (all else being equal) thus usually automatically treated as safer.

Dan also notes a dramatic difference between when he is out in public with a dog and when he is not. He says of this, “If I went to Jumbo by myself I would be invisible. If I take a dog ten people will come up to me and start talking and I could take [those new connections] a thousand different ways.” He says about those interpersonal connections, “It starts out with the dog but then it will be about the people.” While Dan doesn’t report being treated as monstrous or unapproachable, and he comes across as normative in

appearance and behavior as well as generally affable in affect, his description too is remarkable for the dramatic contrast between reception with and without a dog companion. Being in public with a dog allows him to go from being “invisible,” neither seen nor presumably cared about by others, to being virtually mobbed by other people, as befits a celebrity. And importantly what he suggests come out of such interactions are actual “connections” with others. We know that he understands these to be potentially abiding, and born of more than shared admiration for a dog, because he also says that he could “take those [connections] a thousand different ways.” Dan also states that these connections are really about “the people.”

When Dan asserts the “different ways” he can take those connections he is explaining what he experiences by way of the different kinds of potential that inheres in new relationships, be they those of future friends or lovers or people who share common interests, commitments, or fields of work. What he describes here is a sense that once people make initial connections, once the cloak of “invisibility” is removed, a nascent but dense network of interpersonal connection is waiting to be realized. But these are just as easily not realized. It is *only* when he is with a dog do “ten people” approach him as he shops. It is in the dogs’ status as “social bridges,” and as character witnesses more specifically, that they facilitate the mutual regard of (former) strangers that Dan explains marks his time in public with dogs.

While my informants took it for granted in their descriptions of their experiences that people approach each other more often when in the company of dogs (see Sanders, 2003 for a good overview of literature regarding this phenomenon), at the same time it is

important that we not overlook the special status of those dogs who not only go to the park but who may be met in Jumbo stores, restaurants, and clinics. These dogs are of course “special” by virtue of being dogs in these and other places where most dogs are not allowed. The agency’s literature makes mention of this phenomenon as well. One brochure states, “our dogs open social doors too. Focusing on *the special dog* takes attention away from the disability and reduces barriers between people” (my italics). While other dogs may also draw positive attention in public, assistance dogs draw even more.

On one hand these dogs may be marked by a kind of contagious personhood by virtue of being in spaces generally reserved for humans. On the other hand because people assume that the only dogs that are allowed in these places are specially trained and highly skilled (or on their way to being so) they have another kind of built in celebrity, as smarter, special, and so transcending the usual species-based restrictions. In both of these ways the dogs who people encounter in these indoor public places are thus usually treated as even more special, and thus an even better character witness than other dogs.

The descriptions of my informants’ experiences of the way dogs act as “social bridges” are extensive. Their roles as character witnesses are important and somewhat complicated. The clients experience socially instantiated enlargement of their personhood based on the fact that they have dog companions. The response to this companionship manifests the high regard people have of dogs as trustworthy in specific ways. Jim suggests that he knows what other people are thinking when they regard him with an unprecedented friendliness in the company of Manny. Jim says about other people

regarding him “they think he [Jim] can probably talk if he has a dog.” Being able to talk here metonymically expresses a broader portrait of personhood. No longer the monster that kids must be protected from, Jim feels that he becomes available for social interaction by virtue of keeping company with Manny.

Following the logic of the imagined stranger that Jim evokes, the idea seems to be that Jim must be able to talk because he must talk to Manny. This not only reflects the idea that Jim can physically speak, but highlights the ways that he feels his status is changed by being understood to *relate to* Manny. It is his relationship with Manny, not merely the fact that he can talk, that changes how strangers receive him. Manny’s presence testifies that not only “must” Jim be able to talk but he must be worth talking *to*. We can see this idea reflected in a somewhat unexpected way in Shannon’s similar report of what she supposes people experience when encountering disabled folks with assistance dogs.

According to Shannon many people, because of a fear of difference, “do not know how” to interact with people whom they understand to be radically physically different or disabled. As she says, while people are otherwise inclined to exchange pleasantries she believes that “with somebody in a wheelchair most people are apt not to say anything.” Here again we find the experience (and this is certainly based on her extensive experiences of being with Ben and other people) of the removal of disabled folks from the purview of sociability. But as she explains, this is totally revised in the company of a dog. In the hypothetical bus stop scenario she explains that in the company of a dog “you are probably all going to say ‘cool dog’ or ‘what’s your dog’s name?’” Here we find that

the dog is not merely a common object of attention, as manifested by the statement, “if you have the dog they can talk about the dog and you can have a normal conversation.” We can also hear the sense that people (those who despite their physical, intellectual, or communicational differences are not perceived as monstrous) “are probably all going to” respond to a dog positively and with interest. Here then is a description of personhood, the very definition of which includes a warm regard for dogs. In fact the implication here is that it is somewhat monstrous not to feel kindly disposed towards dogs.

The fact that a warm regard for dogs is a mark of normalcy actually issues partly from the same constellation of attributes that dogs are understood to have. I have never heard any of my informants express even the most minor concern or make a single passing comment about a dog’s judgment of them, despite the consistent reiteration of these concerns when it comes to human folks. While obviously there is a great deal of skepticism regarding whether dogs can make the kind of judgments I am referring to, it is equally important to remember that most of the assistance dogs I have encountered are regarded as the bearers of all sorts of agency, ability, decision-making, and character traits (such as “heroism”) that bespeak being held in the kind of regard befitting only those who could reciprocate that kind of regard.

While it is an extremely complicated and variable matter, it does seem clear that the clients’ dog partners are often understood to be set apart enough from human sociality that they are expected to neither judge nor betray those whom they are partnered with. Additionally the clients do not express feeling beholden to, nor dependent on, their dog partners, at least not a dependency that is commensurate with dependency on other

humans. It is important to note the ways that the agency's assistance dogs come to be understood as sometimes morally superior beings, and it is precisely this that feeds into their efficacy as character witnesses.

When Jim explains that Manny walks with his head held high, "like a bodyguard," we may hear in his words the way the assistance dogs act as role models for the clients despite certain contrary expectations given anthropocentric hierarchies. Edna, too, expresses the ways she experiences a paired uplifting mirroring effect with Mocha. On one hand she often expressed to me a concern for how I was seeing her, worrying that I thought she was "a sicky," for example. On the other hand she discussed her marked pride about being in public with Mocha. But between and among these experiences are Edna's explanations of the way she and Mocha are alike. She told me about this both in big-picture descriptions of how well matched they are, and in the details, such as when she explained how they both have "bony elbows" or how they are both "drama queens."

Jim says that when he and Manny met they both stared at each other. He had never seen a dog that looked like Manny: "I'd never seen a smooth collie before. I looked at him and he looked at me..." Here he paused in enacted confusion before going on. "He looked at me like, "what are you?!"...I'd never known an animal and a human could bond like that. He has completely changed my life." This is another striking example of the transformative offset mirroring that these relationships can give rise to. It is partly in the very difference between Manny and Jim or Mocha and Edna that inspiration or optimism takes shape in the human partner. Manny and Mocha are often

seen as prouder and more competent companions-cum-models; and this is one more element that produces a self-esteem that spirals upward strengthened by such mutual regard.

The agency has held several fundraising events at various sporting events. One of these was a professional basketball game. They billed the fundraiser as a “dog night.” The basketball arena has two tiers, and the second tier was open to “Dog Owners and their Dogs.” The participants of “dog night” had their own entrance and exit, and dogs were ticketed separately. Dog’s tickets cost \$15, whereas “owner/adult” tickets cost \$25. Here parental-familial relations have a tacit presence in the evocation of “adult” (“owner”) as opposed to “dog”/ (“child”-“dependent”-“owned” ?) . The waiver and liability form that all participants must fill out asked that “you remain with your pet in the upper bowl section in courtesy of fans who do not have pets or may suffer from allergies or stigmas.” The use of “owner” terminology and clearly separated tickets, entrances, and floors of the arena suggest an acceptance of the fact that everyone may not want to be at a basketball game with dogs and the tacit acknowledgement that dogs are not usually allowed (except as service dogs) in indoor public events such as this. And of course much of the final technical arrangements of this event were surely coordinated by the arena’s management in order to gain as much and lose as little (revenue and good publicity) as possible. Yet the liability form describes presumably any discomfort with dogs that is not an allergy as “suffering from stigmas.” The human who doesn’t want to be around dogs is here portrayed as a victim, marred by having succumbed to some stigmatization of dogs. Here again is the suggestion that people (most normal ones) like dogs. This is the root of

the assumed ease of conversation about dogs, as well as the sense that having a relationship with a dog attests to one's trustworthiness or at the very least attests to one's basic approachability.

As I discussed earlier the very fact that an assistance dog may be encountered where other dogs are not allowed seems to contribute to her unique/celebrity aura. The "dog night" at the basketball game (like many of the agency fundraisers and gatherings) however, presents the special case of being an event that not only assistance dogs and those in training can attend, but that any well-behaved and responsibly accompanied dog can attend. It is the kind of "mixed" event that reminds the attendees that while assistance dogs are indeed special they are also, or fundamentally, dogs. That is, they are also like other dogs. This also highlights the fact that "regular" or "pet" dogs also hold such promise. As many people repeated in my presence, assistance dogs are "still dogs."

The "dog night" basketball game was arranged as a fundraiser that would appeal to people's desire to do things with dogs with whom they have relationships, and which that they normally would not be able to do, unless the dog was certified as an assistance dog. As one of the announcements explained, the event offers an opportunity "when dog owners can bring their furry friend to the game!...before the game, dog owners can show their dogs around the second level of the arena. During the game, sit with your dog in a special section!" This announcement, like the event itself, affirms that people who have dog friends also want to go out in public with them, and enjoy entertainment and leisure activities together as they would with other (human) friends and family. The event is exciting, the literature makes clear, partly because this is not normally possible. We can

expect that events like these will become increasingly common as more humans experience dogs as friends and family, or as otherwise highly regarded intimates.

We see the possibilities for interspecies activities changing in the form of pet friendly vacationing guides (like dogfriendly.com, petfriendly.com, bringfido.com ,etc.) detailing greatly increased options for where one can stay, eat, and/or exercise with dogs and cats when travelling, as well as in more elaborate centers like the Annenberg Project at Lower Point Vicente in Southern California, in progress as of this writing. According to the Annenberg Foundation website, “The Center will dovetail with the natural environment, celebrate our relationships with companion animals and other living things, and complement the Point Vicente Interpretive Center (PVIC).” The Center is envisioned as an educational and recreational institute for humans and companion animals (the computer generated illustrations show only dogs accompanying humans, however). The designers are planning to build “a Center that would focus on providing education, services, and volunteer opportunities to learn about animals, science, behavior and care. Geared to all ages, the Center would provide a wide range of classes, counseling, animal adoption opportunities and support for families interested in better understanding the human-animal bond.” The Annenberg Project, like the Dog Night, demonstrates a vigorously expanding interest in and marketing towards human-animal relations, including leisure activities for interspecies families. Just as dogs are being welcomed with great warmth by many folks in public places, they are also acting as social bridges and character witnesses in facilitating interactions between humans. All of

this reflects and contributes to a deepening of regard for dogs and possibilities for interspecies relationships in the United States.

This chapter has detailed central issues regarding how my informants experience security and insecurity in their lives. In this we feel the palpable sense of distrust of human strangers as well as the immediate positive reception of assistance dogs. My informants manifest valuation of functional independence and pressure of professional comportment even while daily interdependence and emotional intimacy complicate and illuminate these. In addition to the ongoing work of making security for themselves we have seen how my informants' lives are deeply affected by how they are in turn trusted or not by others, especially strangers, and how such interspecies relationships as those explored here enhance the personhood of both team members, and thereby contribute to a security made together.

CHAPTER THREE:

Likening: Doing Relations, Being Significant

This chapter explores the making and experience of personhood, as this may be attributed to dogs as well as humans (and others). In this undertaking I interweave ideas pertaining to metaphoricity and literality, as these notions are used to characterize and authorize specific attributions of personhood. I propose “likening” and ideas about what is changeably “shareable” to destabilize the dichotomy of “real” versus “creative” description or meaning implicit in dominant ideas about what is literal and what is

metaphorical. That dichotomy denies the creative, changeful nature of making all meaning and expression. Critical to this intervention is the fact that what is understood as literally true and what metaphorically true can and does change as we will see. I also aver that personhood, or being significant, is made; it is processual. Personhood and significance is in the doing. Ultimately this chapter deals with how the significance of selves, others, sociality, and meaning more generally is relational, embodied, lived.

Likening and the Shareable

As I conducted my fieldwork and listened to people at the agency talk about assistance dog partners, trainees, volunteers, staff, and family members in various ways, I was initially very surprised at how often and variously client-dog partnerships were described. As it is clear by now, these relationships are usually described as family and work partnerships. When I would mention such characterizations to others, especially those unacquainted with the agency or assistance dogs, I was struck by how often the notion of metaphor would arise. While listening to my informants talk about their assistance dog partners as family and workmates there was certainly no reason for me to assume that anyone was expressing a metaphorical relationship. And yet frequently enough to make it noteworthy, I have found myself relating a story from my fieldwork in which someone at the agency described their relationship with a dog as a familial relationship or in terms of careers, and my interlocutor would find these “metaphors” so interesting. This kind of response assumes that it is clear to all that dogs and humans could only have metaphorical relationships.

These experiences, along with my encounters with notions of literality and

metaphor in the work of other scholars such as Paul Nadasdy (2007), Eduardo Kohn (2007), Tim Ingold (2000), and others who also insist that we must take human and non-human animal social relations seriously, left me further confounded by the meaning of the “literal,” as that which is not “metaphor,” and “metaphor” as not real. Take for example Paul Nadasdy’s critically important assertions regarding taking human-nonhuman animal relationships seriously. As he presents it: relationships between, for example, Arctic hunters and their quarry are not “metaphorical” social relationships, but actual ones entailing critical reciprocity (Nadasdy, 29). The sensibility that holds metaphor to be equivalent to “not actual” and literal to mean “true” is itself rife with import. I will return to Nadasdy, and the other scholars I mentioned, shortly.

The more I ruminated on these matters the more obvious it seemed to me that the very notion of “the literal” was used as a term that hid, or was expected to hide, its own effects. Like the biologists’ microscope, thought by some only to enlarge reality rather than contribute to producing it, the word “literal” seemed to me to be expressing the very relationship between what was being described and its *representation*, as in translation. Given the fact that the word “literal” is signaling its own work of representation, it seems quite strange that a word like “literal” should be used as a synonym for words like “real” or “actual.” These matters are thoroughly entangled with concerns over who and what counts as actual people, relationships, and social possibilities. The fact that non-human personhood, interspecies sociality, and questions of metaphor and literality are consistently brought up together, if not always addressed as social phenomena in tandem, by other scholars, has only encouraged me to continue to pursue their mutual effects.

My informants' relationships, especially those understood as interspecies ones, uniquely draw on and shape possibilities regarding personhood and sociality. Given the geometric increase in number and kind of assistance and therapy dogs and their work in recent years, including the introduction of seizure and diabetic alert and assist dogs, assistance dogs for children with autism, animal therapy programs in elder residences, reading to dog programs in schools and libraries, and the announcement a few years ago of potential cardiac alert dogs, my informants' relationships reveal the persistence and emergence of various inter- and intra-species socialities as well as the character of critical dimensions and criteria underlying and constituting these relationships. It is preeminently useful to explore how ideas of metaphor, literality, what is shared and what is not, are themselves inextricable from how these various socialities are made and experienced in everyday life.

The client-assistance dog teams share homes and jobs. My informants also describe shared thoughts, character traits, fundamental life experiences, love, and struggles. What people describe as being shared or unshared abilities, traits, and skills, or challenges, stigmas, and concerns are key elements in how my informants experience and make sense of themselves and one another. And they do this relationally. My informants report and experience all kinds of elements (thoughts, love, histories, characteristics, etc.) as shareable and unshareable with one another. The saliency of a given shareable element changes depending on the context. While species lines are often treated as impenetrable,

and the distinctions they describe as absolute, my informants, and the agency's teams in particular, experience rich shared lives of perception, communication, work, and affection. Additionally the subtle as well as the stark elements that are mobilized to characterize clients, staff, or dogs as for example "disabled," "professional," or those who "want to work," are also those elements that can be shared or not. These elements, and whether they are understood to be shared or not, then get used to underwrite solidarity, affection, distrust, or pity. The identification, selection, and mobilization of a given trait or characteristic as meaningful, as being held in common with someone else, is itself an important and creative process.

