Choreographing human-companion animal relationships
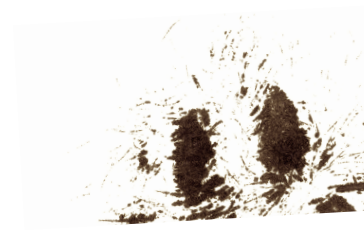
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Thesis submitted 20th June, 2019

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Abstract

Australia appears to be a nation of 'pet lovers'. Approximately 62% of Australian households include companion animals, one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the western world. Human-pet relationships, which have been linked to many social, psychological and physical benefits for human owners, are promoted through positive discourses around pet ownership and nation-wide campaigns, to 'keep Australia pet friendly'. However, for many animals designated as 'companions' the lived experience of the pet industry is not positive. Each year hundreds of thousands of pets are rejected — surrendered to shelters, euthanised or otherwise displaced. Companion animals who remain in homes face restricted agency and are also vulnerable to neglect and/or outright abuse. The pet industry depends on the exploitation of animal bodies, as forced breeding creates animals as both producers of pet-commodities (if bred) and/or commodities themselves (if sold). However, these experiences are seldom considered in popular or academic discussions of human-companion animal relationships. This, then, indicates that more work is needed to bring together critical understandings of human-companion animal relationships and empirical research on them, to arrive at scholarship that better accounts for the complexity of these entanglements. Sociology, with its attention to the relationship between the minutiae of everyday life and broader power structures, is well placed to explore this.

In this thesis I challenge anthropocentric depictions of these entanglements by creating space for companion animals' participation to render elements of their' lived experience visible. Drawing on thirty qualitative interviews and in-home observations with humans and 'their' pets, I argue that human-companion animal relationships are inescapably steeped in an asymmetrical division of power but are socio-spatially constructed so as to appear otherwise. My sample included a variety of nonhuman species, allowing me to capture the complexity of granting pet or non-pet status and explore how relations with companion animals are shaped by external ideas around species and petness. In my observations and interviews I found that owners demonstrated some capacity to resist anthropocentric approaches to pet keeping through intentional de-centring of the human(s) within the household and creating space for animal agency. But, whilst these measures undoubtedly impact on the material reality of 'their' companions, they do not extend so far as to render these relationships unproblematic. Nevertheless I assert that

examining these less oppressive ways of relating uncovers promising sites of resistance that can contribute to animal liberation — despite their complicity in the exploitation of pets. Pet ownership is a fundamentally problematic practice that has no place in anti-oppressive scholarship or a liberated society. Species-inclusive critical pet studies, however, is vital to the activist-scholarship agenda. The critical analysis of companion animals' lived experiences presented in this thesis, which moves beyond the affective gaze of the human to look at the broader material conditions which are crucial to understanding these complex and often contradictory relationships, offers a fruitful contribution to critical pet studies, and sociological animal scholarship more broadly.

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and

2. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed _____   Date 20/06/2019

Acknowledgements

It was inspired by three wilful, joyous and very creative furry friends. Mollini, Lorelei and Tom: your adventures keep me grounded in dog-world and those muddy paw prints in my notebooks serve as a constant reminder to embrace the 'mess' of multispecies living.

To my ever-patient supervisor Nik Taylor: thank you for the years of unconditional support, for stretching my thinking and always encouraging me to follow my nose. It is a testament to your supervision (and excellent dog stories) that I leave this project more captivated by multispecies research than I was going in.

To the best writing buddy imaginable, Ros Wong: thanks for the lock-ins, the blunt feedback and unwavering encouragement. I never doubted that this thesis would get done with you cheering me on!

Thanks to my partner Nathan for being my constant (human) companion, keeping me in coffee and red liquorice in the end days and generally being my extra hand when things are hectic or I run out of patting hands (no dog wants the lesser foot pat!).

Finally a big thank you to everyone who has supported me at Flinders — to my second supervisor Heather Fraser: your feedback was very much appreciated. To Kris Natalier: I have learned so much from your advice and support. Ben Lohmeyer — the original officemate! Thanks for keeping the dream team alive. To the librarians, admin staff and whole foods store (RIP) your support (and snacks) were very much appreciated. To the friends and family who have patiently waited for me to rejoin the land of the living — thanks for putting up with my brainmelt, the theoretical ramblings and many many animal stories. Those things will probably all continue but let's put them down to the PhD for now...

1
Introduction

We like our pets' silence because it allows us to write their words for them, and what they say — what we write — reminds us of our power. Lassie tells us she wants to come home. Beautiful Joe tells us how grateful he is for human omniscience. But this, of course, is fantasy.

Erica Fudge *Pets* (2008), p.52.

In March 2017, activist photographer Jo-Anne McArthur gave a public lecture at Flinders University on her work photographing nonhuman animals in human environments as part of the *We Animals* project (among others). This project seeks to document human interactions with "other" animals 'in such a way that the viewer finds new significance in these ordinary, often unnoticed situations of use, abuse and sharing of spaces' (We Animals 2018). The image that most struck me, and indeed is of the most relevance to my own project, came from a competition in Toronto, Canada, called the "Stupid Dog Trick Contest". Described by McArthur as a positive event for attendees, the winner of this contest took out the prize with their ability to fit their dog's entire head in their mouth:

Figure 1: 'Stupid Dog Trick Contest'

"Stupid Dog Trick Contest" Toronto, Canada

Photo credit: Jo-Anne McArthur, We Animals 2018

For the audience, this stunt was nothing more than a "stupid dog trick" — indeed the best one of the day. But for McArthur (2017), it was indicative of the invisibilisation of nonhuman animals, even when they are in plain sight:

> It's an illustration of how we just don't think critically when it comes to animals. I ended up getting up on stage and photographing him from that angle rather than down with the crowd because I wanted to show everyone having fun, and look at all those laughing faces and no-one is looking at, you know, the animal that's at the centre of it all. It comes back to animals being completely invisible right in the middle of everything.

Companion animals[1], though in some ways highly visible in our homes and in society, are also masked by the narratives that surround them. Their silence is perpetuated when their stories are told through human voices, and these stories tend to depict mutually affectionate relationships to the exclusion of those that raise ethical questions around pet keeping practices. As McArthur has shown, uncritical narratives of human-nonhuman animal entanglements can freely posit these relationships as unproblematic, but centring nonhuman animals can tell a very different story indeed.

My project seeks to shift the focus of scholarly enquiries into human-companion animal relationships onto the nonhuman animals, highlighting the lived experiences of the nonhuman animals at the centre of these relationships rather than solely relying on human testimonials on their behalf. While critical accounts of pet ownership do exist (e.g. Rollin & Rollin 2001; Tuan 1984; see Chapter 2: Literature Review for further discussion), these are rarely integrated into empirical studies, indicating a need for critically framed empirical research on human-companion animal relationships. Although human participants necessarily feature prominently in my research, which relies in part on semi-structured interviews and owner-written nonhuman animal biographies, visual and observation components were included in the methods as a means of better creating space

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[1] The terms pet/companion animal and owner/guardian will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis. While I am aware that some scholars (e.g. Irvine 2008a) prefer to use guardian/companion animal exclusively (a point I discuss in future chapters) and others explicitly object to 'companion animal' (Dunayer 2001), I have chosen to use all terms for two reasons: 1) participants used a variety of terms, and did not necessarily assign the same meaning to them as the afore mentioned scholars, and 2) given the property status of companion animals in society, the pet/owner discourse is not an inaccurate depiction of the relationship as it currently stands. While I take the point that 'nonhuman companions' may be a more appropriate term for nonhuman animals who are treated with 'full respect' (Dunayer 2001, p.204), the changeable nature of companion animals' living situations means that these beings may be both commodified as "pets" and treated as companions (with varying levels of respect) over their lifetime and none of the above mentioned 'preferred' terms is wholly applicable. Further to this, I would argue that any nonhuman animal who has been bred and sold as a "pet" has not been treated with 'full respect', and attempts to discursively imply otherwise may have the unintended consequence of further disguising the exploitative foundations of these relationships.

for nonhuman animal participation. This is because at the heart of this thesis lies a deep commitment to the critical evaluation of human-nonhuman animal entanglements and an unwillingness to support those that perpetuate oppressive relations between species. Human-companion animal relationships, which occupy a complex moral position, are challenging to untangle. My objective in this thesis is to present a portrait of pet ownership that both accounts for the experiences of "love" reported by human owners, and situates them within a broader system of domination, highlighting the inescapably unequal power dynamic that renders these entanglements fundamentally problematic. The critical analysis of lived experiences presented in this thesis, which moves beyond the affective gaze of the human to look at the broader material conditions which are crucial to understanding these complex and often contradictory relationships, offers a fruitful contribution to critical pet studies and sociological nonhuman animal scholarship more broadly.

1. Researcher background and project motivations

My story isn't remarkable. Like many scholars in nonhuman animal studies, I have been particularly taken by nonhuman animals for as long as I can remember. Like many children, I begged my parents for a dog — going as far as to tote around some bung fritz (essentially a roll of processed meat for those outside of South Australia) on a leash, calling it 'Fritz the dog' until they relented. I spent every possible minute with my first dog, Kelly, a King Charles Cavalier who passively endured the many adventures my childish imagination could conjure. Growing up my house was often host to the nonhuman animals my mother rescued — injured birds, abandoned kittens; anyone who needed help found it at hotel Sutton. Of course, this occurred seemingly unproblematically alongside meat eating, "pest" eradication and bloodsports like fishing — a staple activity for those who hark from the riverland of South Australia.

For many years, these contradictions were completely invisible to me — my own eating and harming of nonhuman animals existing comfortably next to a staunch abhorrence of perceived cruelty towards any other nonhuman animal not socially constructed as an acceptable target of violence. It wasn't until my teenage years that I became vegetarian (and later, vegan), and began to shirk problematic activities with nonhuman animals that caused obvious harm. I didn't include pet ownership in this bracket of 'harm' and sought out opportunities to interact and work with companion animals wherever possible. As a seemingly positive point of human-nonhuman animal connection, I valued interactions with pets over most others in my working life. Ironically it was through this pursuit of positive connections with nonhuman animals that I arrived at the more critical view of human-pet relationships that motivates this project.

Through my experiences in various nonhuman animal industries — volunteering in an nonhuman animal shelter, working at a pet groomer, petsitting, dog walking — I was exposed to a breadth of attitudes and treatment of nonhuman animals that extended far

beyond my own preconceived ideas. In particular, the grooming salon opened my eyes to both the prevalence and acceptability of banal neglect and mistreatment of supposedly "loved" companions. I began to understand that the "good" and "bad" owner dichotomy I had previously believed to exist quite separately, was actually just a matter of scale and visibility. "Loved" pets can still be matted to the skin, kept under strict control, and given limited medical care. "Family" can live their entire lives in a backyard — with food, water and shelter, sure, but minimal social contact. Nonhuman animals transition between levels of familial inclusion and exclusion over their lives, and this transitioning often tells us more about the humans who own them than any inherent quality of the nonhuman animal. Even the "good" companion animal relationships observed at the groomer held elements of the power and control that underpinned more obviously problematic relationships, including those experienced by nonhuman animals at the shelter.

Volunteering at the shelter I interacted with companion animals who had often seen the worst of humans and were expected to not only recover from this but trust and show affection for the very species that had already betrayed them. From within the enclosures I observed the browsing behaviours of potential buyers who would discuss preferred appearances, breeds and traits as one might rattle off a grocery list, "testing out" potential companions who were expected to tolerate handling by strangers (often children) who showed little regard for the aversions of the nonhuman animals themselves. And, of course, the nonhuman animals ultimately had no say in who ended up taking them home. The blame for this doesn't lie with the shelter system which often operates on limited funds and is expected to somehow accommodate an ever-growing number of rejected companion animals, but rather with the pet industry as a whole for which the shelter is merely, and can only ever be, a bandaid.

Pet-sitting gave me a window through which to view the complex and varied ways humans negotiate these relationships in the home setting — no home and no relationship ever looked the same. Most clients cared deeply for their animal companions and went to great lengths to accommodate their preferences, resulting in some unusual requests that, to me, demonstrated keen observation of the ways their animal companions interacted with the home setting. For instance, cats who preferred to drink from the leaves of particular plants or glasses in the house rather than from a water bowl, requiring that owners (and I) were constantly vigilant that said plant's leaves were consistently wetted. Conversely I also tended nonhuman animals who were filthy and/or matted and received calls from owners who stated that if I was unavailable they would simply leave their companion for two weeks with large bowl of food or drop them at a shelter. Oftentimes the situation was somewhere in the middle — for example, nonhuman animals who were loved with food treats, costumes or cuddles but lacking walks, grooming or enrichment. Human-companion animal relationships were certainly more complex than I initially thought.

It wasn't until my formal sociological education at university that I began to understand the socially constructed world that enabled these complex relations. Following a

"Sociology and Animals" course I became vegan, an ethical standpoint which has informed my scholarship since. My honours thesis explored the role of nonhuman animal shelters in contributing to companion animal disposability, and I began to understand how these human-pet relations I had been pondering fit within a broader, exploitative, anthroparchal system[2]. I began to see how, through human social construction, the visibility of companion animals could actually render them — despite being minded, living individuals — relatively invisible, reduced to "our" affective framing of them.

My experiences and ethical values have undoubtedly shaped the direction of this research, and while writing this thesis I have reflected often on my relationships with the three dogs who share my life. I couldn't begin to imagine life without them and endeavour to make sure they are content and fulfilled in our shared existence. But I am also painfully aware of the limitations they face as companion animals, and the power imbalance in our relationship that will always exist. As an abolitionist vegan I am staunchly opposed to the exploitative 'use' of nonhuman animals and systemic oppression of other animals by humans. I think the forced breeding and commodification of "other" animals, even as loved companions, is a form of oppression and ultimately needs to stop. However I am also mindful that as pets are living goods, eradicating the pet industry is not quite so simple, nor immediately achievable, and for the nonhuman animals currently living out their lives as companions we need research that highlights their material reality and theorises about how that reality can be improved. In my own relationships with animal companions, this position motivates me to limit the constraint on their lives to the greatest extent possible and explicitly advocate for the abolition of the pet industry (alongside all other exploitation of nonhuman animals). This means that if such a future is successfully obtained, I am willing to live in a world without commodified companion animals, though these bonds which surely differ from those shared with humans would be greatly missed. But I am aware my current efforts are not enough, what is needed is systemic change. To this end, I was motivated to pursue this research project as a stepping stone to facilitating this change. Human-companion animal relationships need to be seriously considered in emancipatory projects, so that we can think through how owners might push for nonhuman animal liberation despite being complicit in pets' oppression. This project is a step towards those ends, in the hopes that through more comprehensive understanding of human-companion animal relationships we can better challenge them whilst also fostering less oppressive relations in the meantime. The next section will provide a brief historical background of pet-keeping in Australia in order to provide context for the discussion that follows in the rest of the thesis.

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[2] A term I borrow from Cudworth (2005; 2011) which refers to a system of domination that structurally oppresses nonhuman animals. This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

2. The rise of western pet-keeping

According to Harriet Ritvo, the practice of pet-keeping in western society can be traced back to the middle ages as 'unmistakable pets' emerged as 'playthings' for Royalty and privileged members of society (Ritvo 1987, p.85). By the seventeenth century pet-keeping was prevalent among the upper classes, as English aristocrats developed a passion for 'unnecessary dogs,' that is, companions that were without the 'practical functions' of other domesticated nonhuman animals at that time (Ritvo 1987, p.85; Thomas 1983). Functionally useful "working" animals, though indispensable to their owners in a practical capacity, generally found themselves to be disposable once their ability to perform their function was compromised: '"My old dog Quorn was killed," wrote a Dorset farmer in 1698, "and baked for his grease, of which he yielded 11 lbs"' (Thomas 1983, p. 102). Pets, on the other hand, were highly valued by their owners — King Charles II was reported to be 'inconsolable' following the disappearances of his prized canine companions, a sentimentality echoed by his brother, James II, and successors William and Mary (Ritvo 1987). Portraits were commissioned for these beloved companions and their departure inspired epitaphs and elegies nationwide (Ritvo 1987; Tague 2008).

Financial and commercial revolutions in eighteenth-century England increased disposable income that, together with a demarcation of space in living quarters, facilitated the spread of modern pet-keeping practices (Tague 2008). By the nineteenth century this modern form of pet-keeping spread to broader English society as 'an antidote to the alienation and commodification of modern urban life' (Brown 2010, p. 20). Inevitably this increased ability to indulge in otherwise functionless companions led to widespread breeding for profit as pets became coveted status symbols, a sign of prosperity (Brown 2010; Ritvo 1987; Tague 2008). The status of "pet" was extended to non-domesticated species such as ferrets, rabbits, squirrels and mice to meet demand for potential companions, however vermin-type "pets" were not afforded the same status as the dogs and cats coveted by the upper classes and thus "lesser" pets became a marker of class (Brown 2010; Ritvo 1987; Tague 2008).

These pet-related class distinctions followed the British to Australia, with many bringing domestic dogs and cats as well as grazing animals. An article in the *Hobart Mercury* on the 13th of November, 1862, details 'the first Dog Show that has been held in the Australian colonies' (p.2) which clearly indicates the intent to separate the prized purebred nonhuman animals from the 'mongrels':

> The dog is proverbially the companion and friend of man in all climes. He is marked amongst what is called the brute creation, for his desertion of his own species to attach himself to man. He is domesticated in our homes; the courageous sharer in our dangers, and the faithful comrade in our sports. Yet the family of dogs has its disreputable members as well as the family of men. And the lovers of this noble animal would be glad to see the breed free from the

perpetuation of the useless non-descript curs, that are tone met with
at every corner, and in every gutter; not only thoroughly useless, but
in many cases mischievous pests; … A Society having for its objects
the improvement of the breed of dogs, and an attempt to check the
multiplication of the aforesaid mongrels, has initiated an exhibition
of a some-what novel character, (at least in these parts,) in the shape
of a real *bona fide* Dog Show, which, accordingly, took place
yesterday, at Moore's Horse Bazaar in Liverpool-street.