Paul Nadasdy, in his article "The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality," details the stakes and assumptions underlying anthropologists not taking seriously their informants' assertions of human-animal sociality. He concentrates on northern hunters, such as people of the Kluane First Nation in the Yukon, with whom he worked. Nadasdy points out that anthropologists have tended to avoid taking seriously their informants' descriptions of hunting as entailing the hunted giving oneself to the hunter (Nadasdy, 26), and he makes it plain that the stakes of these debates are high. The stakes are high for the Kluane people, not only in terms of cultural integrity and the respect accorded them, but also in relation to competing land claims and the terms of cooperative management undertaken with government agencies over critical resources (Nadasdy, 25).

Nadasdy clarifies that the stakes are also high for anthropologists. He asserts that

[o]ne of the basic premises of exchange theory is that reciprocity is a social act. It binds persons to one another through the creation and maintenance of social relations. Because it is a social act, it can occur only among persons, that is social beings who are active and conscious participants in the exchange process. Very few Euro-American scholars are willing to accept the proposition that animals might qualify as conscious actors capable of engaging in social relations with humans. As a result, Euro-American anthropologists—even those familiar with aboriginal theories of human-animal relations—have been reluctant to expand their own analytic concept of society to include animals, much less sentient spiritually powerful ones. Yet this is precisely what the study of human-animal relations among northern hunting peoples calls for (Nadasdy, 29).

Thus, Nadasdy passionately argues for taking human-animal sociality seriously. He writes that while Tim Ingold, whose work we will discuss shortly, has been an inspiration to him in this, yet Ingold “ultimately shies away from some of the most radical implications of his own work and ends up (despite himself) treating certain important aspects of northern hunters’ conceptions about human-animal relations as just metaphor” (Nadasdy, 26). I concur with Nadasdy that many scholars and others too often end up treating interspecies sociality as merely projections of human wishes or behaviors, and do not actually take such webs of relationships and ways of relating seriously, as “real.” So while I heartily agree that interspecies sociality must not be reduced to “just metaphor,” I suggest that metaphor itself is not a reduction, but an important mode to be attended to, not as opposed to literality, but as an expressive mode and itself an important cultural category.

The assessment, whether implicit or explicit, that something is metaphorical or literal itself reflects and gives rise to social possibilities. Such understandings are foundational for what is considered as real and as socially shareable. When someone asserts that a dog is a member of their family, like their son, or a co-worker, whether

these statements are considered to reflect actuality, to be metaphorical, or even not evaluated in these ways, such assessments themselves reflect important and protean standards regarding social life. Attending then to the very constitution of the literal, the metaphorical, as part of meaning-making more generally, thus allows us to understand how the impossible can “literally” become true as what becomes possible changes.

Terence Turner’s insights help us to understand how what is considered metaphor, and what literal, is changeful and contingent. In his work “ ‘We are Parrots’, ‘Twins are Birds’ ” Turner offers an important anthropological discussion regarding the non-oppositional nature of metaphor and literality. Turner elaborates on what underlies conventional views of metaphor, including what is often called “metaphor theory.” As he explains,

“In the most commonly held view, based on positivist or “correspondence” notions of semantic reference, in which sharp distinction is made between denotative and connotative meaning, it is assumed that the similarity between the features of the “source” and “target” domains is determined by the objective correspondence of each with its referent. The similarity, in other words, derives from the objective properties of referents, which are themselves independent of (prior to) the perception or cognition of those properties by subjects”(Turner,123-4).

The creativity of metaphor then is the use of shared, “objective” characteristics to make a metaphor. The “denotative semantic relations that provide...[the] elements” of metaphor are regarded as “natural” (Turner,124). Again, the positivist approach to metaphor here is “that ‘literal’ meaning and the semantic domains in which it is represented are in some sense natural and thus uncreative. Creative or figurative meaning is therefore contrastively located in the ‘unnatural’ metaphoric connection between

domains” (Turner, 124). It is worth noting, then, that in this view the denotative domains of “family,” “dogs,” or “people,” for example, are understood as natural, and so objectively and universally recognizable. Any traits selected from one domain to map the other are seen to inhere in the objects, or domains themselves. It is only the mapping itself that is seen as creative. That is, the creativity of metaphor consists in the “choosing” of pre-given, objective traits with which to map correspondences and so craft metaphor. Thus metaphor in this conventional view “creates a new relationship between domains, it does not create new meaning as the basis of this relationship.” (Turner,124).

Turner, following philosopher Cristina Bicchieri’s developments on the work of metaphor scholar Max Black and literary critic I.A. Richards, explains that an interactionist approach to metaphor underscores that “the common ground of the two members of the metaphoric equation necessarily entails the creation of new meaning, not simply the recognition of a preexisting one” (Turner,125). According to Turner, to “say ‘the foot of the mountain,’ is to imbue both feet and the bases of mountains...with a new sense not reducible to that each has in its original semantic domain” (Turner,125). Turner asserts that the “difference between literal and figurative meaning, or what is recognized as straightforward reference and what is perceived as metaphor... is not essential but pragmatic or contextually relative” (Turner,128). Thus metaphor and literality are not opposed to one another, nor is one creative while the other is objective. By attending to the kinds of personal characteristics and other elements described by my informants in discussions of important relationships we can see the making of social possibilities. This includes new possibilities in interspecies relationships, affecting and affected by the play

of metaphor and literality, as ways of knowing and expressing, as well as ways of knowing knowing itself.

The elements in my informants' lives that they experience as "shareable" and unshareable" are foundational for how, and with whom, they make their livelihoods and their families, and understand themselves, each other, their communities, and their safety. These elements, such as the attribution of shared thoughts, or common life experiences, are themselves changeably regarded. When in a given moment a client of the agency highlights the fact that he and his assistance dog partner have their careers in common, like the mountain and its feet, all the elements entailed in the discussion are imbued with mutually changed meaning. Certainly the human, the dog, and the career become imbued with a mutually changed meaning as they are held together in that context. Even setting aside for a moment distinctions between metaphor and literality, we can see how such an interactionist perspective is most useful in tending to the protean nature of meaning-making.

As clients and staff, dogs and humans experience or discuss shared communicative modes, their homes, travels together, being held in high regard or low, these become bases for and reflect other shared identities or lack thereof, such as family, friend, coworker. Such shared identities and relationships are not definitively secured; they are always being made, remade, unmade. Attending to what people understand to be shared or unshared traits or elements, with whom, and the import of these, allows for more analytic flexibility than over-commitment to notions of fixed similarity or

difference. We can explore how notions of metaphoricity and literality may emerge or recede in tandem with these other expressive modes.

Exploring how my informants describe and experience shareable and unshareable elements allows for making more fine-grained observations about the contextual and relational nature of important social distinctions, providing insights into dimensions of intimacy, trust, and social cohesion that would otherwise be invisible. These putatively shareable or unshareable dimensions of life are fundamental to what I shall refer to as the “likening” process, which resists absolute distinctions between metaphor and literality to the same extent that it also expresses and enables (and represses and disables) emerging social possibilities. I find the notion of “likening” most useful in its inclusivity and its processual character. We can use it to resist the analytic pressures exerted by a dichotomous view of metaphor-versus-literality. Like metaphor, likening is central to the process of articulating previously inchoate, or even “impossible” feelings, ideas, and experiences, as well as less conceptually or psychologically challenging ones. But unlike traditional notions of metaphor, it does not exclude the literal.

The power of likening in action is what is at work when Jim describes Manny as “like having a teenager around the house...one that listens” and when moments later he explains his first experiences of quiet affection with Manny as “when the bond started...I was the alpha male and he was the servant...er, part of the pack...” and then concludes, “I can’t explain it.” Here Jim is likening his relationship with Manny to all kinds of other ways of relating to try to explain their relationship to an outsider. In this linking together he is making new meanings for his and Manny’s relationship in particular and dog-

human relationships more generally. The additive nature of his description changes each term in turn. In this example we can hear the mutual shift and play of meaning between Jim and Manny in their relationship. In his additive pursuit of clear description, Jim also communicates the very fact that there is not an easily accessible common stock of words and phrases that would reflect a putatively straightforward and widely accepted understanding of relationships like his and Manny's. If Jim wants me and others to understand what makes his and Manny's life and work together special and important (which he and others demonstrably do) then he has to make that clear without the assumption of such widely accepted points of reference. He cannot assume that "everybody knows" what assistance dog-human relationships are like.

Additionally and equally important, the newness of articulating the feelings and experiences he is having with Manny not only pertains when communicating to others, but is characteristic of how Jim too experiences the relationship. This is the case for many of the other clients, staff, and volunteers as well. Articulating the experiences of such intimate interspecies relationships as these by expressing their similarity with relationships thought to be more widely experienced and accepted, as well as by naming them in those terms, are both ways of expressing and experiencing relations. Discriminating "between" both of these examples of likening and naming as somehow absolutely distinct is counterproductive and misleading. Additionally the very resistance to explanation that Jim and others frequently mention is also important, and itself expressive of this importance.

Let us return to Jim's description of the foundational moment of his life-changing relationship with Manny. Jim says that having Manny with him is "like having a teenager around the house" but with the qualification of "one who listens." He also explains that "when the bond started" it was also as a relationship between "the alpha male" and "servant...er part of the pack." Jim draws on what he understands will be shared ideas about various *kinds* of relationships to explain what he expects will be for me, as it is for him, a new kind of relationship. And in this undertaking his primary reference is to a nuclear family and the relationship between himself as father and Manny as son. What he hastens to add to this conjuring is the key fact that Manny listens to him. Respect and mutual attention mark the difference here between Jim's reference and what he expects it might mean to others.

Human nuclear family and dog pack are both drawn on for explanation, and they are folded over one another and knotted together in this description. Not only does Manny become part of a human family here, and so makes that family an interspecies one, but so, too, Jim becomes part of a dog pack, making it also an interspecies one. The "servant" that makes a brief and perhaps mistaken appearance in Jim's description leaves a trace that further buttresses the hierarchical character of the other descriptions. This sense of hierarchy, predicated on listening (or attention), naturalized by family and pack, is also intensely emotional. After all, his recognition of "when the bond started" was in quiet, restful affection, and talking about it brings on tears in a man who is shocked by his own tearfulness.

Jim is criss-crossing and blending together various images and references, and so crafting their various associations to approximate and express what it is that he and Manny share. In his evocation of “having a teenager around the house,” he remakes a description of the nuclear family, as well as his relationship with Manny, as each is imbued with mutually changed meaning. The same is true of his dog pack description. The connections between these linked characterizations and their mutual influence are multiplied as all of these elements modify one another to various effects. The ad hoc poem of his description is neither strictly metaphor nor literal, but in its likening we can start to descry new worlds of sociality that Manny and Jim are sharing.

The notions of the shareable and unshareable as implicit and foundational characterizations can help to approach the double-heart of the recurrent issues of metaphor versus literality and the fluidity of personhood which these terms may or may not be (able to be) mobilized to describe. Tim Ingold’s insights can help us to further address the nature of metaphoricity-literality while pursuing a sociality and its constituents that Ralph Acampora would characterize as “interanimalic” (Acampora, 126). Ingold’s work helps us to underscore the embodied and relational nature of meaning-making and being, which is central to my informants’ experiences of interspecies relationships, including families and work teams.

Becoming Significant, Emergent Personhood

Ingold addresses himself to animal personhood quite specifically in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*. In his chapter “A Circumpolar Night’s Dream,” Ingold explores some of the critical import of A. Irving

Hallowell's ethnography of Ojibwe people. One of the overriding matters here for Ingold is the distinction between "Thing" and "Being" that he sees plaguing and confounding much scholarship. In the face of this distinction Ingold reminds his readers that an organism does not "contain life," nor "express life," such that the organism is somehow separate from living. He explains that the organism is rather "emergent within the life process itself" (Ingold, 89). Ingold finds in Hallowell's work on "Ojibwe Ontology, Behavior, and World View" conceptions of personhood that he asserts can help us "'bring the person, as it were, back down to earth,' to restore it to the primary context of its engagement with an environment" (Ingold, 95). According to Ojibwe ontology, as Ingold and Hallowell present it, persons take many forms, and transformation is itself essential to personhood. For Ingold these ideas offer an alternative to an ontology predicated on the confounding subject-object division embedded within both "organism" and "environment" as such, and dividing each from the other.

Ingold poses the question of what outsiders with radically different cosmologies should make of Ojibwe statements pertaining to talking stones or the Sun as person. He explains that for Hallowell, "the sun is not really a person, but is constructed as such in the minds of the Ojibwa" (Ingold, 95). Ingold concludes from this that "[b]y this move, Ojibwa metaphysics appear to pose no challenge to our own ontological certainties" (Ingold, 95). This is an approach that Ingold himself seeks to redress and one that Nadasdy, too, is at pains to challenge. Ingold takes Ojibwe ontology-cosmology's lead in this, explaining that it makes a nonsense of categorical distinction between living and non-living things" (Ingold, 97). Further, Ingold explains that "life in this sense is not

given, ready-made...It is rather a project that has continually to be worked at. Life is a task” (Ingold, 97). This way of understanding also helps us to grasp the ways that the personhood of assistance dogs, clients, and staff are being worked out within not-merely-human social fields of being-together. Whether these persons, their families, or other domains and experiences are understood as metaphorically or literally real, including by those most directly involved in any of these “projects” of living is but one index , manifestation of, and contribution to, their apprehension.

When Dan explains that while no one notices him when he goes out in the world alone, but when he goes out in public with an assistance dog he attracts many people, who he will then “connect with,” he is explaining his experience of being a center of such a shifting field of relational and contingent personhood. This experience is even more obvious for Jim or Edna, who are treated as much “more human” in the company of Manny and Mocha. Certainly Manny, Mocha, Tag, Hal, and all the other assistance dogs are treated with much more regard and respect than a great many other dogs. Just as Dan can “take these connections [made when accompanied by an assistance dog] in all different directions” and so become enlivened and enlarged, so too does Manny become more of a person, as do we all, when engaged with in a stimulating, attentive, and respectful manner. As Manny and Jim too attend to one another in the ongoing task of learning and doing their togetherness, they enrich the relational field, following Ingold’s gloss of Ojibwe ontology, from which they emerge, and of which they are a manifestation.

Following up on his prompting regarding clashing ontologies, Ingold elaborates that for Ojibwe people, “Knowledge does not lie in the accumulation of mental content. It is not by representing it in the mind that they get to know the world, but rather by moving around in their environment” (Ingold, 99). “Experience...amounts to a sensory participation, a coupling of the movement of one’s own awareness to the movement of the aspects of the world” (Ingold, 99). These modes of knowing-as-doing-as-being give rise to knowledge that is “not propositional...but personal—consisting of intimate sensitivity to other ways of being, to the particular movements, habits, and temperaments that reveal each for what it is. “ (Ingold, 99). This approach to knowledge is particularly apt for understanding the kind of personal and active knowledge that coheres in the bond between assistance dogs and client partners.

“The bond” as a phrase used by my informants expresses a paradoxical ineffability, some of which is an outcome of marginal and sometimes culturally confusing relations, as interspecies partners, for example. As such there is not a canon of widely and easily understandable terms to share experiences of these relationships with others. It is also true that the very nature of what the bond expresses is confounded by what Ingold describes as the “propositional form,” that form which knowledge is often expected to take according to the dominant demands grounded in positivist assumptions.

In contrast to this “propositional form,” “intimate sensitivity” is “closely analogous to that which the skilled craftsman has of raw material, is not easily articulated in propositional form, and would seem to be devalued by any attempt to do so—to disembody it from grounding in the context of the knower’s personal involvement with the

known” (Ingold, 99). Ingold describes how personal, experiential, and kinesthetic modes of knowing are unable to be articulated in a propositional form of abstraction. The craftsman example is helpful. Even more confounding for articulating in propositional form is the nature of the potential personhood of a craftsman’s “raw material” itself, a talking stone perhaps, or some “brute beast” such as a cow, deer, dog, or any number of others. Experience then confounds rigid ontological-epistemological divisions. As Ingold puts it, “experience is intrinsic to the generative process wherein persons—both human and other-than-human—come into being and pursue the goal of life, each within the field of their relations with others” (Ingold, 99).

Eduardo Kohn calls for an “anthropology of life” that also attends to more than the human. Whereas Nadasdy focuses on other-than-human “personhood” as he discusses interspecies sociality, Kohn uses the concept of “selfhood” as a central analytic focus of multispecies sociality in Upper Amazonia, paying particular attention to relationships between dogs and humans. Kohn points to Bruno Latour’s work on “natures-cultures” and human-nonhuman socialities as a model of ethnographic work that attends to other than human actors. However Kohn asserts that Latour’s distinctions fail to “recognize that some nonhumans are selves. As such they are not just represented (Latour,1993). They also represent. Representation exceeds the symbolic, it therefore exceeds human speech” (Kohn, 5). According to Kohn humans may be distinctive in their use of symbolic reference. However these are, as Kohn puts it following Peirce, “embedded in more fundamental and pervasive modes of representation” (Kohn, 5).