As the practice of Dog-showing spread to other states, so too did the demand for an official registry of legitimate breeders in an attempt to weed out the undesirable and often overpriced mixed-breed dogs that had filtered into the supply-chain (Harvey 2013). The 1912 publication of *Tyzack's Annual* marked the first official attempt to create accurate registration records, with official pedigree registration later formalised by the Victorian Working Sheepdog Association in 1927 (Harvey 2013).

Outside of the prestigious dog-showing circuit, Australia faced a more complex negotiation of relations with pet species than those found in the UK. Having invaded a country already inhabited by unique flora and fauna[3], British colonisers came to consider these native species as central to the Australian national identity as they sought to distinguish themselves from the mother country (Franklin 2006). This, then, created a messy network of inter-species relations as introduced species either escaped or were abandoned and formed their own wild populations that threatened the wellbeing of native species, while at the same time native species came to threaten valuable livestock populations (Franklin 2006). According to Adrian Franklin (2006), this resulted in a split in categorisation and attitudes around pet species, as those who remained "under control" (the domestic-domestic animals) were embraced while those who did not (the domestic-wild) were condemned. The results of this split are still evident today, with cats in particular bearing the brunt of the blame for dwindling native bird populations (Probyn-Rapsey 2016), resulting in a significantly diminished acceptance of cats (and certainly cats in public spaces) than that observed elsewhere (Fox 2018; Franklin 2006).

Despite this complexity, pet ownership levels in Australia remain among the highest in the western world, with 62% of Australian households including at least one animal companion (Animal Medicines Australia [AMA] 2016). Comparatively, household pet ownership rates sit at 65% in the US, followed by 64% in New Zealand and 40% in the UK (AMA 2016). Perhaps due to this popularity in pet-keeping, increasingly attention is being paid to *how* humans live with their companion animals, for instance owner/pet co-sleeping habits (Smith et al 2017), the inclusion of companion animals in human leisure activities (Young & Carr 2018), and the active role companion animals play in "doing family" (Charles 2014; Power 2008). However, what is often either left out of, or skimmed

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[3] Not to mention first nations people, the displacement of whom is outside of the current scope of discussion but certainly important to note — see Anderson (1996) for further reading.

over, in these narratives is a consideration of nonhuman animals as minded beings, and the mechanisms by which they are encircled in a tangled web of relations that consistently position the needs and preferences of humans over other animals and the natural environment. The pet industry extends well beyond the intimate relating that occurs between owner and pet in the home, and it is in the consideration of the forced breeding and systematic killing of "failed" pet commodities that the asymmetrical power relations underpinning human-pet relationships becomes starkly apparent. For instance, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of rejected pets are euthanised each year (Chua et al 2017), however the exact number of nonhuman animals bred, sold and/or killed each year is unknown due to insufficient reporting. This in itself is indicative of an anthroparchal system in which nonhuman animals are commodified (and disposed of) as mere goods, with little consideration for their lives or acknowledgments of their deaths. While some scholars have highlighted that these entanglements do have problematic aspects (see Cudworth 2011 and Irvine 2008b for examples, and Chapter 2: literature review for a detailed discussion), very few consider how this unequal power manifests in everyday relationships — something sociology as a discipline is well placed to explore.

3. A Sociology of/for nonhuman animals

Sociology as a discipline has typically considered nonhuman animals to be outside of its scope, often limited by its definition of "the social" as a space that is exclusively human (Irvine 2008a; Peggs 2012). Influenced by a Cartesian conceptualisation of a human/nonhuman animal binary which positions humans as emotionally and logically superior to nonhuman animals, "other" animals were (and often still are) considered incapable of meaningful interaction (Peggs 2012). Dichotomous human/animal, nature/culture binaries underpin an intellectual tradition that not only centres humans but has actively constructed them as the only beings capable of the higher thought necessary to meaningfully participate in the social world (Irvine 2004a; Peggs 2012; Taylor 2012). Bolstered by the works of George Herbert Mead (1934) who painted language as the unparalleled medium of social interaction and construction of the social self, and fuelled by an enlightenment epistemology that privileged particular kinds of knowledge, the development of Sociological understandings of the world involved the continued exclusion of nonhuman animals (Alger & Alger 2003). Any perceived expressions of nonhuman agency were dismissed as either instinctive reactions or human projections of selfhood onto their animal companions — as Mead stated:

> We, of course, tend to endow our domestic animals with personality, but as we get insight into their conditions we see there is no place for this sort of importation of the social process into the conduct of the individual. They do not have the mechanism for it—language. So we say that they have no personality...We put personalities into the animals, but they do not belong to them. (1934, pp.182-183)

This clear boundary erected between humans and the natural world (in which nonhumans animals were included), served two functions — 1) to clearly demarcate the human species as superior in their development of self, culture and society, and 2) to carve out a clear niche for the discipline of sociology which was otherwise quite amorphous in its focus (Lindemann 2005).

 This exclusion of nonhuman animals from sociology has not gone unchallenged, however. Following Clifton Bryant's (1979) call for social scientists to explore the 'zoological connection' in society, sociologists have increasingly participated in the 'animal turn' to consider nonhuman animals as an important aspect of the social world (Irvine 2008; Peggs 2012). In recent years we have seen a heartening increase in nonhuman animal related research areas, journals, books, fellowships and conferences (Shapiro & Demello, 2010), although studies of nonhuman animals still tend to dwell on the fringes of the discipline (Wilkie 2015). On these fringes are Sociologists working to bring nonhuman animals into studies of the social world, utilising the sociological toolkit with its ability to highlight the minutiae of everyday life, as well as analysing broader patterns and manifestations of dominance and power structures, or as C.W. Mills (1959, p.6) puts it, 'the sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society'. It is this ability to re-examine the taken-for-granted aspects of society that renders sociology incredibly well placed to antagonise the social relations that enable the construction of nonhuman animals as consumable goods, experimental subjects, sources of entertainments and companions (to name but a few of the social roles embodied by nonhuman animals) (Cudworth 2014).

My project draws significantly on two tenets of sociological thought — symbolic interaction and the relationship between structure/agency — which I will briefly outline here, and expand on significantly in chapter 2: literature review. The symbolic interactionist tradition attends to the constitution of society through shared meanings — that is, how micro-interactions shape, and are shaped by, the social world (Pascale 2011). Nonhuman animal scholars have employed symbolic interactionist thought to examine the roles, rules and shared understandings negotiated between human and nonhuman interactants that shape multispecies life (see for instance, Alger &Alger 2003; Irvine 2008a; Sanders 1990, 1999). For my project, symbolic interaction provides a framework through which to conceptualise verbal and physical interactions between owners, pets, and physical environments, as meaningful in constructing shared realities. However, studies from the symbolic interactionist tradition rarely make explicit connections between these micro experiences and broader structural oppression. For this, a structure/ agency lens is a useful tool.

Sociological conceptualisations of structure and agency attempt to theorise the connections between individual choices (agency) and broader social structure (Archer 2003, 2007; Cudworth 2005; Giddens 1984). For nonhuman animal scholars, this is a useful tool to analyse the oppression of nonhuman animals as constructed and supported

by broader social structures. For example, Erika Cudworth (2005, 2011a) lists five enabling structures that support a system of domination she calls anthroparchy. An anthroparchal system systematically privileges human wants and needs over those of other animals and the natural environment. It is perpetuated through structures that oppress nonhuman animals through production, reproduction and domestication, politics, violence and cultures of exclusive humanism (Cudworth 2011a). Highlighting the structures of oppression that underpin human-companion animal relationships enables an analysis of how the everyday relatings of owners and pets reflect or challenge anthroparchal norms. As the discussion in chapter 2: literature review will demonstrate, understandings of agency in the structure/agency debate are less developed, even more so with regards to nonhuman animal agency. This, then, necessitates the use of the symbolic interactionist lens discussed above, in order to better capture the lived experience of these structured relationships. The use of both approaches (symbolic interaction and structure/agency) in this project allows for a richer picture of the micro and macro elements of the human-companion animal relationships studied. The greater detail of observations garnered through a symbolic interactionist lens has allowed me to highlight the manifestation of this broader structural oppression on a micro level.

4. Research Question

How do humans co-construct their relationships with companion animals?

5. Aims & Objectives

The use of 'co-construct' in the research question above reflects a driving interest in exploring how human and nonhuman animals co-create their relationships in webs of structural relations, challenging the silencing of pets highlighted by Fudge (2008). In order to explore the navigation of human-companion animal relationships, this project utilises qualitative data with both human (owner) and nonhuman (companion animal) participants to create a comprehensive portrait of the co-construction of human-companion animal relationships in the observed situations. The project aims were to:

1. Obtain owner testimonies of their navigation of relationships with companion animals, and opinions on elements of the pet industry that occur outside of their immediate relationship (eg. breeding, pet displacement, ethics of pet keeping).

2. Explore how owners think their companion animals experience their relationship.

3. Include companion animals in the research by having them physically present, including an observation component to the data collection and employing nonhuman animal-centric interview questions to avoid solely privileging human voices.

Through pursuing these aims, I (at least partially) achieved the objective of producing a more species inclusive picture of human-companion animal relationships, demonstrating that the inclusion of nonhuman animals in research that concerns them results in a richer data set and highlights different areas of the relationship than that achieved with a solely human centric approach.

6. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: Literature Review provides an overview of relevant existing literature to further situate the thesis and demonstrate how this project contributes to sociological knowledge of human-nonhuman animal relations. In this chapter I outline the social construction of reality generally, and nonhuman animals specifically, to demonstrate that the positioning of companion animals in society is shaped by the construction of knowledge, roles and discourses that privilege humans. Further to this, I argue that the breadth of research around companion animals is depoliticised and thus reinforces the legitimacy of using nonhuman animals as companions. I demonstrate this by outlining key themes from the existing literature around human-companion animal relationships, which focus on positive constructions of pets as minded beings engaged in familial relationships with humans, and the benefit of pet ownerships for humans. These works tend to be empirical studies, focussed on the micro level of entanglements and thus largely ignore the structural oppression that underpins them. I also outline the small body of critical works that actively challenge the ethics and legitimacy of pet ownership. These works are largely theoretical, and this pattern indicates that there is a need for critically framed, empirical understandings of human-companion animal relationships. My project seeks to address this need by assembling a theoretical framework that draws on critical animal studies, structure/agency debates and symbolic interactionist tradition to critically analyse human-pet relationships while meaningfully including nonhuman animals in the research process.

Chapter 3: Methods considers the methodological challenges of conducting multispecies research and outlines the methods employed in my project. I argue (in line with Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Law 2004; and Strega 2005) that methods are political, both reflecting and shaping the social worlds they purport to study. For nonhuman animals who tend to be silenced or, at best, marginalised in research about them, it is highly important that the methods selected to explore their lived reality do not further silence those they intend to give voice to (Taylor 2012; Taylor & Hamilton 2017). Given the messiness of studying human-nonhuman animal entanglements (Taylor 2012), I argue for the need to embrace an "assemblage" of theoretical approaches to craft a method that best includes companion animals in research that concerns them. Further to this, research with nonhuman species brings with it the specific ethical concerns of working with participants who are not necessarily in a position to give informed consent (Birke 2014).

Given that my chosen methods consist of semi-structured interviews and in-home observations with owners and their companion animals, the methods for this project move towards species inclusive research whilst remaining conscious that eschewing my own human privilege and analysing results through a non-anthropocentric lens is not entirely possible. I also use owner-constructed biographies and photos of nonhuman participants to make sure they are visible and remind the reader that the discussions in this thesis pertain to real lives and are not merely theoretical. Despite the difficulties outlined, I argue that researchers must seriously consider the methods and challenges involved in multi-species research and through my own methods provide an example for a potential way forward for future researchers.

Chapter 4: Making Pets explores the process of "becoming pet" in western society. This discussion problematises "Companion Animal" as a taken for granted category, drawing on interview responses and observation notes to demonstrate the co-construction of owner and pet identities. Existing literature tends to focus on owner centric narratives and identity construction, leaving little space for nonhuman animal agency and glossing over the necessary exploitation in creating nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities. I examine how owners participate in, and are aware of, the processes that enable a deconstruction of minded agential (non-human) beings and the (re)construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities that follows. I argue that in this constructed form, the companion animal has value only insofar as this is bestowed by a human owner or carer. Thus, although being constituted as "pets" may be considered one of the best possible outcomes for domesticated nonhuman animals, this only applies to a portion of nonhuman animals designated as companions. This individual validation of nonhuman animals-as-pets results in simultaneously held, conflicting narratives of pet-keeping that exist unchallenged when the complexity of these relationships is not adequately considered. By acknowledging this, we can begin to understand the human-nonhuman animal companion relationship as part of a broader, anthroparchal system of relations. Attending to nonhuman animals' interactions also allows for a consideration of how pets contribute to the construction of their relationships, and in doing so challenge the construction of them as "mere goods". This chapter, then, unpacks some of these complexities and explores human and nonhuman participants' negotiation of these contradictory entanglements.

Chapter 5: Doing Companion Relationships examines the socio-spatial 'doing' of human-companion animal relationships, arguing that contradictory narratives of dominance and love do not just underpin these entanglements, but are visible in the everyday negotiation of them. For companion animals, the construction of space can either enable or constrain their agency. Thus the presentation and interactions that occur in a place are a useful lens through which to study the negotiation of asymmetrical power dynamics between owners and pets. The privacy and control afforded to individuals within the homespace, for example, means that for owners who are so inclined, the home can be a site where human-nonhuman animal relations can be reimagined so as to

decentre the human to the greatest extent possible. However, through the organisation of space and items in the home, this place can also reflect the anthroparchal values of broader society by reinforcing 'other' animals as inferior beings. Through the experiences of human owners in outside (public) spaces we glimpse the mechanisms by which broader anthroparchal structures infiltrate the private space of the home. This chapter draws on the observational component of the data as a means of including nonhuman interactions , making visible the ways in which nonhuman animals can and do meaningfully negotiate their lived environment. It further highlights the significance of the home site for human-companion animal relationships for maintaining a 'veil of ignorance', as companion animals within the homespace are able to be afforded a greater level of freedom than they ever could in the public sphere, thus maintaining an illusion that companion animals are not limited at all by their social role. This chapter, then, ultimately demonstrates that by adopting a socio-spatial lens to the study of human-companion animal relationships we not only obtain a better picture of how these relationships are navigated in everyday life, but we also move towards research *with* companion animals, rather than merely about them.

In **Chapter 6: Challenging Human-Companion Animal Relationships** I argue for the inclusion of human-companion animal relationships in broader projects of nonhuman animal liberation and highlight the need for careful consideration of the limitations of resistance in these situations of complicity. While resistance to other forms of nonhuman animal exploitation are more clearcut, the nature of pets as "lively commodities" who live through their commodity experience make conceptualisation of resistance within human-companion animal relationships challenging. However, by expanding the scope of what is considered resistance to include the affective shifts that preclude more observable "acts" of resistance, we are able to better unpack what resistance in human-companion animal relationships might look like. Importantly this facilitates a portrait of resistance that is able to account for nonhuman animal agency. Findings indicate that many (human) participants resist anthroparchal forces both inside and outside the home, re-imagining their relationships to decentre human privilege somewhat (though the level at which this occurs differs between owners and specific nonhuman animals in the home). In taking seriously the pushback of human owners against the construction of their companion as mere goods, while they are at the same time maintaining their "pet" status, we glimpse how human-companion animal relationships might be included in broader narratives of nonhuman animal liberation as more than just a 'best case scenario' for nonhuman animals.

Chapter 7: Conclusion brings together the major themes of the thesis to demonstrate that centring nonhuman animals in research results in a more complete picture of complex relationships that are both loving and oppressive. I argue that, given the role of research in bringing forth and legitimising particular knowledges and realities while silencing others, nonhuman animal scholars have a responsibility to centre nonhuman animals in research that concerns them. This is not without ethical and practical

challenges. For instance, if we are explicitly challenging the "use" of nonhuman animals, how do we ethically engage with the human participants who have allowed us to study these intimate relations? Can we truly include nonhuman animals in research given language barriers and human gatekeepers? Nevertheless I advocate for the development of a truly critical, Critical Pet Studies field which might consider these challenges within its remit, whilst focussing on further developing species-inclusive research that critically examines human-companion animal relationships. In short, this project works towards a scholarly account of human-pet relationships that is *for pets,* rather than centring human experiences of them.

2
Literature Review

In 1956 Nelson N. Foote called attention to the glaring gap in academic research around the 'most neglected member of the family': the dog. At the time of writing, Foote found only one article that focussed on human-pet relationships — Bossard's (1944) 'The mental hygiene of owning a dog'. Since then, literature around human-pet relations has increased exponentially and extended beyond canine companions. However, as this chapter will show, more work is still needed to bring together critical understandings of human-companion animal relationships and empirical studies of them. Irvine and Cilia (2017) aptly capture the complexity of companion animals' positioning in an anthropocentric world where '[p]eople can—and do—lavish attention on pets' but at the same time:

> We have the power to decide the fate of our pets unlike any power we have over the human members of our families… We can relinquish them to a shelter or end their lives if they become sick, old, inconvenient, or if their behaviour fails to meet expectations (p.2).