These fundamental modes of representation include iconic and indexical representation, which Kohn describes respectively as “embody[ing] likeness” and “impacted by the objects they represent” (Kohn, 5). He gives the examples of photographs and lizard’s skin for icons and windsocks and monkey’s alarm calls for indices. Iconic and indexical representation, then, are the bases for representational reference. These “more basic modes are intrinsic to the biological world” (Kohn, 5). Not only is Kohn clarifying that humans are not the only beings who represent, and are thus selves, but he also underscores that “[i]n understanding nonhuman selves and how we can interact with them, the choice is not between (animal) bodies and (human) meanings”(Kohn, 5). Just as representation for Kohn is unseated as the basis for human exceptionalism so too his call for an “anthropology of life” is predicated on the undermining of mind-body dualisms. And these two are clearly and always conceptually linked.

While for Kohn, symbolic representation is a distinctively human mode of representation, even the adaptation of simple life forms enacts signification along a continuum of embodied semiosis. As he explains it, such “adaptation is an embodied sign vehicle to the extent that it is interpreted by the subsequent generation with respect to what this sign vehicle is about—the relevant characteristics of the environment” (Kohn,6). This adaptation to the environment, or embodiment of the environment, is instantiated by the next generation. For Kohn then, beings are representations of the environment, and interpreters of these representations. “Life, then, is a sign process” (Kohn, 6). Selfhood thus emerges as “the locus and product of this process of

interpretation. Self does not stand outside this embodied dynamic...it emerges within this dynamic as the outcome of an embodied process that produces a new sign, which interprets a prior one” (Kohn, 6). Kohn points to the inextricability of living from meaning-making. The distinction between “Thing” and “Being” that Ingold described is here confounded by Self as Kohn describes it.

Doing-as-Being (-Other)-Together

While advocating an “anthropology of life,” Kohn discusses his primary informants, the Runa, who participate in a particular “transspecies ecology of selves that constitutes the forest ecosystem” (Kohn, 7). According to Kohn their understanding of these relations reflects what Eduardo Vivieros de Castro (1998) calls “perspectival multinaturalism,” in which each being experiences their own commensurate kind of personhood as such, however different these may be given radically different embodied existences. This kind of subjectivity is what for the Runa underlies transspecies communication. But this must also take into account the potentially radical differences in embodied existence. Accordingly, “knowing others requires inhabiting their different umwelts ” (Kohn, 7). Here Kohn’s description echoes Ingold’s elaboration of intimacy-in-otherness.

Kohn explains of his informants that “in their mutual attempts to live together and make sense of each other, dogs and people increasingly come to partake in a shared constellation of attributes and dispositions—a sort of shared transspecies habitus. Such becomings cut across nature-culture distinctions” (Kohn, 7). Kohn’s description certainly speaks also to the work of the interspecies families and partners such as Toby, an injured

war veteran, and Jax an assistance dog, who helps Toby with mobility as well as with his “frustration.” Jax retrieves items from around the house for Toby as well as providing “security,” according to his wife, Dana. Jax and Toby learn how to make an enriched togetherness with all their embodied cultural particularities. These include Jax’s four-footed walking, acute sense of smell, and early socialization to attend carefully to humans, to Toby’s recent blindness, two-legged walking, and military history to list just a few characteristics. As these two (and Toby’s wife and children, to a lesser extent) learn to walk together and rest together, listen and communicate to one another, they too make sense of each other through a daily emergent and shared “transspecies habitus.”

Toby and Jax’s transspecies doing-as-being together imparts a security in the wake of war’s trauma. In contrast Kohn takes care to describe the perils his informants experience in knowing others through “inhabiting their different umwelts” (Kohn, 7). In doing this work of knowing others, “attributes and dispositions become dislodged from the bodies that produce them and ontological boundaries become blurred. I call this transformative process of blurring a ‘becoming’”(Kohn, 7). As he explains it, “becoming” in this sense engenders the risk of becoming more permanently other. Kohn describes how Runa people guard against these risks in their mobilization of communicative strategies. Paralleling Vivieros de Castros “perspectival multinaturalism,” Kohn explains that the Runa interpret their own dreams metaphorically, so that they interpret their dreams as the spirit master experiences the forest. By contrast they interpret dogs’ dreams literally, based on the barking or leg movements of a sleeping dog. “What is literal and what is metaphoric shifts” (Kohn,12).

“In Avila, [the Runa village of his informants] the literal refers to a customary interpretation of the world internal to a given ontological domain. Metaphor, by contrast, is used in Avila to understand across ontological domains. It therefore aligns different ontologically situated points of view...What stays constant is that metaphor establishes a difference in perspective between beings inhabiting different ontological domains. In this way, it is a crucial brake that the Runa impose on the propensity toward ontological blurring” (Kohn, 12-13).

The literal, thus, describes the relationship that obtains between what is experienced and its description within a given ontological realm, such as “the human.” Keeping Kohn’s description of Runa use of metaphor as protection against ontological blurring in mind, we can behold the shifting of metaphoricity and literality as manifestations and registers of what is changefully possible. Limned by the putatively “metaphorical” or “literal,” the very contours of such possibilities also mark ontological dangers, the way monsters might at the edge of a map. Thus understanding dogs and humans as “metaphorically” family rather than “actually” family can put a “crucial brake” on perceived dangers of ontological blurring. Kohn’s description of metaphor and literality as communicative strategies helps to further undercut distinctions between these two as the opposition between fiction and reality, or creativity and objectivity.

Both metaphor and literality are communicative and perceptual modes that can be mobilized to aid transspecies relations within an ecology of selves. For Kohn’s informants, and mine, and all of us, metaphor and literality describe the creative work of attempted mutual understanding as well as self-protection. Kohn’s analysis lets us further clarify that the very ways that metaphor and literality are experienced and mobilized within creative fields of relations are themselves important, impactful. Kohn says, following Roy Ellen, “[h]uman-dog becomings are dependent on the ways in which

canine and human socialities merge” (Kohn, 12). As Kohn describes the Runa in their “partaking in a shared constellation of attributes,” they are experiencing and forging “shareable” elements as I have been using the term. In doing so, however, Kohn clarifies that “Runa do not want to become dogs in the process” (Kohn, 12). This echoes Rane Willerslev’s work on Yukaghir hunters of northeastern Siberia, who partake in a delicate mimesis in which they become “not animal, not not-animal” as the title of one of his articles declares (Willerslev, 629).

Willerslev too draws on the work of Vivieros de Castro, and describes Yukaghir hunters as experiencing the same kind of “perspectivism” as the Runa, such that reindeer, wolves, and vole all experience themselves as people, in the same way that humans do. Willerslev explains that this manifests what Vivieros de Castro characterizes as “uni-culturalism and multi-naturalism” (Vivieros de Castro 1998, 470). According to this idea, different beings have different experiences because they are different kinds of (embodied) beings, yet experience their worlds in commensurate ways, “like we would.” Yukaghir attempt to assume the viewpoint of their prey by way of “intentionally acting as an incomplete copy of it ” (Willerslev, 638). In their hunting, Yukaghir hunters “attempt to assume the point of view of the animal, while in some profound sense remaining the same” (Willerslev, 630). As Willerslev describes it, mimesis “provides this ability to be like, yet also different from, the animal impersonated; it grants the hunter a double perspective...but still remain a human hunter who chases and kills the prey.” (Willerslev, 630). Here, as in Kohn’s description, the thoroughly embodied partaking of attributes and dispositions, the working out of the being of another kind, is productive, but also

potentially dangerous work in these contexts. Both Kohn and Willerslev describe the perception of acute danger of permanently becoming other kinds of persons, whether dog or elk or otherwise. These dangers are risked in the more ephemeral or reversible “becomings” that Kohn describes.

Part of Willerslev’s project is to elaborate on Yukaghir transspecies mimesis in a way that does justice to the embodied and concrete character of the experience. As he puts it, “their perspectivist representations are not just intellectual constructs, but are in a significant sense practical, inseparably bound up with hunting activity in which they are engaged” (Willerslev, 637). Fundamental to Willerslev’s argument is the insight that attending to embodied mimesis is central to making “a way to place Yukaghir conceptions of such matters as human-animal transformations in the lived-in world of experience instead of simply attributing them to some overarching cosmological model”(Willerslev, 638). Echoing Ingold, we find here an attempt to “bring the person back down to earth” (Ingold, 95). It is in the doing of such transformations that they have import, that they are real.

As I see it, the kind of mimesis that Willerslev describes is the willing of oneself into the *umwelt* of another, becoming another’s kind of person. The personhood or the selfhood of those, whether elk or reindeer, a hunter imitates is not in question. So real is the becoming that one must take care not to lose one’s originary embodied perspective. Additionally Willerslev too offers a strategy for acknowledging these modes of sociality without reducing them to cosmological abstractions, and he does so by keeping their constituent nuanced psychic and physical becomings central in his exposition. As he

describes it, personhood is fundamentally embodied and physically distinguished. Ontological boundaries are crossed by becoming other physically. The mimesis that enacts these transformations is born of intimate attention and existential risk. This ability is predicated on some profoundly “shareable” field of personhood and transformation.

The mimetic activities of Yukaghir hunters, and Runa becomings, have some important commonalities with the activities to which many of the clients, assistance dogs, staff, and volunteers at the agency are dedicated. The training and then the ongoing learning of togetherness that make these teams work is predicated too on a shareable *habitus*. This is a shared transspecies embodied living that is highly communicative, and intuitive as well as explicit. I would also suggest that on one hand the dogs and humans who work together act, as Willerslev’s informants do, as “in-between identities,” yet these may become something else, a kind of sharedness, that is different from “in-between,” especially as it tends to be abiding, rather than temporary. In this regard Donna Haraway’s notion of “significant otherness” persistently suggests itself. Such is the case because her term so elegantly describes beings of potentially different and distinct kinds who count to one another. It also suggests a wide range of intimacies this relating may give rise to, or be born from. The fact that my informants form and experience life-changing interspecies “partnerships” and families makes her term that much more appropriate.

Kohn and Willerslev make it clear that becomings and mimesis are approached as highly risky as well as essential undertakings. I have taken pains to assess whether clients and staff or others seem to express comparable fears of identity loss or

“ontological blurring.” Certainly species lines are policed and touted when visitors to the agency are reassured that “dog and human stuff are kept separate” in the kitchen, for example. The importance of these speciated distinctions is being registered when audiences at agency graduations laugh at almost everything the graduating assistance dogs do, not merely when dressed in mortar board with nylon diploma, but also when video footage shows the graduate demonstrating the important and highly complex help that he or she has trained extensively for. The sometimes seemingly ubiquitous and contradictory nature of the laughter may indicate both a discomfort with perceived ontological category confusion and/or a kind of blinkered view of the work these dogs do as clownish tricks. Of course these perceptions easily shade into one another.

Given that the graduation audiences are composed of graduates’ families and long-time agency supporters and volunteers, it seems unlikely to me that so many people would understand the demonstration of skill as mere funny tricks. After all, while this footage is being shown, presenters like Lizbeth Hapsburg offer such details as “John can fall into a coma induced by hypoglycemia unawareness” if he does not get help from someone like his partner Rally, who brings him a juice and or licks him to try to keep him conscious. While each moment is not a life or death situation for all of these teams, there are many seriously undertaken tasks demonstrated and discussed at graduation ceremonies that seem to be met with a strange and seemingly benign, however seemingly inappropriate, laughter. This I suspect is product of ontological crossings that some attendees experience as deeply uncomfortable if not dangerous. After all, trusting a dog

with one's life is even scarier for some people than the fear of becoming one. Either way the stakes are similarly existential.

Responsive Relations

Nurit Bird-David writes compellingly of Nayaka experiences of personhood and sociality beyond the human. She uses her work with the Nayaka of Southern India to revisit anthropological concept/s of animism from Tylor onward. In particular she focuses on the meaning of *devaru* or (non-human) super-persons within her discussion of animism. Bird-David makes the argument that “animism constitutes a relational (not a failed) epistemology. This epistemology is about knowing the world by focusing primarily on relatedness” (Bird-David, 69). Her project too is inspired by A. Irving Hallowell, and her intent is to build on his insights by detailing the perpetuation of animistic beliefs. She uses Strathern's notion of the dividual to elaborate on the daily workings of this relational epistemology. She explains that she “derive[s] from Strathern's ‘dividual’ (a person constitutive of relationships) the verb ‘to dividuate’”(Bird-David, 72). She clarifies that this contrasts with the action of individuating. ‘When I dividuate her I am conscious of how she relates with me. This is not to say that I am conscious of the relationship with her ‘in itself’ as a thing,” Bird-David continues, “ rather, I am conscious of the *relatedness with* my interlocutor as I engage with her” (Bird-David, 72).

Bird-David's scholarship offers great resonances with our concerns on various fronts, and these include her attention to how Nayaka “composite personhood is constitutive of sharing relationships not only with fellow Nayaka but with members of

other species in the vicinity” (Bird-David, 73). Critical to “Nayaka sense of person” is that the “person is sensed as one whom we share with” (Bird-David, 73). Echoing Carsten’s analytic of kinship through shared substances, and our present concern with the “shareable,” Bird-David clarifies that the Nayaka “dividual objectifies sharing relationships and makes them known. This dividual is emergent, constituted by relationships”(Bird-David,73). And these are also then “local kinship relationships which are also objectifications of mutual sharing of space, things, and actions”(Bird-David, 73). For our purposes it is particularly noteworthy that both person and kin here are highlighted as “one whom we share with.” As she explains it, the very maintenance of relationships with fellow Nayaka, as well as other local beings, is inseparable from maintaining identity and personhood.

Bird-David recalls her initial confusion about the circumstances in which certain non-humans were or were not regarded as *devaru* by her Nayaka informants. She calls on James Gibson’s (1979) ideas of “affordances” and “attention” to clarify these matters, explaining of Gibson’s ecology of visual perception that, “[t]hings are perceived in terms of what they afford the actor-perceiver because of what they are for him (p.138). Their affordance as Gibson calls it, ‘cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective...It is equally a fact of the environment as a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer (p.123)” (Bird-David, 74). Additionally, Bird-David uses the Gibsonian idea that attention is educated skill, and knowing “is developing this skill; knowing is continuous with perceiving, of which it is an extension” (Bird-David, 74). Bird-David hears several

stories about Nayaka encounters with elephants and puzzles over the great contrasts between how the elephants were understood in each episode. She eventually concludes that these examples “show how elephants (as one example among others) may be regarded as persons or as objects, depending on what happens between them and Nayaka, which itself depends on “affordances” of events involving elephants and people.

During an expedition Bird-David walked with Kungan, a Nayaka man, and they encountered an elephant. Kungan turned away from the elephant. He called the elephant not as “elephant *devaru*” but “elephant.” Bird-David explains that in this case the “lack of mutual engagement prevented the kind of relatedness which would have constituted *this* elephant (at *this* moment) as *devaru* while it might be perceived as *devaru* on other occasions” (Bird-David, 75). On one such occasion, elephant *devaru* were known as such when for example, they “looked straight into [another person’s] eyes” and so they “responsively related to Nayaka” (Bird-David, 75). Again here we have not a fixed class of persons, but dividual or dividuated personhood. These are understood as sharing relationships, which are made relationally. As such they are emerging, receding, and transforming with interaction. This description echoes the changeful regard I have witnessed directed at assistance dogs, who one moment may be objectified or described in relatively debased terms, such as in the exhortation to subdue a dog and “bring him down like a steer,” or in the lack of regard that defines interdependence with an assistance dog as “independence,” yet in the next moment even the same dog may be described as beloved partner, confidante, and life-saver.

Just as mutual engagement makes relatedness and so makes *devaru*, mutual engagement makes relatedness and so enacts and gives rise to “the bond” between agency clients and assistance dogs. Such “responsive relatedness” that Bird-David describes is fundamental to the familial and intimate working relationships of these partners (Bird-David, 77). At the same time these insights are not only helpful for understanding “the bond” but also offer an alternative for making all or nothing assessments of the attribution of personhood. The same kind of changeful field of relations out of which *devaru* or “the bond” might emerge, and which they reflect, is also that which helps us to understand how Jim can be treated as monstrous at the bus stop one day and like a celebrity the next. The specific affordances, as Gibson would have it, that are part of the mutual engagement between Jim and various strangers or acquaintances involve the actors’ educated skills of attention, their mutual regard, and the ever-reverberating effects thereof.

This is also reflected in Dan’s description of being “invisible,” versus making so many “connections” depending on whether he is accompanied by an assistance dog. The education of attention that encourages mutual engagement between assistance dogs and client humans is at least initially explicit, intensive, goal-oriented, and structured by the agency and its staff. But this is not the extent of such education, and of course all of our attentions are educated thoroughly, subtly, in manifold and changeful ways, including by such things as the stigmas of disability, the valorization of independence, fear of strangers, and countless other elements mentioned here or not.