The treatment of pets in the literature is similarly conflicting. Scholars in the field tend to focus on either the dominance and exploitation inherent in petkeeping, or (overwhelmingly) the positive aspects of these entanglements, including the human benefits of pet ownership and the (positive) framing of pets as minded, familial beings. Sociological research on human-companion animal relationships is exceedingly anthropocentric and depoliticised, more so than research focussed on other human-nonhuman animal entanglements (Taylor & Sutton 2018). This then means that as a body of work, sociological studies of the pet are more likely to contribute to broader narratives that legitimise and support the use of nonhuman animals as companions, than further thinking that seeks to challenge them. As sociologists increasingly call for research that explicitly advocates *for* nonhuman animals (Cudworth 2016; Peggs 2013; Taylor & Sutton 2018), sociological pet studies need to do more to highlight and challenge the manifestations of power and oppression in these seemingly unproblematic everyday relations.

I begin this chapter by exploring the social construction of reality. I argue that the symbolic interactionist tradition and sociological understandings of knowledge production provide a foundation from which to understand the social construction of nonhuman animals generally, and companion animals specifically. While symbolic interactionist provides a useful lens through which to study micro-interactions of everyday relatings, it is unable to account for the structural constraint that shapes these everyday experiences. For this, a structure/agency framework is better placed to account

for the relational shaping of individuals and the broader social norms that constrain them. By discussing more critical accounts of human-companion animal relationships I then demonstrate that while a critical body of work does exist in pet studies, this doesn't often filter in to empirical accounts of these entanglements. I finish by proposing an assemblage of theories that, together, offer a way to entwine critical and empirical understandings of human-pet relationships and thus provide the theoretical framework for this thesis.

1. Social construction of the world

Sociologists often confine their study to the bounds of 'the social', that which is socially constructed[4]. To understand how nonhuman animals and pets specifically are constructed in particular ways and what this means, it is important to first explain what I mean by socially constructed. Peter Berger & Thomas Luckman were the first to use the term 'social construction of reality' in their 1967 text by the same name. Building on the symbolic interactionist movement coming out of the Chicago school, Berger and Luckman explored the ways in which the 'objective' world was actually constructed through shared understandings of meaning created through language, posing the question: '[h]ow is it possible that subjective meanings *become* objective facticities?' (p.30). While social constructionism is largely concerned with the production of knowledge, symbolic interaction and identity construction also provide important insights into how sociologists have come to understand the social world. This section will therefore unpack each of these areas, as well as theories of structure and agency which provide an alternate approach to explaining the social world, to lay the foundation for understanding the social construction of nonhuman animals in the rest of this chapter.

1.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism, originally coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937, begins with the premise that society and the individual are interdependent— each constituted through shared meanings. Finding its roots in the Weberian concept of *verstehen* — that understanding of cultural processes can only come through discovering the meaning of specific shared realities for individuals involved in them — and the philosophical school of American Pragmatism, Symbolic Interactionism is centred on the idea that 'truth is made true through everyday interactions' (Pascale 2011, p.79). By observing the negotiated interactions between actors in a given social situation, one can begin to understand how roles, rules and selves are negotiated on a micro level. Early symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead (1934) focussed heavily on language as the primary means of participation in the social world (see also Berger 1966). Mead argued that the individual does not experience themselves directly, but rather comes to understand their 'self' indirectly through the perspective of other members of their social environment.

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4 Though some exceptions, such as actor-network-theory, do exist.

Interaction becomes symbolic when it is able to communicate particular understandings with other socialised selves, facilitating shared meaning (Mead 1934). While Mead explicitly restricted his understanding of meaningful interaction to humans, Erving Goffman emphasised the performative nature of interaction in such a way that created space for nonhuman interactions as well:

> A frown, a spoken word, or a kick is a message that a sender conveys by means of his own, *current* bodily activity, the transmission occurring only during the time that his body is present to sustain this activity. (1963, p.14).

He also mused that certain interactions, such as greeting rituals, were visible in multiple species and thus demonstrated common ground between nonhuman animal studies and human studies (Goffman 1971, p.73 fn14). As will be discussed later in this chapter, Goffman's broader understanding of symbolic interaction provides a useful framework through which to study both human and nonhuman animals' interactions. For Goffman, the only prerequisite required for interaction was *co-presence,* meaning:

> ...persons must sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived. (1963, p.17)

This awareness of 'being perceived' is significant, as for Goffman (1956) the organisation of everyday life can be linked back to 'impression management'. In short, individuals in society are encouraged to behave in accordance with existing social roles and scripts, to avoid social consequences such as ostracism or public condemnation. The social 'primary frameworks' in which interactions occur provide the underlying understanding for events that shape and control social actors in their performance of 'guided doings' (Goffman 1974, p.22). Goffman calls his approach the 'dramaturgical approach' for its likeness to a stage show, in which actors move between front and backstage spaces and have various scripts, props and co-actors to ensure the 'show' proceeds smoothly (1956). In everyday life, backstage conduct is behaviour that is intimate, disrespectful or otherwise socially unacceptable (such as belching) while front stage conduct is quite the opposite. Teams of social actors can come together and use their performances to create and maintain particular social situations, for instance in a restaurant setting there are a myriad of roles which must be performed for the situation to exist (e.g., waitstaff, customer, chef) and the use of props (e.g., menus, 'wait to be seated' signs) and common expected phrases ('may I take your order?') cue participants in to the setting to perpetuate a shared understanding of the situation.

These shared understandings also extend to individual identity, as '[e]very society contains a repertoire of identities that is part of the "objective knowledge" of its members' (Berger 1966 p.107). Actors use various props to signify particular identities in specific situations and failure to act appropriately can be met with social consequences.

For instance, certain items (e.g., iPhone) and clothing (e.g. a Tuxedo) are imbued with symbolic meaning that changes in accordance with the social context, and these meanings then shape how actors are likely to perform their selves in those contexts. Later in this chapter I will discuss how this social construction of selves serves to keep nonhuman animals in a limited number of roles, many of which have dire consequences for the nonhuman animals in them. These shared understandings must be supported by discourses and 'knowledge', thus it is necessary to understand how 'knowledge' is also socially constructed and shaped according to what is valued as 'true', rather than any inherent, objective value.

1.2 Social Construction of Knowledge

The sociology of knowledge takes a more macro approach to the social construction of reality, looking at the 'comprehensive organisations of reality within which individual experience can be meaningfully interpreted' (Berger 1966, p.108). Berger and Luckman (1967) argue that while it may appear that there is an objective reality, the world as it is experienced by individuals within it is 'built up by subjective meanings' (p.30). To achieve this, subjective meanings must be 'objectivated' and positioned as an objective portrayal of reality that exists outside of individual preferences (Berger 1966, p.108). This then means that '[t]he socially available definitions of such a world are thus taken to be "knowledge" about it' and these definitions are constantly reinforced through the interactions that take place within this "known" world (Berger 1966, p.108). Thus the socially constructed world becomes the only world individuals in society can feasibly "know". According to Berger, individuals are then absolved of the responsibility of reflecting on each aspect of their existence and can instead simply refer to 'common sense' understandings to interpret their experiences. These commonsense understandings are not benign, but rather reflect broader power dynamics, and their influence extends beyond the individual to a societal level.

These broader power dynamics were captured in the works of Michel Foucault, who took a socio-historic approach to the construction of knowledge to demonstrate how knowledge is created from particular historical practices, and how these knowledges in turn structure society. Foucault argued, '[t]ruth isn't outside power, or lacking in power' (1980, p.131). Societies have their own 'regimes of truth' — that which is accepted as true and the means by which they are sanctioned as such (Foucault 1980). These regimes of truth are tied closely to discourse, broadly defined as a group of statements that 'belong to a single system of formation'(Foucault 2008, p.121), providing a way of talking about or understanding something (e.g. the economy). While there are many discursive formations in society, some are more widely supported or encountered than others. For Foucault (1971[1980]), this demonstrates the inextricable link between power and knowledge:

No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of
communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in
itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and
functioning, to other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be
exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or
retention of knowledge. On this level, there is not knowledge on the
one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only
the fundamental forms of knowledge/power (p.131).

For minority groups and views, this then means that the objective 'truths' of a society are
likely to reinforce their marginalised position, as the privileged mainstream are more
likely to be considered a reliable source of knowledge (Strega 2011). As will be discussed
later in this chapter, the accepted 'truths' surrounding nonhuman animals tend to reflect
and reinforce their 'use' to humans — and knowledge that challenges these 'truths' is not
readily available or accepted in an anthroparchal society (Cole & Stewart 2014).

1.3 Limitations

The constructionist approach has drawn criticism for its excessive focus on the individual,
failing to adequately capture the interplay between social structures and individual agents
that produces society (Archer 2007). Margaret Archer, who is critical of sociological
endeavours that place too much emphasis on either structure *or* agency, or conflate the
two, points out the lack of sufficient depth in the social constructionist approach:

...social constructionists cannot dodge the issue by regarding all
societal features as products of "objectification" by its members. This
is because each and every individual can mentally deliberate about
what is currently objectified in relation to himself or herself (in
principle they can ask the reflexive question: "Should I take this for
granted?") Conversely, no objectified "entity" can be reflexive about
itself in relation to individuals (it can never, as it were, ask: "Could
this construct be presented more convincingly?"). (Archer 2007, p.41)

Goffman also acknowledges this shortcoming, stating that his theories do not address
social structure, but rather look solely at 'the structure of experience individuals have at
any moment of their social lives' (1974 p.13). For this project, a focus on the everyday
minutia of human-companion animal relationships is important, but I argue that this
needs to be contextualised in the broader structural context that systemically oppresses
nonhuman animals in order to better capture the complexity of these entanglements.
Various scholars have sought to address this link between individual experience and
broader social structures through studying the interplay between structure and agency.

1.4 Structure & agency

Sociological understandings of structure and agency attempt to theorise the connections between individual agents and broader society or institutions. Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984) frames structure (broader social forces that enable and constrain individuals) and agency (capacity to act within structures) as interrelated and equal — to the point that it is difficult to untangle them. Critics of this approach (Archer 2003, Cudworth 2005) argue that 'conceptual conflation' fails to capture the interplay between structure and agency, instead 'sinking one into the other' (Archer 1995 p.57). Archer's morphogenetic approach conceives of structure and agency as separate phenomena that relate but are not conflated. Thus individual agents will not necessarily experience structural forces in the same way:

> A particular collectivity may be subjected to the same structure, yet whilst some may act in ways consistent with the maintenance of the structure, others will act otherwise and in unpredictable ways (1995 p.62).

Archer argues that it is possible to map the relationship between structure and agency because the two exist in different temporal scales. Macro, structural events are not happening at exactly the same time/rate as those on a micro scale, and as such the influence of one on the other can be studied (2007). Erika Cudworth (2005; 2011) builds on Archer to develop her complex systems approach to dominance, focussed on the system of anthroparchy. Cudworth argues that societies, culture and communities are embedded both locally and in systemic relations of human domination — and it is human specific, as Cudworth makes clear, exclusive hierarchies only occur in human social systems. Anthroparchy — a system of dominance that systemically privileges humans over "other" species and the natural environment — is characterised by five structures that perpetuate human privilege: 1) anthroparchal relations in production; 2) anthroparchal reproduction and domestication; 3) anthroparchal politics; 4) Violence; and 5) Cultures of exclusive humanism (Cudworth 2005; 2011). This focus on anthroparchy, and its complex systemic relations, is necessary according to Cudworth who argues that:

> Anthropocentrism has been used so broadly... that its link to a system of social organisation has been lost. In addition, 'centrism' is inadequate to rise to the challenge of interrogating forms of exploitation and in the case of some non-human animals, oppression. (2011, p.68)

As will be seen in the section that follows, this link to a broader, oppressive, system of organisation is central to many nonhuman animal studies works, and Cudworth's Anthroparchy is an important contribution to clearer theorisation of this. However, less clear is how individual agency should be accounted for, with scholars taking many different approaches to understanding the individual level of society.

For Archer (2003; 2007), agency is part of an internal conversation in which individuals engage with social structures by reflexively shaping their selves in relation to their social context. Burkitt (2016) is critical of Archer's conceptualisation of agency, finding it too focused on the internal conversation, undervaluing the significance of social interaction which, he believes, is primary to individual's development of self. In short, Archer's work on reflectivity 'is based on how people think about their relation to the social world and to others rather than on what they do' (Burkitt 2016, pp.327-328). This is problematic in that social structures are perpetuated and resisted through both conscious and unconscious action, and although intention is important, so too is understanding how what people do is linked to social norms (Burkitt 2016; Wheatley 2019). It is here that Goffman's performative approach to social interaction can flesh out understandings of agency. While he might not specifically look at the link between immediate social situations and broader structural powers, the patterns highlighted in a dramaturgical study of society can nevertheless be theorised in relation to broader systems of domination. For instance, an owner getting ready to walk their dog — putting on walking shoes, fetching a leash — and dog's excitement in response to these social cues and props that indicate 'time for a walk', demonstrate both the interaction and rituals co-constructed between parties as 'the walk' and the broader structural constraints in which dogs must be leashed and escorted in public when humans decide walks will be granted. Further to this, Goffman's focus on the performative aspects of interaction provide a useful framework for analysing what individuals do when they exercise agency, particularly helpful when researchers lack the language skills to converse with nonhuman participants about why they do things.

Scholarly theories around nonhuman animal agency are far more recent and similarly diverse, but tend to agree on the fundamental point that nonhuman beings *do* have agency, and this agency is often constrained. While Mead (1934) explicitly excluded nonhuman animals from consideration as persons, Leslie Irvine (2007) argues that nonhuman animals most definitely demonstrate their capacity for selfhood, and thus should be considered socialised selves. She conceives of agency as self-willed action, demonstrable when nonhuman animals are 'trained' to do particular behaviours rather than others which requires an understanding of 'self' in relation to another (Irvine 2004a). Bob Carter and Nickie Charles (2013; 2018) argue that a more dynamic view of agency that depicts it as 'the constant accompaniment of material existence, the dynamic and relational outcome of the engagement with the world of all things, human and non-human' allows for the conceptualisation of nonhuman agency (2018, p.89). Carter and Charles draw on Archer to construct their theory of agency as separate to social action, as nonhuman animals' actions are often heavily curtailed by structural oppressions but this does not negate their capacity for agency. This, then, allows for the inclusion of nonhuman animals as agential beings, while also attending to the oppressive structures that constrain nonhuman lives:

> ...non-human animals are agential beings. They are entangled and
> enfolded in all sorts of relations with humans (many of which are

fatal for them) and thus will find that their agential conditions are modified involuntarily (sheep do not decide when they are to be slaughtered; chickens do not decide to live in cramped and insanitary battery cages; wolves and pheasants are unaware of the shooting season) and that their choices, when they are exercised, are already circumscribed (the caged chicken cannot walk freely and the pheasant cannot fly safely within the range of armed humans). (Carter & Charles 2018, p.92)

Cudworth (2005; 2011a; 2014) similarly appears to separate agency from social action, arguing that agency is socially constructed in relation to others, and not all perceived acts of resistance can necessarily be understood as agency. Giving the instance of a biting dog, she reasons that what may appear to be resistance to a particular situation on the part of the dog might actually be little more than an involuntary reaction to fear or pain — a reaction that may have deadly consequences for the dog in question (2011a). In theory this is a valid distinction, for instantaneous reactions to pain would appear to be differentiable from the unthinking habitual action Burkitt (2016) argues is an important aspect of agency. However, this leaves us in a place where we must decide what 'counts' as nonhuman animal agency when we cannot ask their intentions, and what can practically be observed as such by researchers. In the interests of trying to understand the interplay between anthroparchal structures and individual human and nonhuman agency, I have made the choice in this thesis to include observable nonhuman animal (inter)actions as exercises of agency — though not necessarily indicative of *capacity* for agency which is arguably unknowable due to the heavy constraint under which they live. This is not unproblematic, but I feel it is necessary in order to best capture experiences of constraint in everyday life and render nonhuman animals' lived realities 'seen' and meaningful — even if their intentions are not satisfactorily knowable. In the next section I will discuss the social construction of nonhuman animals that shapes their capacity for agency and demonstrate that these constructions have real material effects on their lives and human understandings of them. This will then provide a context for the social construction of human-companion animal relationships, as well as highlighting how the social construction of knowledge impacts on the framing of these entanglements.

2. Social construction of nonhuman animals

Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders (1996) state that '"[b]eing" an animal in modern societies may be less a matter of biology than it is an issue of human culture and consciousness' (p.9). In line with the discussion in the previous section, the positioning of nonhuman animals in society and the way humans interact with them is much more dependent on socially constructed understandings of nonhuman animals than any inherent biological basis. This position is echoed by Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart

(2014), who argue that human behaviour towards nonhuman animals is largely determined by, and determines, our understandings of their (dis)utility:

> We 'know' that chickens are 'useful' *because they are used,* as 'food'. We 'know' that rats are 'not useful' *because they are killed,* as 'vermin'; that is, discourse and practice mutually recall, reinforce and legitimate each other (p.16)

These understandings are shaped by the socially constructed knowledge of other animals, which reflect a dualistic conceptualisation of a human/nonhuman animal divide, as well as the discourse and commodification that positions nonhuman animals in particular roles. In this section I demonstrate how the mechanisms of social construction outlined above have been used to position and legitimate nonhuman animals as marginalised others at best, and objects for use at worst. By exploring how nonhuman animal scholars have used theoretical tools to critically examine the construction of knowledge and discourse, and structural oppression of other animals, I highlight the context and tools available to be drawn on to critically understand the navigation of human-pet relationships.

2.1 Power/knowledge and the human/nonhuman animal binary

In an anthroparchal society, human wants are generally privileged over the needs of nonhuman animals and the environment (Cudworth 2005; 2011). To facilitate this, humans maintain a strict (ideological) boundary between themselves and nonhuman animals that is both practically and discursively enacted (Cole & Stewart 2014; Dunayer 2001; Peggs 2013; Plumwood ; Taylor 2012). Lisa Kemmerer (2011) argues that the way humans theorise 'other' animals reflects our vested interests in relations with them:

> Many humans are interested in establishing and maintaining an "unbridgeable gap" between humans and "other" animals, some way of self-defining that justifies our sense of hierarchy in which we stand on top of all other species, excluding these "others" from the moral community, allowing us to exploit them. (pp.73-74)

So it is not just that human understandings of nonhuman animals shape and are shaped by the way we behave towards nonhuman animals, but also that we have a vested interest in maintaining those exploitative relations, and thus are more likely to support discourses that perpetuate them. Given this, we are far less likely to see research (especially research that reaches public discourse) that challenges generally accepted relations with nonhuman animals[5].