Gibson was specifically concerned with how people perceive “the environment,” and refers specifically to the way “people,” on one hand, perceive “things,” on the other. Bird-David uses his insights to articulate her attempted rehabilitation of the notion of animism. As she puts it, within “the objectivist paradigm informing previous attempts to resolve the ‘animism’ problem, it is hard to make sense of people’s ‘talking with’ things, or singing, dancing, or socializing in other ways for which ‘talking’ is used here as shorthand” (Bird-David, 77). Her description of “talking with” is helpful:

“ ‘Talking’ is short-hand for two-way responsive relatedness with a tree—rather than ‘speaking’ one-way to it, as if it could listen and understand. ‘Talking with’ stands for attentiveness to variances and invariances in behavior and response of things in states of relatedness and for getting to know things as they change through the vicissitudes over time of the engagement with them. To ‘talk with a tree’ ...is to perceive what *it* does as one acts towards it, being aware concurrently of changes in oneself and the tree. It is expecting response and responding, growing into mutual responsiveness and, furthermore, possibly into mutual responsibility” (Bird-David, 77)

This description is keen in discriminating between various kinds of attention and regard that we may engage with others. Yet just as people and things are fairly categorically distinct in Gibson’s account, despite the fact that affordances cut across subject-object dichotomies, Bird-David too may be expressing some slightly paradoxical notions. She seems to be expressing a powerful latent expectation that trees, like other “things” are not really people, as when she states that talking with is different than “‘speaking’ one way to it, as if it could understand” (Bird-David, 77). This may undercut her argument. On the other hand I find it useful to apply her insights perhaps more widely than she herself does as when we include humans as those who may be relationally instantiated (to various effects) in the fluid mutual engagement that Bird-David calls “talking with.”

She asserts that “relational framing is articulated in complex, variable, and shifting ways that deserve study” (Bird-David, 77). One of the examples that she suggests for this is ethologists “regarding as persons the study animals with which they live, they frame them relationally. In addition to making them the objects of their scientific study” (Bird-David, 78). Just so, can we easily experience the resonances between Bird-David’s description of animism as relational epistemology and the relational status and meaning of assistance dogs, *as well as* human clients, staff, and all of my informants. Bird-David concludes, “[w]e do not first personify other entities and then socialize with them but personify them, *as, when, and because* we socialize with them. Recognizing a ‘conversation’ with a counter-being—which amounts to accepting it into fellowship rather than recognizing a common essence—makes that being a self in relation with ourselves” (Bird-David, 78). A “conversation,” rather than a “common essence” as Bird-David puts it, exemplifies the changefully “shareable” dimensions of relating that (may) defy categorical and fixed propositions of sameness or difference as criteria for determining personhood, kinship, and other socialities.

Whether and how these “conversations” (dances, songs, etc.) take place, in what manner, and with what manners manifest this very “fellowships” or lack thereof. As my informants demonstrate and express it, shareability, is both more fundamental and a more protean experience constitutive of relationships, of sociality. Additionally we socialize with beings in dynamic recognition and attribution of shareability, or lack thereof. When Marla suggests that folks are more likely to approach and talk to someone in a wheelchair because of the enhanced personhood that their dog partner brings, as she puts it, because,

“they must be able to talk [to the dog, and I can too, and I would talk to the dog too...],” that is an example of the attribution and enactment of shareability bringing socializing. The very making, or attribution, of shareability, arises out of the educated, shifting skills of embodied attention. We can imagine here a more completely interpersonal version of Gibsonian affordances, in which the environment is not opposed, as the world of thing/s, to (human) persons.

In “Bodily Being and Animal World: Toward a Somatology of Cross-Species Community,” Ralph Acampora asserts that “[t]ypically phenomenologies of intersubjectivity are humanly intellectualized and thus limited to the level of interpersonal mentality. As a result, personhood becomes something only humans can have” (Acampora, 119). Against this, Acampora describes how “bodily being can establish lifeworldly residence as a similitude sufficient enough to cross speciated differences” (Acampora, 119). Thus Acampora’s argument is predicated on exploring the shared elements, such as belonging, “at least temporarily, to some common, relatively localized environment which would serve as the milieu of any putatively transpecific ‘somatic society’” (Acampora, 120). “Live bodiment can function as a conduit for interspecific conviviality” (Acampora, 122). In contrast to Gibson this description avoids *a priori* subject object divisions in which man is preemptively set apart from nature, or person from environment, along with mind from body. Acampora is clarifying that shared embodiment manifests our shared-ness with the world. Thus our embodiment and our being of the world are preeminent shareable elements and so are fundamental to our interspecies sociality.

Acampora writes, “The flesh-of-the-world is organismic consanguinity writ ecosystemically large...World-flesh, then, constitutes a thoughtscape and lifeworld broad enough to incorporate conceptually and experientially transpecific intercarnality” (Acampora, 122). Acampora explores “interanimalic instances of ‘metropolitan *Mitsein*’” in Kissena Park, Queens, New York (Acampora, 126). Here he details encounters between and among cicadas, heat, ice, humans, geese, and seasonality. Suggesting that some may wonder about the import of encounters of mutual regard between geese and humans that he describes, Acampora answers that “interspecific perception is charged with pragmatic concern or regard, attention becomes contention, and thus it is difficult to behold simply (neutrally, reductively) because survival vision and social sight must be literally respectful of another living being—taking care through fear or love, to deal with the Other in a phenomenally physical dimension of vital exchange and intercourse”(Acampora, 127). Here he describes how phenomenal realities of mutual attention and conviviality, whether unnerving, amusing, or something else, are shown to be instantiated in shared proximity, shared regard. Thus shared space/ lifeworld is whence comes the significance in “significant Otherness” in Haraway’s sense. Whatever is meant here by “literally,” the respect in question is clearly to be demonstrated in the acting toward, and attending to, the other, such as Bird-David’s description of “talking with” as “expecting response and responding” (Bird-David, 77). Both Acampora’s “survival vision” and “social sight” demand “perceiving what [the other] does as one acts towards it, being aware concurrently of changes in oneself and the [other]” (Bird-David, 77).

Clinton Sanders asserts that “a sociology of human-animal relationships provides a rich context in which to explore how we construct and assign the designation ‘person’,” such as we are clearly engaged with here (Sanders 2003, 407). He asserts that “the conventional, linguicentric perspective on mind-as-internal-conversation is inadequate and confining” (Sanders 2003, 407). He continues that an “expanded view of mind, like personhood, we can best understand as arising out of social interaction. In essence, I maintain that people ‘do mind’ as a cooperative interpretative process that does not depend on the ability of all parties to express their thoughts linguistically” (Sanders 2003, 407). It is helpful here to bring into conversation with this idea the embodied relational enskillment that we have been attending to. It is just such embodied relational enskillment that allows us to “do mind.” Thus we can be reminded that in the very doing of mind, neither the doing nor the mind is limited to the verbal.

Let us recall that Terence Turner warns against the view of metaphor (and literality) which would hold that members of such “tropic relationship appear as inert, preconstituted objects...[In contrast] the transformation of meaning in the ‘play of tropes’ as envisioned in [his] analyses... presents such a [“structuralist” and “positivist”] theory with the paradoxical question of where the literal meaning or denotative reference of the tropic elements goes when they become engaged in tropic interplay” (Turner, 151). Turner explains that from the interactionist approach, and I would argue from an approach concerned with embodied meaning-making-as doing, “this question resembles that question often posed to children, of where mommy’s lap goes when she stands up. The meaning is in the doing, in the operations, in the construction of the form, in the

standing up and sitting down” (Turner, 151). So, too, as we have seen is the sociality of hunting, kin, team members, interlocutors. Such meaning is also made in the mutual affordances of conviviality (interanimalic and otherwise).

Toward Interanimalic Socialities, Expansive Significance

To conclude, manifesting an intensifying concern with human-animal relations in the social sciences, Paul Nadasdy and Eduardo Kohn among many others assert that anthropology should address interspecies relations in new ways. Given the crucial importance of interspecies relations, Kohn calls for an “anthropology of life” that attends to the embodied semiosis of all creatures (Kohn, 6). Nadasdy has recently challenged anthropologists to examine the boundaries of sociality instantiated by most anthropological theory. He points out that most Euro-American notions of sociality reduce human-animal relations to the metaphorical rather than the actual. Like Tim Ingold, Nadasdy observes that for arctic hunters, for example, animals are not *like* people but *are* people, Nadasdy challenges anthropology’s historical denial of such a possibility (Ingold, 91, Nadasdy, 31). Where Nadasdy suggests that we must take human-animal relationships seriously by not reducing them to metaphor, I suggest that metaphor itself does not have to be *reduction*.

I assert that metaphor could be a reduction only in a context in which the literal is understood to be “truer” because “non-creative” and so more “natural,” as Terence Turner puts it, from a positivist position, and only within a context in which these terms are considered absolutely different (Turner, 121). Approaching notions about *both* the metaphorical and the literal, anthropologically, as ways of knowing, expressing, and

representing, thus helps to illuminate even subtler and more complex articulations of people's relationships and experiences. It is precisely how dogs may be understood as "metaphorical" or "actual" people, or "like" and "not like" human people in various contexts and relationships, as well as how some humans may or may not be like other humans (or dogs), that is of critical importance.

Our lives are profoundly shaped by the particular ways in which we liken one thing or person to another and to ourselves. The very embodied ways that we engage in likening are part of the educated skills of bodily and social-izing attention that I have been detailing here. Likening is born of and contributes to particular shapes and tones of "thoughtscapes" and "lifeworlds," as the not-only verbal and not-only human. When we "liken" this to that, you to me, as well as when we expressly do not, we enact a relationship, create meaning, born of putatively shareable elements.

Like making family and work relationships together, like the "doing of mind" and the doing of personhood in daily physical expressive being, metaphor and literality, as we have seen, themselves describe particular ways of attending to and making meaningful those elements which are understood to be shareable or not. These processes of likening are critical to our shifting notions of personhood and our bonds to one another. The notion of "likening" includes both metaphor and literality and does not assume that these two modes of expression and perception are oppositional. Whereas the distinction between metaphor and literality is often presented as an opposition between the fictional and the real, the analytical notion of likening helps to focus on the creativity and

imagination that are always at play (and work) as we bodily live out and make sense especially of social changes.

Thus we can describe in likening both the profoundly protean relational nature of meaning-making and the creative and contingent character of such meanings. The notion of likening helps to make sense of the creativity and “doing meaning” that subtends both metaphor and literality. This same creativity and fluidity subtending metaphoricity as well as literality, yet obscured in their opposition, is highlighted by the notion of likening which is processual and relational. We have seen how the very notions of literal versus metaphoric may contribute to, disallow, and/or reflect various possibilities of “doing mind” and otherwise “doing relationships,” as ourselves and others become significant or insignificant. Likening thus describes how those shareable (or unshareable) dimensions, that we experience as variously cogent and pressing are put to use within the shifting field of embodied relations that is our always convivial home.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Making Meaning: the Shareable and Unshareable at Play

This chapter explores the daily making of mutual understanding and mutual meaningfulness of my informants’ interspecies relations. I describe how interspecies socialization emerges and becomes meaningful in my informants’ lives. Following the concerns of the previous chapter, here I will describe practices central to my informants’ transspecies habitus and their particular methods for becoming other enough to be together. These practices, and matters of daily living, constitute learned attunement to

other ways and other meanings. For example, we will see how for my informants fun and play are fundamental to the mutual enskillment of work together. In the emerging trust and understanding of such interanimality new ways of knowing and being demand openness to myriad “something elses,” other ways of knowing, other meanings . Thus too mutual significance expands and shifts as my informants transform together

Regard

Jax, Marla, Dan, Jim, Mocha, Edna, and all the other participants from the agency are engaged every day in the intimate and complex work of making, strengthening, and maintaining interanimalic socialities. Puppies (and some older dogs) come to live with volunteers and clients, and from that point on the relationships between the humans and dogs introduced through the agency are more often than not made denser and more vibrant each day with the engagement of everyday life done together. In no small part this also includes the emergence of trust and shared meaning that is forged in what is most often conceived of as “training.” This training, when successful, involves mutual learning, a reciprocal attunement. And this is fundamental to the well-being of the teams. This version of training is more usefully registered as “training for,” as for a team sport rather than “training of,” as in the purported one-way communication of operant conditioning. Jim and Manny, Mocha and Edna, like all the dogs and humans paired by the agency that work and live together, share worlds of meaning, affection, and activity together. This togetherness resists the cartography of human-animal distinctions in which abyssal ruptures crack open the ground around these ontological borders and so make full and complex interanimalic sociality seem impossible. What they share and make

shareable together, by way of work and home, meaning, regard, affection, and trust is not reducible to “training.” However the regular classes and at-home training that the humans and dogs participate in is a fundamental element in what we can better understand as socialization of, following Acampora, a specifically interanimalic kind.

Dogs and humans learn significance with one another, including the meaning of sounds and scents, motions, places, tastes, shapes, and tasks. They learn to trust each other in so many ways, and as we will see trust and meaning are built together, inextricable each from the other. Initially, and at its most basic, the significance of one human or dog to the other emerges in attentive proximity to one another, often in shared engagement with an activity. Donna Haraway has written extensively on multispecies relations. This includes reflections on her experiences of agility training with dogs and the ethical insights she has forged therein. Haraway writes of agility training, cloning, laboratory animals, and wildlife television programs. In this she attends to both the material and its semiotic specificity and without losing sight of the depth and breadth of human utilitarian and objectifying attitudes and behaviors towards non-human others. So, too, here we must wonder given the abyssal ruptures of philosophy and law, the fundamental exceptionalism attributed to humans, and what is entailed for others in that hierarchy, how does interanimalic sociality of the kind my informants participate in emerge and become so vital and meaningful for all involved?

Let us remember Jim’s story of the bond forming between him and Manny. In his story of this foundational moment, it begins with Jim and Manny regarding each other. According to Jim they were in this moment of regard asking each other, “What are you?”

I will return later to the matter of Jim's "translation" of Manny's thoughts, as this too is essential. For the time being it is enough to remember this thoughtful mutual regard, followed by querying. This moment is a precipice; it holds the promise of a response, and whatever that response might demand. These are the fundamentals of interanimalic sociality: regard, openness to response, responsiveness. This relating may bring a plunge into the abyss or may initiate the kind of mutual regard that is the precondition of the bond as Jim describes it. Jim and Manny's mutual regard includes expecting and even waiting for a response. In this moment Jim is "talking with" Manny, as Bird-David has it, even in relative silence.

In "The Animal That I Am (More To Follow)" Derrida begins his interrogation of human-animal boundaries by reflecting on an experience he had in the company of a cat he lived with. Finding himself naked with this cat, he regarded the cat regarding him, and in regarding his own discomfort he finds an opening for reflection on what we (humans) might share with (other) animals. He asks after the cat's response, but never regards that response. This is quite different from Jim's experience of feeling the other ask you what you are, feeling the query of another regarding yourself. Manny and Jim regard each other both as new companions within the wilds of home and intimacy as well as across contested borders of ontological territories. They offer an alternative example of mutual regard, and so offer one another other responses. Derrida, however, finds in his own reflections an answer to the question of what humans share with animals. This, he suggests is "finitude," "nonpower at the heart of power," and "the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish" (Derrida, *The Animal*, 121). Where

Derrida pursues “the question of suffering” as that which humans share with other animals, Haraway suggests “how much more promise is in the questions, Can animals play? Or work? And even, can I learn to play with *this* cat?” (Haraway, WSM, 22). These are the very questions that we will continue to address, that my informants ask and answer, in word and deed. In fact such play and work is at the heart of interanimalic socialization as my informants engage in it.

Jim and Manny ask after each other, ask about each other with openness, responsiveness, regard. Even in their first meeting and their skeptical “What are you?” this reciprocal regard and curiosity is strong. Haraway asserts that such queries are proper to serious relationships among significant others “[t]he question between animals and humans here is, Who are you? And so, who are we?” (Haraway, WSM, 208). This, she says, is the (Haraway, WSM, 208). As Haraway puts it,

“Who is not a relative pronoun in the co-constitutive relationships called training; it is an interrogative one. All the parties query and are queried if anything interesting, anything new, is to happen. In addition who refers to partners-in-the-making through the active relations of co-shaping, not to possessive human or animal individuals whose boundaries and natures are set in advance of the entanglements of becoming together” (Haraway, WSM, 208).

This co-shaping and its meanings are central to interanimalic socialization of the agency’s teams Haraway asks “[s]o how *do* dogs and people learn to pay attention to each other in a way that changes who and what they become together?” (Haraway, WSM, 208). The interspecies community involved with the agency offers countless opportunities for insights into just these processes of what I have been calling, following Acampora, interanimalic socialization.