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5 In fact, Donald Griffin and Jane Goodall — two scholars who were instrumental in the recognition of nonhuman animal minds in ethnological research — both faced harsh condemnation for daring to challenge traditional scientific ways of thinking about nonhuman animals (Goodall 1993; Gould 2004).

Part of this boundary maintenance lies in the research process itself. As Alexandra Horowitz points out, the experiments from which we often draw our ideas around nonhuman animal capabilities are skewed by the very conditions in which the experiments take place:

> A closer look at the intelligence tests and the psychology experiments reveals a flaw: they are unintentionally rigged against dogs. That flaw is in the experimental method, not in the experimented dog. It has to do with the very presence of people— experimenters or owners. (Horowitz 2010, p.177).

Horowitz (2010) goes on to say these tests often involve conditions which are 'truly bizarre' for nonhuman animals— not just dogs but nonhuman animals more broadly — who are subject to this sort of intelligence testing. Jonathan Balcombe (2010) notes that humans 'have a patronizing tendency to measure other animals' intelligence against our own. We subject them to a sort of IQ test. Because these tests are devised by humans, they naturally contain human bias' (2010, p.32). Further to this, when nonhuman animals do perform well on these human-centric skills tests — such as birds who demonstrate tool use or primates who adopt an impressive sign language vocabulary — humans respond by shifting the boundary and no longer counting tool use or language as a significant marker of human/nonhuman animal difference (Taylor 2012).

It is also worth considering the abilities that are *not* highlighted as significant — unless they can be utilised for human gain. Alexandra Horowitz (2016) proposes that dogs may in fact be able to smell the passage of time. Goldfish are able to obtain a plethora of information about their surroundings by merely tasting the water in which they swim (Balcombe 2016). Chickens have highly specialised vision, able to hone in on multiple focal points and utilise each eye separately (Potts 2012). In short, if our society's parameters for testing intelligence were tailored around any of the aforementioned species, humans would in all likelihood be considered inferior. Therefore, our very notions of what "counts" as intelligence operates to reinforce the anthroparchal power structure in constructing nonhuman animals as less intelligent creatures who act solely on instinct (outside of the novelty reporting of 'clever animals' which arguably reinforces the lesser status of nonhuman animals by portraying 'clever animals' as an isolated and surprising occurrence). This is useful in terms of feeding discourses that enable nonhuman animal (ab)use, by denying nonhuman animals the thinking or feeling capacity that might make human treatment of them more overtly problematic. The social positioning of nonhuman animals in society, then, is a reflection of power/knowledge and human privilege, rather than any inherent quality of these beings. This highlights the importance of critically constructing research that challenges normative assumptions and anthroparchal privilege (something I return to later in this chapter and extensively in Chapter 4: Methodology).

The discourse surrounding nonhuman animals reinforces a human/nonhuman animal binary, normalising exploitation and harmful treatment of nonhuman animals by

minimising their suffering through language (Cole & Stewart 2014). Arran Stibbe (2001) argues that '[a]nimals are represented in language not only as different but also as inferior, the two conditions necessary for oppression' (p.150). Citing examples of everyday phrases and metaphors — such as 'not enough room to swing a cat' and 'stupid cow' — Stibbe draws a connection between relations of dominance and discourse, with entanglements involving the most extensive dominance (such as killing nonhuman animals to consume their flesh) associated with the most negative and/or violent discourses. Stibbe argues that linguistic devices employed by the meat industry construct nonhuman animal suffering as unimportant, such as framing birds' injuries as 'bird damage' (2001, p.155). A similar pattern was also noted by Hamilton and Taylor (2013) who found that slaughterhouse workers tended to use technical language that depicted the killing of nonhuman animals as 'routine and non-violent' (p.78), thus erasing the nonhuman animals involved by reducing them to food commodities (a point I will return to in the next section). This minimisation of nonhuman animals' experiences is also reflected in Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart's (2014) explanation of the 'sensibility' of nonhuman animal lives. They argue that nonhuman animals differ in the extent to which the material conditions of their existence are 'sensible' or knowable to humans, and the extent to which they are objectified for human use. Those nonhuman animals towards which humans may have affective ties — such as "pets" or fictional nonhuman animal characters — are more sensible. Nonhuman animals who are violently exploited — such as 'farmed' animals — are more likely to be 'non-sensible'. Nonhuman animal roles are not exclusively tied to species — citing the example of a rabbit, Cole and Stewart demonstrate that one species can occupy several material/discursive spaces, depending on whether they are to be used for companionship, scientific testing, entertainment, or meat, existing as fictionalised characters, or 'wild'. It is not the biology of a being that matters, but rather the shared meanings humans construct around them which determine how they will be interacted with, and whether their lives will be sensible (Cole and Stewart 2014). Thus the discursive framing of human relations with other animals convincingly highlights (anthropocentrically interpreted) positive entanglements, whilst disguising cruelty — effectively legitimating any use of nonhuman animals that serves human interests[6].

Given the significant influence of the discursive construction of nonhuman animals on their social positioning, several scholars argue that challenging problematic discourses is an important step to tackling nonhuman animal oppression (Cole & Stewart 2014; Dunayer 2001; Smith-Harris 2004). Tracy Smith-Harris (2004) states that while language alone cannot alter industrialised or individual (mis)treatment of nonhuman animals,

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[6] It should be noted here that legitimated (ab)uses of nonhuman animals tend to reflect privileged human groups in society, with tensions emerging when non-dominant groups use nonhuman animals in a way that is not legitimated by the dominant culture. See, for instance, the acceptance of eating chickens vs. rejection of cockfighting, a sport associated with marginalised lower classes (Herzog 2010).

using it in such a way as to render oppression visible is an important step towards necessary changes. For instance:

> ...euthanising companion animals because of overcrowding at a shelter sounds rather peaceful. Killing cats and dogs by lethal injection because no one wanted them sounds quite different. Eating pâté sounds refined, whereas eating the swollen liver of a force-fed goose sounds quite different. (Smith-Harris 2004, p.15)

This sentiment is also put forth by Joan Dunayer (2001) who recommends a revision of speciesist language, instead offering more truthful alternative such as 'pig flesh' instead of 'pork', 'oppressor' instead of 'dolphin trainer' (pp.192-193). Lisa Kemmerer (2006) calls this kind of resistance 'verbal activism' — a linguistically based challenge to the anti-nonhuman animal status quo. Echoing Smith-Harris (2004), Kemmerer argues that although linguistic change alone is not sufficient to challenge nonhuman animal oppression, it is an important step in highlighting and troubling the taken-for-granted human/nonhuman animal binary. Certainly the opposition to 'animal product' terminology being reappropriated for plant-based 'meats' 'cheeses' and 'mylks' indicates that language has the power to disrupt normative uses of nonhuman animals' bodies and labour (Gambert 2019). Even the use of the word 'nonhuman animal' serves to (re)position humans as animals, rather than beings held as superior to, and apart from, nature and nonhuman animals (Kemmerer 2006).

This section has demonstrated the social construction of nonhuman animals through the legitimation of 'truth' and knowledge, and the use of discourse to marginalise nonhuman animals' suffering. The works discussed importantly emphasise the strategically manufactured gap between the lived reality for many nonhuman animals, and what their lives are discursively represented to be. As some scholars have noted, discourse is not just a tool of oppression, but also a potential site of resistance within which the (ab)use of nonhuman animals can be highlighted and challenged. Given this, understanding the social construction of reality and the impact of this on our understanding of other animals demonstrates that the positioning of other animals is dependent on human use of them. Further to this, the (ab)use of other animals can be challenged to an extent through the construction of knowledge and language that surrounds them (this theme will be further explored in Chapter 4: Methodology). Another key site of nonhuman animal scholarship is that which considers the impact of broader structures, such as capitalism and state power, on the lives of nonhuman animals. These works, which I discuss in the following section, are significant in demonstrating the interplay between structure and agency that perpetuates oppressive human-nonhuman animal relations and thus provide useful insights that can further the study of human-companion animal relationships.

2.2 Structural oppression of nonhuman animals

While the previous discussion of discourse provides insight into some of the mechanisms through which such exploitation is normalised and invisibilised, an exploration of power relations between humans and nonhuman animals sheds still more light on this problematic pattern of relating. Anthroparchy is a system of dominance that intersects with other structural forces. While not all nonhuman animal scholars exploring the systematic oppression of nonhuman animals explicitly link this to the anthroparchal system, the influence of capitalism and legitimated (human) power are strong themes in critical nonhuman animal research.