Playing

At every class meeting and each occasion of teaching at the agency I heard trainers and volunteers exhorting each other to “make it fun,” “fun, fun!” “make it a party!” It would be impossible to avoid the concept of fun in these situations. Every puppy raiser, trainer, and potential client learns that making training and work “fun” is absolutely critical to forging a successful relationship with the dogs they work with. Several months into my time at the agency Dan started using the phrase “get their tails wagging!” This proved to be a singularly useful cue during any particularly sluggish classes, when the post-workday timing of the classes gave rise to a real scarcity of [human] engagement. It may seem paradoxical that partying and fun are so central to successful working relationships. Dan’s demand that volunteers “get [their partners] tails wagging” highlights some critical elements in how dogs and humans learn to pay attention to each other, and hone this mutual attention into complex and intimate working relationships.

The longtime volunteer Macy, who is also a veterinarian technician, is particularly consistent in her ability to stay engaged and positive with the dogs she works with. She is clearly very successful. Over the 18 months that I attended training classes and other agency events it became clearer and clearer that those humans who were truly attentive and maintained a positive (rather than, say, frustrated) countenance towards the dogs they worked with, had better communication with those they worked with, the simplest indicator of this success being the dog’s responsiveness to what the human said to them. Macy frequently called out “make it a party!” or “big party, big party!” Dan’s

encouragement to “get their tails wagging!” concretizes Macy’s “party.” These exhortations underscore the same things, but Dan’s can help us to understand its import most because it demands something specific and visible.

For training purposes, it is not enough that a volunteer, for example, fake exuberance, hoot, or frolic around, evoking a “party.” What is important in these training situations, which are well near constant, is that the volunteers “get their partners tails wagging!” The *dogs* in other words must be happy, be engaged, be having fun. This demands embodiment. In fact “getting tails wagging” demands interanimalic embodiment, and as such it is thoroughly relational. The fun that gets made when volunteers concentrate on this fundamental goal, depends on the fun that is *shared* between themselves and their dog partners. Its veracity is measured by wagging tails. It is inescapably not only verbal and not merely theoretical. Dan’s exhortation highlights elements fundamental to the ways that dogs and humans at the agency make interanimalic sociality despite so many challenges of difference. He reminds class participants that the concrete demand here is embodied and relational. No other fun will do, and this fun, as we will see, is central to making meaning together.

The esteemed ethologist Marc Bekoff has written extensively about play, especially in canids. He explains that minimally it is clear to ethologists that the absence of play, especially during early socialization periods, “can have devastating effects on social development” (Bekoff, 127). Bekoff explains that such is the case because play itself is essential to proper socialization. As he explains it, “during social play, while individuals are having fun in a relatively safe environment, they learn ground rules about

behavior patterns that are acceptable to others—how hard they can bite, how roughly they can interact—and how to resolve conflict” (Bekoff, 126). Bekoff explains that filmed sequences of canid play show “subtle and fleeting movements and rapid exchanges of eye contact that suggest that players are exchanging information on the run, from moment to moment, to make certain everything is all right—that this is still play” (Bekoff, 127). Subtle, fast, embodied mutual attention and communication is how play is made. Through play the arts of socializing are practiced safely, social trust and attention to another’s meaning being high among these arts. The import of a yelp or a scent, the veracity of a bow or a bite, are all practiced and tested adventurously in play.

Asking after the importance of play, Bekoff asserts that play helps hone the skills and bonds necessary for pack-living, in which “individuals coordinate their behavior...to achieve common goals and maintain social stability” (Bekoff, 129). “The highly cooperative nature of play” explains why it becomes the very ground for social trust (Bekoff, 127). As Bekoff continues, “[p]lay cannot occur if individuals choose not to engage in the activity, and the equality (or symmetry) needed for play to continue makes it different from other forms of seemingly cooperative behavior” (Bekoff, 132). This characterization of play elucidates its power, and the importance of “fun” as humans and dogs learn to understand and trust each other in the training process of the teams and others.

Bekoff’s emphasis on equality and choice brings to mind also the refrain that “you can’t make a dog do this.” Here the evocation of the dog’s choice in work takes on new meaning. Just as volunteers cannot (usually) fake the fun or happiness that they are

asked to communicate, so we can understand that something else may be meant here with the statement, “you can’t make a dog do this” work. The choice and symmetry that Bekoff highlights as essential to play are those that are essential in the work and training of assistance dogs at the agency. One night at a training class the floor was strewn with all kinds of objects, from keys to plush toys. Dan directed the human students to pick out an object and try to get their dog partner to bring it to them. I found myself watching one particular dog, Bonner, sniffing and exploring each object and taking cues from his human partner, to “leave it” and then “get the keys,” then “no, leave it” then “over there, the keys” and so on. I was struck by how confusing, how difficult Bonner’s task was, and how difficult too it was to keep making sure it would be also be “fun.” Cora, Bonner’s partner, would only fail them both were she to get frustrated.

In exactly the proportion that “fun” is emphasized, so too is watching out for “signs of stress” and making sure the dogs aren’t “shut down.” A dog who is “shut down” is, in Dan’s words “not in the game anymore.” “The game” in this context is the very mutual availability that is fundamental both to the work of the teams and to play. Play and communication here emerge in tandem. Should Cora get frustrated, the fun would surely come to an end, and so too would her intended meanings, and their emergent comprehensibility made in that fun. And when Bonner was successful, as with all the other times I saw breakthroughs of success in mutual understanding, it took hearty engagement, focused encouraging attention on the part of both partners, with Cora standing at the edge of the room bent forward, rooting for Bonner, willing his

understanding, trying to clarify their goal. This was what was required to Bonner to stay in the game, for the work to be fun, for meaning to be put in play.

Something Else

Cora's genuine engagement manifests the most positive version of what is meant by the sign on the wall of the training room that shouts in capital letters, "SAY IT ONCE AND MEAN IT!" At first I interpreted this as a reminder of the importance of authority, of human command in a rather generic way. What I came to understand of this sign is that it is a reminder of the importance credited to intention, to the "something else" that may accompany verbal language, but are not words. During one class Dan said to the participants,

"What I want you to get out of this class is working outside your comfort zone...see, all you guys can do it...use your marker [meaning "mark" a dog's action with a clicker or a word like "good" or "yes"]...you just got to know that they [the dogs] can do it...They can tell the instant something's bothering you...from muscles in your face that most humans can't even see. If you doubt they can do it they sense that."

This is one of countless instances in which Dan, Marla, Macy, and other experienced trainers and volunteers remind participants that intentions, thoughts, and attitudes matter as much as words. These are also reminders that there is more than what humans see, or might be able to access directly, and that these matters are important.

One of the games encouraged for the enjoyment and exercise of the dogs is what is described as "charging up" a toy and then hiding it from one's partner. Dan explains that the process of charging up the toy begins with just letting a dog see the toy, and see that you have it and are paying attention to it. The next day the human partner is

encouraged to talk to the toy further, hold and touch it and look at it in order to “put more energy into it,” by giving it more attention. Then the dog partner is allowed to smell it, to look at it briefly. Eventually the toy is hidden and the dog partner is allowed to find it. The toy is returned to the human partner; and the dog is not allowed to “have” it, only to find it. This is repeated with increasing difficulty in the hiding place, but the dog partner is never allowed to play with or “keep” the toy. The goal is the finding, not the keeping, and the pursuit is made compelling because of the “charge” the object bears. This charge is made in attention, in hiding, in attitude towards the object. But the charge of course cannot be seen directly. It is experienced in its effects, in the brightening of a dog partner’s eyes and pricking up of her ears. This game is an example of the importance of attention and intention, the “something elses” besides words that human partners are asked to pay attention to, learn to work and play with.

During another class Marla was working with teams walking together without leashes. She told a woman that she noticed her whole demeanor change when she removed the leash from her partner. Noting that the woman looked unsure, Marla emphasized the importance of the woman’s own confidence when walking with her partner off-leash. Marla told the woman that she must “expect them to do it. Look at him like you know he can do it!” Here again the focus is on the efficacy of intention. The seemingly intangible (beliefs) must be treated as communicated, communicable, even in instances where humans may not understand how that is so. Marla does not stop to explain how it is so, but she asserts that looking at one’s dog partner “like you know he can do it” will, she assures the class, “give him the confidence” to do it. Marla is

teaching her human students about the importance of believing in and manifesting the transfer of intent, feeling-tone, meaning, outside of words alone.

When Dan explains that the human partners cannot see what the dogs see in their faces, and so they cannot otherwise know all of what the dogs know, including their human partner's state of mind, he is reminding his students of nonverbal ways of knowing. When he explains how to "charge up" a toy, and when Marla asserts the unarguable transfer of intent and belief, all these lessons clearly relate that meaning and communication, the fundamentals of the growing relationship being nurtured, exceed words. In fact reliance on words and neglect of other modes of apprehension and communication will sabotage mutual attention and understanding.

Class participants are taught that meaning and communication, the very basis for trust, inhere in ways of being (attentive) that many are not even aware are possible. Cary Wolfe writes of his posthumanist intent to "[remove] meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism*, xxv). This, he explains, "forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of 'bringing forth a world'" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism*, xxv). Both human and dog class participants are made attentive to such other meanings, other ways of meaning. For the human participants in particular one of the primary, and often implicit, lessons seems to be in the ability to acknowledge what they do not know, at least by themselves. That is part of what Dan and Marla hope to make clear.

Wolfe, in conversation with Stanley Cavell and Vicki Hearne writes,

“can *we* handle the skeptical terror of ‘letting our knowledge come to an end’? In posing these questions Cavell underscores that our stance toward the animal is an index for how we stand in a field of otherness and difference generally, and in some ways it is our most reliable index, the ‘hardest case’ of our readiness to be vulnerable to other knowledges in our embodiment of our own, and embodiment that arrives at the site of the other before we do as our scent reaches the dog’s nose before we round the corner” (Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 5).

This vulnerability and the alterity it offers is precisely what Dan points to regarding what his human students cannot see. It is also useful to suggest that in Wolfe’s example, at least something of our usness, if not us, has *already* rounded the corner, as our scent, regardless of whether we know it. In our embodiment thus we are as much our scent as our knowing. And as Haraway highlights, following Alfred North Whitehead, “Beings constitute each other and themselves. Beings do not preexist their relating. ‘Prehensions’ have consequences” (Haraway, CSM, 6).

Vicki Hearne writes forcibly about other knowledges and the interanimalic coherences that are only possible once these are acknowledged. Hearne was a writer and philosopher as well as a dog and horse trainer. While working on scent tracking with a dog named Belle, Hearne had a series of revelations regarding just such limits of her own understanding and vulnerability to other knowledges that Wolfe describes above. Because Hearne, like humans generally, does not have the sense of scent (quite different from smell, Hearne assures us) that allows Belle to track scent, it has been tempting for her to second-guess Belle’s work, her movements in tracking, based on what Hearne does know. Hearne writes extensively about the pitfalls in second guessing horses or dogs

based on unshared kinds of knowledges. Hearne and Belle embody different ways of knowing, each at times inaccessible to the other. Hearne, momentarily flummoxed by this, asks how she can “ever know whether I am right or wrong to correct the dog, praise her, feel satisfied with the efforts of the day, and so on? How can there be any relationship at all between us?”(Hearne, 97). Part of Hearne’s answer to this question is to suggest that in creating a mutually meaningful language in these interspecies instances, “you can’t have meaningful communication without grammar—without a structure embedded in time”(Hearne, 97). She continues, “relationships require syntax” (Hearne, 97). Here, too, relationships *provide* syntax. As Belle and Hearne work together Hearne learns what she calls “wind-awareness,” not in the way Belle experiences it, but in a way demanded by their work together. She learns it to the extent that she learns to trust the meaning of Belle’s movements.

Hearne explains, “when I say that I am developing wind-awareness, I don’t mean that my wind-detection powers have improved. But while I am handling Belle I no longer believe my eyes in the way I normally do. I don’t mean that I have gone blind, any more than Belle is blind, but that the general shape of my metaphysics has changed” (Hearne, 98). Instead of “going blind” Hearne is indicating the limits of her sight and staying open to what can be scented. She researches scent and scenting extensively but says that “[t]his doesn’t exactly teach me anything about scent, but it does alert me to how much my eyes aren’t going to tell me, even though it is not wind-awareness” (98). For Hearne this is essential for learning to believe Belle, and learning to believe her does bring new knowledges and new meanings. These are the same kinds of new meanings that inhere in

a “charged” ball or in the palpability of “meaning it!” These examples point to the limits of knowledge that must be submitted to in symmetrical interanimalic learning. Like Bonner searching for the meaning of the game he played with Cora, or volunteers learning to believe that their partners feel their intentions, being open to other knowledges is essential.

Hearne writes of learning to handle horses, whose kinesthetic senses, and especially their sense of touch are profoundly complex and articulate. She explains that the “handler must learn to believe, to ‘read’ a language s/he hasn’t sufficient neurological apparatus to test or judge, because the handler must become comprehensible to the horse, and to be understood is to be open to understanding, much more than it is to have shared mental phenomena” (Hearne, 107). One of the first ways that the agency’s volunteers, clients and staff learn these lessons in understanding and being understood through difference is in being reminded to “mean it.” This reminder is usually their subtle introduction to the “something else,” elements other than words, entailed in talking to a dog. “Making it fun” and “getting their tails wagging” offer similar nudges toward awareness of intent, of quality of voice, tone of movement, shifts in scent and sound, one’s own and another’s, and how inescapably important these are. Dan, Marla, and Macy’s exhortations are simple instructions intended to help teach “openness to understanding,” as Hearne puts it (Hearne, 107). They also prompt Wolfe’s “readiness to be vulnerable to other knowledges in our embodiment of our own” (Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 5).

Marla, Macy, Dan, and many of the long-time volunteers talk frequently about “reading a dog,” as well as pointing out the ways that dogs “read” humans. These examples, as well as when a client says that she and her dog partner can “read each other’s minds,” help us to see that the disparate knowledges that Hearne and Wolfe point to do become mutually accessible, or at least believable, as the multisensorial language of burgeoning relationships allows meaning to expand. For the volunteers, as in Dan’s example, this involves “being understood” by the dogs in ways they have not known before.

The human students’ belief in their partners’ other ways of knowing involves an encounter with the limits of their own, at least as previously experienced, and being open to the as-yet-unknown. This kind of imaginative, embodied leap involves being “brave enough to abandon the skills of being in what has been the known world in order to inhabit the world knowable to horses [and dogs, and others]. Here [horse handlers] start hearing the horse’s skin, and in so doing become comprehensible in their own skins to the horse” (Hearne, 111). Again the kind of mutual intelligibility through openness to new kinds of knowledges and meanings is exactly what allowed for interanimalic socialization at the agency. Bonner shows an openness to such when he “stays in the game,” as does Cora when she believes in “meaning it.” This is fundamental to making meaning together, becoming meaningful and so believable to one another.

Diabetic assistance dogs are taught that the scent remaining in a cotton ball after a human with low blood sugar breathes on it means something important. They are taught to recognize this scent as meaningful and to tell their human partner about it. The human

partner with hypoglycemia unawareness as well as an impoverished sense of scent does not have the kind of direct access to this meaning that the dog partner has. The human partner is also taught to recognize as meaningful their partner's ministrations, such as face licking or persistent nudging, that are responses to low blood sugar scent. Here each partner must learn to believe what they may not fully understand, or even have direct access to. Because of this, and by way of it, the syntax of the relationship persists, its meanings thicken. The human partner remains understandable to her dog partner to the extent that she also responds appropriately to her ministrations. In this case the human's life may depend on it.

Primatologist Barbara Smuts writes compellingly about interanimalic sociality with baboons. She explains that in her early work she followed proscriptions against "interacting" with her subjects, and took seriously the admonition never to "move too close" (Smuts, 296). She avoided interaction with the baboons she studied, and she was mostly avoided in turn. The exceptions to this helped her to articulate the failures that accompany overvaluation of "noninteraction." Smuts was repeatedly attacked by a juvenile chimp who was in effect waiting for a clear response of acquiescence or self-defense from Smuts, whose non-response was vexing. He stopped attacking her when she struck back, when she responded appropriately for a chimp. She also ignored the communicative overtures of a female baboon and so rebuffed her in a particularly confusing way. These were both experiences that underscore the fact that the scientific demand of non-interaction does "not take into account the baboon's insistence on regarding me as a social being" (Smuts, 297). Smuts has spent over 25 years as a

primatologist. Eventually she also spent over two years with the Eburru Cliffs baboon troop in Tanzania and Kenya. Around this time she says, “ I learned that ignoring the proximity of another baboon is rarely a neutral act, something that should have been obvious to me from my experience among humans” (Smuts, 297). As she reminds us ignoring the proximity of another is often a sign of great trust or “an indication of great tension” (Smuts, 297).

During her time living with the troop she travelled with them during the day, doing what they did, and would go back to her camp at night only to rest. These were twelve hour days, every day of the week. As she slowly attempted to gain access to the company of the baboon troop, she learned to respond to baboon signals and to communicate the same kinds of cues in turn. Because of this shift from putative avoidance of communication to mutual responsiveness, Smuts reports that instead of “avoiding me when I got too close, they started giving me dirty looks, which made me move away” (Smuts, 295). For Smuts this shift manifested something of paramount importance. It “signaled a profound change from being treated as an *object* that elicited a unilateral response (avoidance), to being recognized as a *subject* with whom they could communicate. Over time they treated me more and more as a social being like themselves, subject to the demands and rewards of relationships” (Smuts, 295).

Smuts explains that for some time at conferences she “used the accepted scientific term ‘habituation.’ The word implies that the baboons adapted to me, that they changed, while I stayed essentially the same. But in reality the reverse is closer to the truth” (Smuts, 295). As she explains, “ in the process of gaining their trust, [I] changed almost

everything about me, including the way I walked and sat, the way I held my body, and the way I used my eyes and voice” (Smuts, 295). What Smuts describes here is her increasing attunement to baboon ways, to being baboon. She says that during her time living with baboons she was “learning a new way of being in the world—the way of the baboon” (Smuts, 295). She recalls how her response to the world around her changed, such as her response to a gazelle in the distance, or the proximity of a troop member, as her way of apprehending became more baboon.

Over time she felt she was “turning into a baboon” (Smuts, 299). She describes the initial dissonance between her ways of being and those of the troop, and how she found herself increasingly attuned to baboon ways. She often felt uneasy being with the troop out in the open as storms approached. She would have to fight the urge to flee as the baboons continued to pursue food. They would then run for cover, she explained, making it to shelter just as the rain came down. She writes, “for many months, I wanted to run well before they did, then something shifted, and I knew without thinking when it was time to move” (Smuts, 299). All these experiences were elements that coalesced in her intimate sharing of baboon ways, of her becoming if not baboon, then certainly a participant in baboon community. “Increasingly, the troop felt like ‘us’ rather than ‘them’” (Smuts, 299).

Smuts’ first-hand account of interanimalic socialization and society is invaluable. She explains how it is was through her openness to baboon ways that she not only came to understand and feel close to this troop of baboons but in this openness she was also comprehensible as a person to the baboons. Smuts says of her whole experience as

primatologist cum baboon that she “developed a sense of belonging to their (baboon) community, and [her] subjective identity seemed to merge with theirs. This experience expanded my sense of the possible in interspecies relations” (Smuts, 293). Smuts suggests a schema detailing seven levels of relating (inter- and intra-specific, or interanimalic, as we have it). She explains that at one of these levels (the fourth in her schema):

“an animal recognizes that I am a social being like them, and that communication back and forth is possible. As I described above, reaching this stage represented a turning point in my relations with the baboons because it created the opportunity to ‘negotiate’ the terms of our relationship. When members of two different species reach this level, they face the additional challenge of learning to interpret each other’s signals. The baboons and I achieved a degree of success in this regard, in part through my attempts to ‘speak’ baboon and their ability to understand me despite an outrageous human accent” (Smuts, 306-7).

Smuts confirms what Hearne, as well as Dan, Jim, and so many at the agency assert, that learning new meanings together, making new meanings together, involves acknowledging the limits of one’s knowledge and learning to embody new ways of being, that is, learning to embody new knowledges. Such is the basis for interanimalic “talking with.”

Tugging and Tasting Meanings

Early on in the learning process, such as first puppy classes at the agency, food plays a big role in the making of meaning. Volunteers learn to give treats to puppies as puppies learn to sit and [lie] down in response to these cues as well as respond to their names. Volunteers learn to give treats to keep their partners “in the game.” Marla once said in teaching “recalls” (when dogs are taught to come when called from some

distance) “make coming to you way funner than anything else.” Volunteers use the puppies’ enjoyment of food to “mark” the positivity of emerging mutual understanding. Being given food in certain circumstances means something enough like “yes” to start the conversation, or at least to signal that a conversation might be possible. Macy once asked a class participant, “Is Arnie taking treats or is he shutting down?” Sometimes, especially early on in these relationships, “taking treats” or “shutting down” are the two predominant attitudes in a world with a very narrow band of shared mutual communication. When puppies are described in terms of how “food motivated” they are, or when fosters talk extensively about what the kinds of treats puppies like and how much, it may bear some resemblance to the “food talk” of parents of young children concerned with the eating habits of their kids. But in this case food is particularly central to the emergent communication of these human-dog teams, in its very content, its semantics, as well as its syntax (in Hearne’s sense) in a way that is usually not true for human babies. Here the possibility of the taste of doing “sit” together bespeaks the place of food at the edge of a shifting boundary of interanimalic understanding.

Dan once had a class engage in an extraordinary exercise in productive disorientation. He had a young woman leave the training room and told the rest of us that we were going to attempt to have the woman go over to the wall and push one of the training buttons, but that we had to do this without using any words, other than “yes.” Like the hot and cold game with the boundaries exploded, the young woman, though less so than Bonner, was put into a void of clear meaning and asked to trust that she and her classmates could make some meaning without the usual means of doing so, and she was

expected to stay open to such a task. As the woman was trying so many kinds of motions and activities she mirrored the difficult pursuit of meaning, suggested but not yet promised by human utterances, entered into by the dogs day after day. This game was a revelation of the difficulty of becoming understandable. The gulf between the words that the class could not use and the specificity of the task she was being willed into performing opened up a horizon that limned both the limits of knowledge on one side and the possibilities for new meanings on the other. This exercise was so effective precisely because it got the human class participants to really feel the challenge of their situation, that is by not overestimating their own comprehensibility. Part of this learning involves trying to experience the difference between their experiences of an interaction and the dog's experience of it.

In working on tugging a door open with a dog, volunteers learn to start by getting their partner to hold a rope in their mouths, or even just touch it with their teeth, the human partner learns to pull slightly on the rope, praising and encouraging as gradual increases in pressure exerted on the rope over successive episodes during the long training period culminate in the coherence of "tug" as something that means pull on the rope and do so until the door opens. Here subtly, and by degrees, meaning emerges in not-merely verbal language of embodied relating. The meaning of the word "tug" as a human speaks it takes shape in the dog's mouth; its meaning is made with pressure and resistance, in the muscles of both partners.

Long-time volunteers and trainers frequently provide insights to newer volunteers as well as each other on how to understand dog ways by announcing things like, "rolling

on one hip like that is a sign of being relaxed,” and “Pay attention to signs of stress, like tongue-flicking.” These prompts help the human participants initially become more attuned to meaningful elements that they may be ignoring. Often as in these two cases, the roll onto one hip, or flicking of the tongue, many participants need the prompt to attend to such seemingly subtle expressions from their dog partners to begin with. They must learn to attend more carefully as well as to learn to look for meaning as expressed bodily in new ways. While most volunteers even at the start of their work at the agency surely would acknowledge that a dog’s wagging tail or bared teeth are important, most have much room to expand that sense. The experienced trainers and volunteers, the clients and others who have lived closely with their dog partners are those who are most aware of all those “something elses” of fully embodied, often seemingly mysterious, communications that are essential to these relationships. These partners have heightened awareness of how they are being “read,” via their face muscles, or intentions, and they show perspicacious attunement to their dog partner’s attitudes and expressions.

Some lessons in embodied relating are seemingly more straightforward than others. Dan reminds volunteers one summer day that everyone should stay aware of heat-related concerns, such as not over-exercising with their dog partners when it is really hot, and to be aware of how painful hot sidewalks can be for their partners. He explains, “...if *you* can walk barefoot on it fine, otherwise give them options [like being able to walk on adjacent grass]...be conscious of their paws.” This is a direct and explicit exhortation for the human partners to cultivate embodied empathy, to assess whether they would want, or be able to, walk barefoot on this particular hot cement, and then to

respond accordingly in concern for their partners. Here difference cannot be used to excuse neglect. There is no suggestion that dogs do not feel pain the ways humans do, nor the suggestion that dog's paws are tougher, more calloused, and so better able to withstand heat. Here instead is the demand that new conditions in weather, or place, bring new challenges for learning embodied empathy and attending to the other meanings and other experiences that embodied differences bring, even as these may include striking similarities. Practicing body consciousness empathically, as another being experiences the world, is one part of this.

Interanimalic socialization of this kind involves cultivating facility with making imaginative leaps and taking creative attitudes towards the limits of one's knowledge. Marla is one staff member (and former volunteer) who talks through her interanimalic encounters with lots of "translations." In her description of bringing home a puppy she was fostering, and this puppy's attitude, she said that he "just rushed into this big house saying 'mine, mine, mine!'" At another time Marla talks about how disturbing it is when humans "humanize" dogs inappropriately. She told me about a neighbor of hers who feeds her dog too much. The neighbor explained to her that because her companion was starved before she adopted her she doesn't ever want her to go without now. Marla tries to advise her. Marla explains, "dogs don't...I try to get people not to humanize their dogs...I believe dogs have souls, that they love, that they feel bad when you feel bad...but they are happy *now*, they are not gonna worry about what happened to them five years ago." Another time as Marla was explaining that she characterizes her relationships with the agency's dogs as relationships with "students," she added that "you

have your super brainy A-students” and those “smoking in the bathroom. These characterizations and her practice of “speaking for” dogs by translating what she understands of dog expressiveness into colloquial human English may seem to exist in uneasy contradiction with her averring the dangers of “humanizing” dogs. However I have come to the conclusion that there is not much in the way of contradiction here.

The seeming paradox only underscores the import of Marla’s (and others’) creative practices in the service of interanimalic community. The “humanizing” that Marla warns about is characterized by a lack of concern for what she sees as the differences between humans and dogs. In the example of the overfed dog she understands her neighbor’s mistake as one of ignorance regarding these differences. Whereas the neighbor, Marla explains, is overly concerned with the effects of past scarcity, her dog companion is not, in fact she is “happy now.” Humanizing, as Marla conceives of it, has a very specific meaning and this is not merely the attribution of any human characteristics to dogs, but the misattribution of common human characteristics due to a kind of interanimalic slovenliness. This is central to the non-contradiction of Marla’s creative translations. We will add another example to consider in this way, and in some detail.

Marla once explained to a class that a “sharp correction is OK. If you need to drop your tone, like you would with your kids, so they know ‘oh, mom is serious’ [that’s OK].” In this example she offers an interspecies communication tutorial rich in multiperspectival imaginings. First she is asserting that it is “OK” to correct sharply, and this should be understood within the context of emphasis put on not wanting to cause the dogs distress. Marla is clarifying that within the parameters of the relationship and the

mutual undertaking of the task at hand, correction is appropriate. And “correction” can be communicated by “dropping one’s tone,” by lowering one’s voice, and in this case slowing down one’s speaking. Marla uses the example of parental correction of a child’s behavior as a way to make the appropriate attitude, and its the relational meaning, accessible to her human students. Here is “likening” in action again, a prompting of creativity, reorientation in a subjunctive key. The “like you would your kids” is offered to help with intention, tone, and relational appropriateness.

Not satisfied with that cue alone, she completes the prompting by suggesting its counterpart in the “kids” cum dogs’ perspective. That is, she explains the intended result as the listeners’ sense that “oh, mom is serious.” In this twice embedded enactment of perspectives, Marla is trying to tell a story that will make participating in new and sometimes disorienting interspecies communication make sense to her students. The kind of lowered tone that she thinks the dogs will understand is perhaps more readily understandable when likened to parental admonitions to (human) children. For Marla this lesson is not “humanizing” because the understanding that is the end result of clarity in this case is actually shared. It is not the exclusive purview of humans, but is integral to interspecies socialization as practiced here.

When Marla explains that the puppy Nemo was “saying ‘mine, mine, mine!’ she is asserting that his behavior expressed a lack of respect and understanding of the pack (dog and human) that lives in her house and the meaning of the pack’s preexisting relational and territorial claims. When Marla realized that the puppy was not getting sufficient schooling from the older and bigger dogs at her house to correct his behavior

problems, she reports, “we did the umbilical cord, put a leash on him, tied it to my waist and wherever I went he went, and after a week he had calmed down significantly.” In this case the puppy is transformed by having his experience made over in thoroughly embodied mutuality. The puppy cannot escape the proximity of Marla. Marla and Nemo’s shared physicality and their mutual effects on one another become inarguable. Nemo’s assertion of “mine, mine, mine!” no longer makes any sense when Marla’s priorities are forcibly argued by the pull of the leash. Nemo is in effect taught an expanded sense of self, a widened “mine,” more appropriate to pack living and to interanimalic partnership.

Marla’s translations provide paradoxical access to other ways, other meanings, by translation into a familiar language. Although her verbal gloss of dog behavior and expressiveness may strike some as anthropomorphizing, in its effects of heightening attunement to dog ways it has opposite effects. Marla’s translations remind me of what Haraway writes about Hearne and trainers’ language:

“Hearne likes trainers’ use of ordinary language in their work; that use turns out to be important to understanding what the dogs might be telling her, but not because the dogs are speaking furry humanese. She adamantly defends lots of so-called anthropomorphism, and no one more eloquently makes the case for attention-laden consciousness-ascribing linguistic practices of circus trainers, equestrians, and dog-obedience enthusiast” (Haraway, CSM, 50).

As cited earlier, Haraway explains “that philosophically suspect language is necessary to keep the humans alert to the fact that somebody is at home in the animals they work with” (Haraway, CSM, 50). The “philosophically suspect language” that Haraway is referring to is presumably the “trainers’ use of ordinary language in their work,” that is,

primarily the speaking to dogs or horses or others “as if” they understand. Additionally Marla and others at the agency offer the example of another kind of “philosophically suspect” language and the help it offers. Marla is offering perhaps even more philosophically suspect language in that it suggests a dog’s perspective “as if” he or she not only could feel or think this way, but “as if” a human could know this, and translate it thus. However the work this kind of translation performs is not only to hone alertness to the “fact that *somebody* is at home” (my italics), but in these interspecies translations Marla is very matter-of-factly offering insight regarding the particular “somebody” in question. In her description of Nemo, for example, she is making it clear that his actions are expressive, that he *means* something, and that he can be communicated with, just as he can be understood. She is “translating” the character of this somebody, his attitudes and personality, into language that may be more accessible to her human interlocutors.

Ends and Beginnings of Knowing: Embodied Relational Meaning Continued

Marla, Dan, Macy, and others work and live closely in interanimalic community. They also help novice others to do so efficaciously. One of the ways they do this is in sharing many insights into interspecies socialization, forging communication, making sense of one another. These people take for granted a good deal of the shared communication and understanding they have with others, dog as well as human. In her translations Marla is expressing her understanding of various episodes between dogs and humans. She makes these accessible by likening this behavior to those kinds of words, or this kind of utterance to that kind of utterance. She tries to give interspecies interactions

more coherence by clarifying the larger stories within which an interaction takes shape. Like Dan and Macy as well, Marla tries to clarify the emotional tone, the relational import of such interactions for her novice interlocutors. This is essential to the success of the relationships she helps to facilitate, and to the work of the agency as a whole.

Marla's skills as a translator, Dan's work to help volunteers "read" dogs, Macy's unflappable attunement, all the imaginative attitudes and openness-to-difference required of volunteers and team partners, manifest Haraway's assertion that,

"[d]rawn from a present participle, fiction is in process and still at stake, not finished [as she explains facts are deeds done, as from "feats"], still prone to falling afoul of facts, but also liable to showing something we do not yet know to be true, but will know. Living with animals, inhabiting their/our stories, trying to tell the truth about relationship, co-habiting an active history: that is the work of companion species, for whom 'the relation' is the smallest possible unit of analysis" (Haraway, CSM, 20).

We can read Haraway as suggesting the ongoing and underdetermined nature of fiction as "fashioning," as in progress, and necessarily creative. Her suggestion that fiction may yet be true, can serve to remind us that there can be no uncreative approach in this "trying to tell the truth about relationship". Instead of an opposition between literality and metaphor understood as that between true and false, we are always fashioning ways of being together and making stories, as truths emerge and recede. There is no neutral approach to interanimalic relating.

Barbara Smuts, among countless others, illustrates the absence of such a neutral approach when she attempts to ignore social interactions with baboons in order to embody "objectivity." By doing so Smuts actually rebuffs baboons, or acts nonsensically from their perspective. She cannot act neutrally. Whether her actions are understood as

coherent, as trustworthy, such as those expected from other baboons is largely a result of her successfully “becoming” a baboon person through daily embodied intimacy. She fashions herself into an interanimality with them. This was possible for her to the extent that she learned to trust baboon ways, such as response to rain, travel and resting choices. And this trust emerges as it does between dogs and humans through, as well as despite, radical differences in embodied ways.

Hearne writes, “if you and I and Fido are sitting on the terrace, admiring the view, we inhabit worlds with radically different principles of phenomenology. Say the wind is to our backs. Our world lies all before us, within a 180 degree angle. The dog’s well, we don’t know do we? He sees what we see—his eyes aren’t defective—but what he believes are the scents of the garden behind us” (Hearne, 80). Note that for Hearne what we experience of the world (at least in this anecdote) is almost entirely that of the 180 degree visuality that she describes. First of all this assumes that the humans in questions are sighted, but it also seems to ignore the extent to which humans, including sighted ones, do experience the world in multisensory fashions. Hearne goes on to suggest that our ability to understand how Fido scents the world is hampered because “our picture-making modes of thought interfere too easily [with our ability to imagine believing scents] with falsifyingly literal representations of the cat and the garden” (Hearne, 81). For Hearne in this case visuality (and a very specific version of visuality) is the literal (truth); they are coeval. Again, as discussed in Chapter Three, the literal, here the visual, is being used to refer to non-creative truth, as in “seeing is believing.” Regardless of these other elements of her provocation, in this passage Hearne is prompting us to believe

beyond sight, or at least to imagine doing so. For, she explains, “how little our modes of thought can analytically probe the modes of thought that are occasioned by scent” (Hearne, 81). She underscores the extent to which imagining, as well as believing other modes, and so remaining open to the fact that other meanings exist is essential to interanimalic sociality.

In *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, philosopher with anthropological training Barbara Noske also discusses the import of such profound epistemological differences. She asserts that because of their acoustic-sonic ways of being whales and dolphins not only “map” space with sound, but also “with their sonic equipment ...[c]etaceans can become aware of the body state of others; they can observe health, well-being, cancers, pregnancy and so forth.” (Noske, 159). Noske then suggests what this means for the world of the dolphin: “it must be a world where the onus of proof is on hearing and where social relations rest on the awareness that one’s own inner state is like an open book” (Noske, 159). Like Dan’s reminder of what we cannot see of ourselves that dogs can yet know of us, Noske here reminds us of the inextricability between our ways of being and knowing and the nature of our socialities.

Noske comments that Nim Chimpsky in his ASL conversations with Herbert Terrace, “used to make tentative ‘X’ signs probably in an effort to refer to those aspects of the world of which we are not even aware and know no verbal equivalent for” (Noske, 160). Just as Hearne suggests the preeminent truth of scent for dogs, Noske presents dolphin ways of knowing in which “hearing as believing.” Nim’s “X” is a firsthand account of “other meanings,” from within their otherness. In this report Nim says that

there is meaning being indicated, but this meaning is translatable only as a mark of “something else” or perhaps “not-any-of-this,” or perhaps even as a treasure map’s mark that points to a place where something is hidden, but does not show what is there. Here is a different articulation of the negative space of human communication or apprehension as the agency trainers and others suggest it. Nim’s “X” registers the “something elses” of meaning and experience that may elude participants in interanimalic socialization of the kind my informants are engaged in. But creative attempts like Marla’s, Bonner’s, Jim’s or Nim’s offer ways of working with such “something elses” and their “other meanings” and thus opportunities to “feel our way into the being of another” as Smuts puts it (Smuts, 295).

The import of all these “something elses” as ways of being and knowing is at least in part to remind us of the embodied, enacted, and relational character of meaning within our multispecies existence. As Haraway explains, “[i]t is no longer possible scientifically to compare something like ‘consciousness’ or ‘language’ among human and nonhuman animals as if there were a single axis of calibration” (Haraway, WSM, 235). This does not suggest dismissing questions regarding consciousness and language. Rather, she explains

“inquiry becomes inextricably rich and detailed in the flesh of complexity and nonlinear difference and its required semiotic figures. Encounters among human beings and other animals change in this web. Not least, people can stop looking for some single and defining difference between them and everybody else and understand that they are in rich and largely uncharted, material—semiotic, flesh-to-flesh, and face-to-face connection with a host of significant others. That requires retraining in the contact zone” (Haraway, WSM, 235).

These are the non-linear differences animated and entered into by Marla's translations and Edna and Mocha's and Bonner and Cora's mutual regard.

Haraway suggests too that in human-dog relations, "we play with each other and become significant others to each other" (Haraway, WSM, 237). In her discussion of the "inventive potency of play" she calls on Bateson's "Metalogue: About Games and Being Serious"(Haraway, WSM, 237). Haraway asserts that "[p]lay can occur only among those willing to risk letting go of the literal" (Haraway, WSM, 239). Let us revisit some of Bateson's most well-known remarks on play from "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." Here he explains that play can only take place when there is metacommunication. As he puts it, something like the following must be communicated between participants in play. This is especially true when play takes the form of mock-combat such as that of the monkeys that inspired Bateson's reflections, "'These actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote.' The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite" (Bateson, 180). I too find Bateson's discussion of the metacommunication of play important for our purposes, but rather than "letting go of the literal," I suggest that in play we may embody a multiplying as well as a complicating of the literal, especially as the literal is no longer stripped of its creativity.

The nip or bite of play, for example, does not only stand for another kind of bite (of not play), but *is* (also) in this instance another kind of bite, one that is embedded in the syntax of relationship in time, as Hearne suggests. Just as Terence Turner reminds us that the lap is in the sitting, the literal is in the doing after all. The meaning of the bite is

in the playing, just as the playing is in the meaning of the bites. These are relational and always creative propositions of not-only biting that make the bite meaningful. Where Haraway suggests the evacuation of literal in play, I suggest that it is not-not literal meaning that play enacts as well. Perhaps in play it is easier for some of us to understand the embodied relational nature of making meaning together.

The not-that-kind of biting that may be expressed in play is largely communicated through other means of not-only biting, such as ear position, facial expressions, tail movements, overall countenance, hackles, scent shifts, play bows, and so on. And the meaning of all these communications together can easily shift, as anyone who has ever witnessed (or been part of) a play fight that changed shape to become more aggressive will attest. The meaning of bites, bared teeth, and much else that is done playfully in play, emerges within the syntax of the ever-moving relationship between those playing together. It is metacommunicative to the same extent that it is metarelational.

Let us recall Bekoff's explanation of play as the way participants learn "about behavior patterns that are acceptable to others...and how to resolve conflict" (Bekoff, 126). In play the meaning of bites is not set; the principles or patterns that emerge regard being in relation. This relating happens through bites, grappling, and chasing, much of the meaning of which as pseudo-discrete actions evaporates in their ephemerality, while the feeling tone of the relating through play persists. Participants are learning a great deal about how to respond to one another, to be "open to understanding" one's affects and another's signals. These lessons shape the meaning of bites in return. The meaning of the

bite depends on the meaning of the bite before, too, and will affect the nature of the bite after.

The meaning of the bite is embedded within play, and as such within a time-space of flexible meaning that is made cooperatively by participants. As Bekoff has noted, participants in play will shift their actions to create a more egalitarian experience. He explains, “Dogs, wolves, and coyotes also engage in role-reversing, and self-handicapping to maintain social play. Each can serve to reduce the inequalities in size and dominance rank between the interacting animals and promote the reciprocity that is needed for play to occur.” (Bekoff,125). Participants contribute to a more egalitarian situation which presumably makes play more fun, indeed more playful. The shared undertaking of maintaining playfulness indicates that play itself is the shared goal. Maintaining shared playfulness necessitates the navigation of communication and attitude within a shifting microclimate of meaning manifested by the roiling bodies and mutual regard of those at play together.

Just as in play “we become significant to one another” as Haraway has it, so too play is making significance together. And these are entirely mutually dependent as Manny and Jim, Mocha and Edna, Marla, Dan, and all the others make clear. When Macy reminds with exuberant shouts, “big party!” she is reminding those around her of the proper attitude of learning togetherness. Play not only provides the learning of metapatterns of relating, as Bekoff explains, but encourages the practice of attunement to fleeting and multisensorial expressions of another’s meaning. “Fun” and playfulness are imperatives at the agency, as these are critical to enabling meaning and significance to

emerge in mutual activity and mutual regard. Playfulness, like demands to “get those tails wagging” enables reorientation to embodiment, and the polymorphous nature of expression. Attention to tails as well as to whatever is called for to “get them wagging” is necessary for making communication possible, precisely because these are all communicative acts.

The interanimalic socialization that is facilitated by the agency staff and volunteers, and that goes on between them as well as the teams, is predicated on a practiced openness to “other ways” and their meanings. In this the participants extend their belief, their imaginings, beyond the limits of their immediate knowledge. They make new understandings possible together, by way of new embodiments, new ways of being are shared. Just as the puppies may slowly learn the import of the exhortation “tug!” so too do their human partners, as “tug” is made together in mouth and hand and fibrous pulling, and in later multiplied meanings as doors and drawers open which would otherwise remain shut. The meaning of “tug” does not only “really” reside in whatever human version may be first to come to mind. It is made together. This may be most obvious in cases when the meaning is not fully shared, when communication is muddled. Such is explained by Hearne in her description of working on “fetch” with a dog when, as is sometimes the case, the dog in question drops the stick some distance from the thrower rather than returning it. She says of this, “[t]he gap the dog insists on between us and the stick represents the gap between our ability to command, to give advice and so forth and our ability to acknowledge the being of others” (Hearne,48). She concludes that “it is the full acknowledgement of language that closes the gap” (Hearne,48). Hearne explains

here that meaning is shared, and the quality and reliability of that sharing depends on acknowledging the being of others.

Just as the garden is not only, and so “literally,” that which we may see in front of us from the verandah, it is also what is scented and heard and experienced of it by others experiencing it. Similarly as Dan suggests we communicate beyond our understanding. We are the scents that precede us around the corner in Wolfe’s example. Believing in this fact is what is called for when volunteers and others “say it once and mean it.” The participants in interanimalic socialization facilitated by the agency engage in a multiplication and complication of meanings and ways of knowing. When Hearne suggests that “full acknowledgement of language closes the gap,” the language she presents here is thoroughly and explicitly embodied and relational (Hearne, 48). This is the language that Marla speaks when the rude wiggling brutishness of Nemo is understood to say “mine, mine, mine!” and when Bonner believes that the search he is encouraged to engage in holds some promise, that the “not that” but “something else” Cora gestures to can be believed.

All of these participants in interanimalic socializing, to the extent that they are successful, become more open to understanding “other meanings” and “something else.” They often accomplish this through a slow accretion of mutual meaningfulness in intimacy and its engagements. Jim has learned to attend to Manny attentively as Manny has learned to attend to Jim. They listen to each others stares in ways quite expanded since their first encounters. Jim explains of Manny that “he senses when I am getting tired,” and relates a story of Manny emerging from the bedroom to look at Jim late at

night. Jim realizes that “if I don’t listen I will end up waking up in the living room.” This story describes how Manny has become attuned to Jim’s demeanor and the expressiveness of his being to the extent that he knows when Jim is tired enough that he should be beckoned to bed. Jim has become attentive enough to Manny’s expressiveness that he knows the import of his look, and importantly that Manny’s look must be believed as having meaning, and that this meaning demands a response.

Implicit in the description of this encounter is the acknowledgement of the limits of Jim’s own knowledge, as Hearne and Wolfe as well as Dan and Marla underscore. This is what Jim describes when he says that “if I don’t listen I will end up waking up in the living room.” The proposition of waking up in the living room describes the incontrovertible fact of the slumber that will overcome Jim that only Manny can fully know about. Between Manny’s look and Jim’s waking in the living room, the caesura of Jim’s consciousness describes that which only Manny can know. Manny has seen Jim sleeping in a way Jim himself will never see. Thus Jim is reminded of the limits of his knowledge in his expanded belief in Manny’s meaning. In so doing Manny and Jim answer Stanley Cavell’s question that Wolfe reminds us of: “can *we* handle the skeptical terror of ‘letting our knowledge come to an end’? (Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 5). The hundreds of participants of interanimalic socialization facilitated by the agency answer this affirmatively, in playfulness, work, love and struggle, and in so doing they are expanded.

CONCLUSION

With all of these examples of interanimality in mind, let us consider three characterizations of human-assistance dog relationships. First we will remember sociologist Clinton Sanders' assertion that guide dogs for vision impaired people are "literally experienced as an extension of the blind owner's self" (Sanders, *Understanding*, 57). Sanders' assertion underscores several of the central issues we have been dealing with here. He describes the very expansion of the human partner's self. In this he suggests how at least the human is changed in this partnership. We know the dog must be, too. Barbara Noske describes how "aiding" relationships are "exemplified by the relationship between a guide dog and its owner. The dog though trained by a sighted person appears to be aware of its owner's blindness. [The behaviorist R.A.] Mugford has called it impressive that a guide dog apparently extends the awareness of its body to include that of the owner, for example passing underneath low objects" (Noske, 154). In this account the dog's expanded self, or at least incorporation of the human (including particularities such as blindness) into the dog's self-awareness, gets highlighted.

By now it should be clear that given my informants' experiences, the literality of Sanders' reference and the human ownership of the dog partner in both of these accounts are problematic. More importantly for our present purposes, in both of these examples these pairs are clearly presented as highly individuated beings who are engaged in discrete tasks. In Sanders' description the dog gets presented in very utilitarian and rather objectified terms. In fact Sanders explains elsewhere that "[m]ost essentially, the dog is a "tool" that functions to assist the visually impaired owner in moving through his or her daily life" (Sanders, *Understanding*, 39). Maximally in this example the dog acts as a

kind of additive apparatus, a living prosthesis. In Noske and Mugford's account the dog is given more credit but the human is somewhat reduced, as so much dead weight accounted for, rather as a truck driver becomes aware of the dimensions of his extended vehicular body.

In contrast to Sanders' and Noske/Mugford's characterizations of interspecies teams, the preceding chapters attest to the ways that the agency's teams emerge from learned and nuanced mutual regard and cooperative navigation, that is, doing-as-being together. Rather than relying on the cooptation of another being to extend a preexisting selfhood, the clients, assistants, staff, and volunteers at the agency demonstrate that these interspecies partnerships are mutually transformative and thoroughly shared. These partners embody, together, new ways of being. They also enact what Barbara Smuts calls "mutuality." According to Smuts,

"the 'presence' we recognize in another when we meet in mutuality is something we feel more than something we know, someone we taste rather than someone we use. In mutuality, we sense, that inside this other body, there is 'someone home,' someone so like ourselves in their essence that we can co-create a shared reality as equals" (Smuts, 308).

She also reminds us that this capacity for such experiences of mutuality "flourishes or languishes depending on the social worlds we encounter—and deliberately create" (Smuts, 308). The teams manifest Smuts' "mutuality" as the cooperative and shared nature of being as togetherness. As we have seen, this togetherness is made with mutual regard, mutual care, and mutual attention. I would suggest, however, that rather than assuming *a priori* characterization of our existence as living "inside" bodies, the mutuality of the teams may incorporate and manifest more or less of this particular sense

of the relationship between embodiment and identity. In the expanded embodiment entailed in learning togetherness, it is more apt to suggest that in mutuality, we sense that there is someone home *as* this other moving, looking, scented, talking, (embodied) being.

When Smuts writes that “the presence we recognize in another” is felt in the “sense that...there is ‘someone home,’ someone so like ourselves ...that we can co-create a shared reality as equals,” she is describing an instance of what I have called “likening.” In this example the beholder likens the presence of another to herself, and this enables the possibility for co-creation, equality, shared sociality. As we have seen in the relationships between all the participants in interanimalic community described here, what is shared or shareable subtends mutuality. The creative meaning-making processes of “likening,” as I have been describing it, are foundational for intersubjectivity. It is this creative, active making of mutuality that Sanders and Noske’s descriptions here leave out. The making of shared meaning, experiences, and communications facilitates daily navigation together for partners like Toby and Jax, Mocha and Edna. And in this mutuality both partners are transformed.

This mutuality as “interanimalic conviviality,” as Acampora calls it, expands both partners, in fact can trouble their separation into separate partners as such. Cary Wolfe, in response to feminist and disabilities scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s positive evaluation of a magazine cover featuring a fashion model and a service dog, suggests that “instead of seeing the nonhuman animal as merely a prop or tool for allowing the disabled to be mainstreamed into liberal society and its values, wouldn’t we do better to imagine this example as an irreducibly different and unique form of subjectivity—neither *Homo sapiens* nor *Canis familiaris*, neither “disabled” nor “normal” but something else altogether, a shared trans-species being in the world constituted by complex relations of

trust, respect, dependence, and communication (as anyone who has ever trained—or relied on—a service dog would be the first to tell you)?” (Wolfe, *Posthumanism*, 140-1).

It is indeed such shared “trans-species being in the world” that has been our subject here. However, just as these “something elses” have been forcefully asserting themselves as critical to the mutuality of these teams, so too do we understand that such subjectivities and their constitutive relations keep changing, are remade over and over again in their doing together. Wolfe uses this example to demonstrate other ways of being in the world, and other ways of knowing these ways of being that are not limited to liberal humanism. And let us not limit this insight only to human-assistance dog teams. What the teams here underscore, but are not alone in manifesting, is the relational, embodied, nature of making meaning within doing together. Wolfe’s description ignores the processual and transformative nature of this doing-as-being together that I have described here. Rather than “an irreducibly different and unique form of subjectivity,” as Wolfe suggests, the interspecies partners and others I have been writing about here embody and experience partnership, loneliness, affection, and work together in the ongoing flux of doing.

Just as the clients, assistants, staff, and others involved with the agency manifest ways of being in the world that defy atomism, as well as the separation of play and affection from work and careers, they also echo and respond to dominant notions regarding fear of dependency and the valorization of career and professionalism. Even while the bond that enables the teams’ doing together belies the separation of work and love, a ubiquitous fear of dependency and vulnerability haunts my informants. Thus the alterity of the teams’ “subjectivity” as Wolfe describes it, the team’s embodiment of

“something else,” that is outside of liberal society, also includes the taxonomies of speciation and stigmas that he mentions. These too continue to be embodied, shared, and addressed. As Ingold reminds us, “experience is intrinsic to the generative process wherein persons—both human and other-than-human—come into being and pursue the goal of life, each within the field of their relations with others” (Ingold, 99). As we have seen, the stigmas and taxonomies Wolfe mentions, as well as fear of dependency and valorization of professionalism are in play, and themselves transformed, in the field of relations, the living, out of which interanimalic conviviality emerges.

Thus the doing-as-being together of the teams and other participants of the agency’s work also manifests the speciation and ableism, the pressures of liberal humanism that Wolfe mentions as that which get defied in the teams. This kind of transformative, emerging and receding, being-of-significance, offers us another approach to what Wolfe calls here “subjectivities.” Echoing Ingold’s frustration with Life-Matter dichotomies and their embedded subject-object separations, I hold that the active and changeful mutuality of the teams exceeds such a “subjectivity.” Understanding the shifting nature of personhood, being of significance, and relational fields more generally, is also more consonant with how my informants’ experiences (of themselves, each other, etc.) manifest such shifting regard and changeful meanings. The clients, assistance dogs, and staff experience themselves, each other, and their togetherness in changeful ways. For example, in a given moment the saliency of shared intimate life, knowing each others’ thoughts and life-saving work invigorates the relationship between Manny and Jim, causing Jim to cry. This enacts powerful interanimalic regard. As Jim is enhanced,

so too is Manny. Other experiences, such as the fear-inducing experiences of being regarded as monstrous, like Jim, being sometimes “invisible,” like Dan or being brought “down like a steer,” like Nemo, manifest other permutations of enacted relations. Bird-David’s notion of the activity of dividuality expresses the embodiment of mutual regard in making relations. As Bird-David explains:

“When I individuate human being I am conscious of her ‘in herself’ (as a single separate entity); when I dividualize her I am conscious of how she relates with me. This is not to say that I am conscious of the relationship with her ‘in itself,’ as a thing. Rather I am conscious of the relatedness with my interlocutor as I engage with her, attentive to what she does in relation to what I do...to what happens simultaneously and mutually to me, to her, to us” (Bird-David,72).

Though my informants are also conscious of the relationship “in itself” as well, Bird-David’s “dividuality” is especially apt for describing the experiences of teams like Manny and Jim, Edna and Mocha, and Toby and Jax as they share their lives. As Bird-David explains for her Nayaka informants “[t]he person is sensed as ‘one whom we share with’” (Bird-David, 73). The shared experiences of daily life, of work together and making communication are inextricable from who and how these teams become together. As family, as co-workers, friends, students, persons, “significant others” emerge in tandem with the specificities of such sharing. The work of doing and being these relations is ongoing. Because of this these relations and their dividualities continue to shift along with what they do and do not share.

As is by now quite clear, Manny and Jim, Edna and Mocha, and Jax and Toby are all engaged in interspecies relationships characterized by deep mutual regard, trust, and communication, as well as interdependence. These relationships are described over again

as “life saving.” As we have seen, abyssal ruptures are defied in the communion and communication of these teams. Just as Hearne suggests that it is not “shared mental phenomena” that are central to communication so much as being “open to understanding,” so too Bird-David asserts that: “Recognizing a ‘conversation’ with a counter-being—which amounts to accepting it into fellowship rather than recognizing a common essence—makes that being a self in relation with ourselves” (Bird-David, 78). In both of these descriptions attitudes of openness to understanding and recognition of a “conversation” is set apart from “common essence” and “shared mental representation.” Shareability is not fixed, but rather it is made, remade, unmade. It is not a given ability or lack thereof shared by human or dog, or some unchanging essence that makes the togetherness we are concerned with here. As we saw in Chapter Four such conversations, such “talking with,” are not only verbal; in fact the best are most decidedly polymorphous and multisensory.

When Jim and Manny have a conversation that involves Manny’s assertion that Jim should go to bed before he falls asleep in the living room, or when Edna explains how upset Mocha gets when Edna is out of her chair because Mocha knows that she is not safe, or when Bonner and Cora come to believe each other in play, such conversations enact fellowship as Bird-David describes it. Such fellowship defies “abyssal ruptures” or “abyssal kinship” as what characterizes relationships between humans and all other animals. Shared and emerging meanings are foundational to the kinship made daily together by the teams, the work done in mutual attention, the shared bond. These teams make such interspecies families and intimate work partnerships

possible through their practices of mutual regard, the work of learning togetherness, and interanimalic habitus. What these teams share (and do not) is critical to the nature of their relationships. Family and work partnerships emerge as intimacy, tasks, communication, respect, meals, travels, friends, concerns are shared. And for many of the team members these activities are made possible through being together.

The participants in the work of the agency manifest shifting possibilities in interanimalic sociality. They fashion long-lived interspecies families and work partnerships. These teams' demonstrable skills and enhanced "functioning" buttress their special status. But these teams emerge from, and contribute to, other permutations in social possibilities. The viewers of a certain television commercial are goaded with the assertion, "you don't feed your family dry food from a paper bag" as a woman opens kitchen cupboards to reveal white bags labeled "dinner," which she then pours into bowls for her seated children, much to their horror. As she opens the refrigerator to reveal food for an expressively anticipating border collie, the narrator goads, "why feed it to your dog?" (Freshpetselect website). The obligation to regard "your dog" as like "your children" is here presented as normative. In this commercial fashioning we can feel the possibilities of interspecies families shift.

Vicki Hearne writes of interspecies partners becoming understandable to one another. This is inextricable from other emergent possibilities. Hearne characterizes the scenting and searching work that a dog named Sampson does, as work "at liberty" (not on a leash). As such she suggests that the existence of "work 'at liberty'...is one of the best kept secrets of the world" (Hearne, TOK, 447). She explains further that "the fact that

there are such dogs as Sampson [is] a kind of secret, in that what he does is unintelligible to culture” (Hearne, TOK, 448). Hearne also acknowledges that such work is itself teamwork. The work of assistance dogs too is “at liberty” in Hearne’s sense, though it is not exclusively off-leash work. It is also even more explicitly team work. As the number and kinds of assistance dog programs grow and teams such as my informants become increasingly visible, such dogs and their teams are clearly becoming more culturally intelligible, at least in North America.

These interspecies teams in their careers and kinship defy separation of work and family, and belie the mutual exclusivity of economies of affection and those of function, as Haraway has it. The work of these teams is equally “domestic” as “public.” Clinton Sanders elaborates how the sociology of human-animal relationships offers a great deal for the exploration of “how we construct and assign the designation ‘person’ ...[and] an expanded view of mind that, like personhood, we can best understand as arising out of social interaction” (Sanders ASLW, 407). In these person- and mind-doing (interspecies) relationships Sanders emphasizes the importance of daily life together, especially as these “friendly routines are sustained within a highly emotional relationship. (Sanders, ASLW, 416). He also highlights play together, and the sharing of meanings therein, as a “central mode of interaction between people and their nonhuman friends” (414). Sanders emphasizes some elements central to our present concerns. However these relationships as Sanders conceives of them manifest substantial differences from those of the interspecies teams I am concerned with here.

Sanders writes, “[a]s caretakers pursue the everyday routines that express and solidify their relationships with their animal companions, they cooperatively create a private, interspecies culture” (Sanders, ASLW, 407). While Sanders concisely describes the daily instantiation of interspecies intimacy here as my informants experience it, the differences between the relationships he characterizes and those of the agency’s teams are critical. He describes dyadic human-animal relationships in which there are “[human] caretakers” and “animal companions.” This pair, he explains “cooperatively create[s] a private interspecies culture” (Sanders, *Understanding*, 407). Rather than having one “caretaker,” teams like Manny and Jim, Bonner and Cora, and others manifest an extensive mutuality in caretaking. Additionally, though Sanders acknowledges the central role of play, he does not deal with the various kinds of shared undertakings, including those characterized as work, that are so important in these team’s lives together. Lastly, teams such as these grow out of and contribute to a larger interanimalic community of training, fostering, and mutual livelihood. Theirs is interspecies culture that is certainly not only private. It is in fact often a very public life, among dog-people and otherwise.

As we have seen, the very public and work-oriented relationships between team members undergird high regard for these teams and those who contribute to their existence. The enhanced status of the teams further affirms the relationship and its importance for participants in the agency’s work. This affirmation and enhancement affects staff, volunteers, and donors as well as the team members themselves. Not only do these “special dogs” and their partners go where other dogs often do not, but more importantly they do work that is highly regarded, specialized, and understood to confer

on their human partner the capacity for a “full life.” Assistance dogs must pass canine “good citizen’s tests.” Such tests are designed to ensure what Marla calls “polite” behavior as well as mutual communication attesting to trustworthiness in public. As the name of the test describes, the stakes are high, as passing the test promises “citizenship” in a widened interspecies sociality. It is widely understood that these team partners have often each saved each others’ lives. Because of this, too, the special moral, emotional, and practical status of these teams resists their relegation to putative private worlds of domesticity and play.

The agency’s interanimalic community certainly belies Sanders’ description of interspecies partnerships as centrally characterized by private culture, human-caretaking, and play. This does not diminish the importance of Sanders’ admonition that “ [i]n failing to recognize the fact that we live in an interactional community composed of both human and nonhuman members we have ignored an area of social life that is commonplace, emotionally rich, and of significant analytic interest” (Sanders, ASLW, 421). By attending to the embodied relational meaning made cooperatively in living together, we have been participating in “casting off the linguicentric and anthropomorphic restraints of conventional views of mind” (Sanders, ASLW, 419). According to Sanders, this “frees us to appreciate an expanded world of social relationship and understand the interactions from which they are constructed” (Sanders, ASLW, 419). The interanimalic community we have been following embodies such expanded worlds.

The particularities of *how* such social worlds are made in doing-as-being together are fundamental to the nature of the teams themselves. Values are embodied and

conceptions and meanings take shape in scent and mouth and muscle and sound. The interspecies teams and their larger interanimalic community develop communication and mutual trust through play, through making (it) fun together. Often it is in play first that meaning becomes mutual as not only human and not only verbal. The character of the teams, and especially the status of the assistance dogs, are often described by work terminology, itself strongly characterized by neoliberal evocation of individualized careers and independence. Additionally the valorization of “independence,” including that of the clients enabled by working with their dog partners, echoes and reinforces powerful notions of full personhood as manifested by self-reliance, and if not career success, then an attitude of “professionalism” reflective of the ability to function in the job/market. Even while these notions have powerful currency around the agency and are reflected in the words and actions of agency clients, staff, and volunteers, so too the emotional and familial nature of the relationships between team members paradoxically undermines division between work and home, affection and function, family and co-worker on which such notions of success and independence are predicated. As we saw in Chapter One, the successful work of the teams is coterminous with the strength of the bond between team members. The emotionally invigorated mutual regard and care embodied by these teams is the very basis for their work as “functional” members of society.

As we have seen, and as my informants often describe it, “functioning,” as a “full person” is characterized by the ability to work, and to work independently, self-sufficiently. These characterizations, though they exert themselves powerfully in the lives

of my informants, are also further troubled by the nature of their lives together. After all the agency's teams are explicitly interdependent, though this is unevenly highlighted as when the importance of the client's newly attained independence trumps the saliency of the interdependence between team members. When this happens, the assistance dog status as a "team member," let alone a family member or significant other, is ignored or temporarily erased. Additionally the functional work of the teams is also coterminous with the affection they share and the playful practices out of which coalesce shared meanings, multiform communication. Play, affection, and interdependence characterize the foundation for these interspecies relationships even as they are consistently characterized as professionalized work teams, and their status often enhanced through valorization of atomism and independence.

The agency's interanimalic community also dramatically defies as well as reflects dominant notions of the differences and distinctions between human and non-human animal others. Like contested and reified distinctions between work and family, play and careers, independence and dependence, the interspecies teams instantiate new possibilities for interanimalic togetherness even as anthropocentric hierarchies and human exceptionalism too are reflected and echoed in the interspecies community of the agency. This community more than anything manifests the shifting nature of personhood, interanimalic possibility, mutual regard, and the transformative fashioning of being together.

Haraway writes of the play of two of her dog friends as "ontological choreography, which is that vital sort of play that the participants invent out of the

histories of body and mind they inherit and that they rework into the fleshly verbs that make them who they are. They invented this game; this game remodels them” (Haraway, CSM, 100). Some similar ontological choreography is at work when Dan prompts fosters to keep their puppy playmates “in the game.” In both of these examples the games are ontological choreography that “participants invent” and which “makes them who they are.” This is the play of togetherness out of which mutual meaning emerges. The language of “talking with,” as mutual responsiveness, is enacted by “fleshly verbs” of being embodied, as players make significance with one another. Such “ontological choreography” describes well the movement and making of being that Ingold’s field of relations evokes and that the interanimalic teams of the agency embody. The teams become teams, become family, become workmates, by doing together and becoming meaningful to one another.

In work and play and all the other modes of making-togetherness that these interspecies teams engage in, meaning and communication exceed the verbal. The embodied relational meaning that is made shareable in doing-as-being together undercuts the separation of humans from all other animals, and humans from interspecies sociality that is predicated on a notion of human linguistic or cognitive isolation. In response to Derrida’s discussion of the “abyssal rupture” between “men” and “animals” from “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” David Wood writes, “The question of the abyss is inseparable from the question of the kind of relationship that obtains between a man and an animal” (Wood, 137). As we have seen in the relationships between Edna and Mocha, Dan and countless puppies, Jim and Manny, Bonner and Cora, and all the

others, the kinship and work, the talking with and playing with are made shareable through the mutual regard and attunement expanded in doing together. These interanimalic relationships answer Wood's question and so refute the abyss. Wood says,

“[o]ur response to Wittgenstein's claim that if a lion could speak, we could not understand him, surely depends on the kind of life that lion is leading. The question then would be: does not the manifold shape of the abyssal rupture between 'we men' and 'what we call animals' depend to a great extent on our mutual engagement—either directly or indirectly, even through the use of evocation and imagination?” (Wood,137).

The interanimalic community facilitated by the agency answers this affirmatively in manifold and transformative ways. In making togetherness, in the play of kinship and work, imaginative leaps and evocative postures are central too for making meaningful relations on the edges of the just now-, or not-yet-true that still mark the edges of abysses.

Dan and Marla explain to fosters that in working on item retrieval with the dogs, when a dog partner is not letting go of the object, for teaching purposes it is important to “change the meaning” of what the dog is doing. When the dog partner stands there with the retrieved but unrelinquished object, the fosters are prompted to relinquish the “retrieve” itself and “turn it into a hold” or “make it a give.” In this example of working through emergent mutual understanding we see again that meaning is made cooperatively. As Vicki Hearne says, “conceptualization is pretty much a function of relationships and acknowledgement, a public affair. It takes two to conceive” (Hearne, *Adam's*, 58). An attempt to elicit the retrieval of an object is turned into a hold, as the dog partner holds the object and the human intends something new and calls it such. The hold is “made” into a “give” when the object is traded for a treat, and “give” is then described

by both the dog who drops the object into her partner's hands and by the partner's answering utterance. In this the transformation of meaning is done cooperatively. This is the sort of mutual engagement in Wood's sense that obtains between the agency's teams. Their engagement is fundamentally about making mutual understanding.

The life-sustaining import of such cooperative meaning making becomes particularly forceful when we consider the experiences of such teams as Joan and Denver and Lenny and Toni. Denver works with Joan as a diabetic alert assistant. Joan has a history of losing consciousness due to plummeting blood sugar. Denver nudges her when he scents her low blood sugar, brings her candy or juice, and alerts her husband. Joan explains that "For some people, an assistance dog improves their lives and gives them freedom. But for me, it's lifesaving." The profound importance of what is at stake when these teams make mutual communication, and make lives together, is likewise reflected in one client's exhortation, "this dog means life and a full life at that!" One winter night, Lenny, a service dog who helps his partner Toni through seizures and with mobility, kept Toni conscious after she got stranded in frigid conditions, her wheelchair stuck in the snow. The emergency response workers told Toni that Lenny saved her life. These examples as well as all the others throughout the preceding chapters attest to the powerful transformations that these teams, that this interspecies community embody. They change the meaning of each other's lives, the meaning of their togetherness, and refashion so many interanimalic possibilities in play.

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