Mary Murray (2011) states that capitalism was founded 'on the back of hooves, paws and claws' (p.88), highlighting society's reliance on the exploited labour of nonhuman animals that is enabled by, and enables the continuation of speciesist relations. Thus the constitution of nonhuman animals as slaves is deeply embedded into the fabric of society (Murray 2011; see also Spiegel 1997). David Nibert (2013) similarly links the extreme exploitation of nonhuman animals to the rise of capitalism, arguing that the process of 'domesecration' (as opposed to the myth of domestication) entails the purposive breeding and violent oppression of nonhuman animals, creating the "docile" workers that aid capitalist progress. This process of (re)creating sentient beings as commodities — defined by Marx (1974) as 'an external object, a thing whose qualities enable it, in one way or another, to satisfy human wants' (p.1) — requires that nonhuman animals be (re)presented as goods for sale, their subjective experiences discursively devalued. Bob Torres argues that this process of commodification has transformed nonhuman animals into 'superexploited living commodities' who are both producers of commodities, and commodities themselves (2007, p. 39). Nonhuman animals are therefore just a means to capitalist ends:

> Their particularity, their interests in not suffering, their desires to be free and to live as beings in the world are all subjugated — *en masse* — to the productive ends of capital (Torres 2007, p. 58).

Capitalism, then, has 'deepened and worsened our domination over animals and the natural world' (Torres 2007, p.3).

Foucauldian understandings of power and domination have been utilised by nonhuman animal scholars to explain the hidden but significant exercises of human power over other animals in society (see for instance Collard 2012; Coppin 2003; Novel 2005; Palmer 2001, Shukin 2009; Taylor 2013; Wadiwel 2016; 2015). As discussed earlier, for Foucault (1980) power is largely established and perpetuated through discourse, with power relationships shaping "discourses of truth" that delineate what is seen as sensible or thinkable from that which is nonsensible. Now I would like to turn to the question of domination, rather than discourse. Foucault's conceptualisation of power is embedded in relationships, rather than

something that is possessed by individuals or a group. In this context power is productive — shaping and creating knowledge, practices and subjects, as well as resistance. Foucault's early focus on the "microphysics" of power struggles to grapple with structural power relations, particularly domination (Palmer 2001). However, Clare Palmer asserts that Foucault's later work introduces the idea of a "power spectrum" in which he distinguished "power relations in general" from relationships of domination and governmentality (Palmer 2001). These distinctions are dependent on the persistence and reversibility of relationships, and the extent to which those who are subject to power are able to act contrarily. Palmer argues that human-nonhuman animal relations pose a challenge for Foucault's power spectrum, questioning, '[s]hould they be considered as falling into the unstable, reversible category of "power relations in general," do they fall under the pastoral regimes of governmentality, or are they relationships of domination?' (2001, p.350). She further states that the domination of nonhuman animals by humans is so extreme and irreversible it can only be conceived of as physically determined domination, in which nonhuman animals are not even afforded the extreme options of escape through death (or death of their captor). This power dynamic 'would "fall off" the domination end of the spectrum of power relation' (Palmer 2001, p.350) indicating a need to develop further our frameworks for understanding domination in human-nonhuman animal entanglements.

Other scholars have argued that there is indeed evidence of nonhuman animal resistance to their oppression, though this isn't necessarily immediately apparent or visibilised (Hribal 2010; Wadiwel 2016). While Hribal's understanding of nonhuman animal resistance is much more immediate — evident in nonhuman animals' overt resistance to their captivity through violent overthrow of their captors (See chapter 6: Challenging Human-Companion Animal Relations for further discussion), Dinesh Wadiwel again draws on Foucault to highlight the occurrences of power and resistance in everyday human-nonhuman animal entanglements. Wadiwel (2016) argues that we can glean insight into nonhuman animal resistance through developments in tools of control. Building on a Foucauldian understanding of resistance as 'always in relation to power', Wadiwel argues that there is scope to understand resistance as 'engaging 'agentially' within relations of power without having to demonstrate that those who resist possess capabilities worthy of moral recognition (language, reason, capability for suffering and so on)'[7] (Wadiwel 2016, p.201). Instead of asking whether fishes suffer (and thus arguing for a lessening of suffering), Wadiwel poses the question of whether fishes resist

> The practice in recreational fishing of 'playing' the fish once they are
> hooked — prolonging the period of time that the fish is on the hook so
> that they swim themselves to exhaustion trying to get away —

[7] . This then moves away from classic approaches to nonhuman animal advocacy based on claims to moral recognition, such as Singer's utilitarian conceptualisation of suffering, Regan's focus on the moral worth of nonhuman animals as 'subjects of a life' and Nussbaum's capabilities approach that argues for a recognition of nonhuman animal needs (Wadiwel 2016).

illustrates the extent to which fish resistance, or at least on understanding of fish resistance, as comprising acts of insubordination against human domination, is conceptually an important component of fishing. (Wadiwel 2016, p.208)

Further, rather than be dragged into an un-provable discussion of whether fishes are 'actually' resisting in these instances, Wadiwel argues that:

> …it is possible to imagine resistance if we focus on the instrumentation of violence used to dominate animals, and the way in which these apparatuses effectively work against the active resistance of animals, even if, from the outside, these relations appear to involve no contest or be unilaterally one-sided in character. (2016, p.210)

These works, which each focus on a slightly different area of human-nonhuman animal entanglement, converge on the themes of knowledge and structural power. They highlight the politics of representation by demonstrating the cruelty that is uncovered when enquiries into human-nonhuman animal relations are framed differently, and emphasise the systemic domination that oppresses nonhuman animals and enables violent relations with them. These power dynamics fit within Cudworth's (2005) complex systems approach to dominance, in which anthroparchy is seen to intersect with other systems of domination, such as capitalism, to shape social relations. A sociological framing which posits the interplay between structure and agency as constitutive of the social world is useful in untangling how these broader structural forces shape and are shaped by human and nonhuman animal agency. However there is a tension here, as theoretical approaches that focus on structural oppression tend to favour macro-theorising and analysis of large-scale systems and processes, which do not lend themselves to a meaningful consideration of the micro. Conversely, as I demonstrate in the discussion below, the literature focussed on human-companion animal relationships tends to neglect structural forces, instead focussing more heavily on the micro level favoured by symbolic interactionists. This, then, exposes a weakness in much of the pet studies field that sees empirical works framed in such a way as to render the power asymmetries in these entanglements largely invisible — effectively contributing to, rather than challenging, the academic normalisation of nonhuman animal 'use' as companions. This thesis makes attempts to bridge this gap by drawing connections between the micro-interactions observed and the structural (anthroparchal) context in which they occur, however there is still more work to be done here.

3. Social construction of pets

As discussed above "pets" are a socially constructed, rather than naturally occurring, category assigned to particular nonhuman animals. While pets are arguably more

'sensible' and likely to be granted subjectivity than nonhuman animals in other roles (Cole & Stewart 2014), they are still objectified and exploited for their companionship. Interestingly, human-companion animal relationships are discursively constructed in such a way that this objectification is erased — both in society and, often, in academic literature. This is, in part, facilitated by discourses that promote a narrative of 'co-evolution', in which human-pet relationships are naturalised as occurring out of mutual reciprocity (usually dogs 'choosing' to enter into relationships with humans), completely negating the domination of other species by exploitative humans. In this section I begin by discussing the discursive framing of these relationships before unpacking the prevalent themes in academic literature around human-companion animal relationships, which I argue are heavily depoliticised. I finish with an overview of critical endeavours in the field, which I term 'critical pet studies', in order to highlight the politicised arguments that I am arguing should frame empirical studies of human-pet relationships.

3.1 Discursive construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities

According to Erica Fudge (2008), human-companion animal relationships are discursively legitimated through dual contradictory narratives that hide problematic aspects of pet ownership from sight. These conflicting narratives stipulate that 1) humans have a "natural mastery" over other animals, and it is therefore in a companion animal's instinct to submit to human dominance; and 2) companion animals genuinely love "their" humans and would choose to be "owned" (Fudge 2008). The former assumes that there is a natural (rather than social) legitimisation of pet ownership and the inherent power inequality that goes with it, but raises the question, if pets don't love us, why do we love them? (Fudge 2008). The latter places a 'veil of affection' between humans and the domination inherent in pet ownership, ignoring, for example, the exploitation of breeding and coercion of training techniques and instead painting the relationship as mutually chosen and enjoyed by all parties (Fudge 2008; Tuan 1984). Fudge cites the book *Lassie Come-home* as an example of such contradictory narratives. The book follows the journey of Lassie, a dog who was sold by her family to an aristocrat to settle a debt and who continually escapes her new owner's estate to reunite with her former master. Fudge argues that the 'assertion of canine desire transforms the relationship between the dog and the humans around her in that it ensures that we recognize the mutuality of, rather than the dominance inherent in, that relationship' (Fudge 2008, p.27). However, the hyphen in the title indicates that Come-home is a name and indicative of Lassie's supposed nature, as she is later described as a 'come-homer'— a creature who instinctively 'comes home', rather than makes a conscious choice about her preferred family (Fudge 2008, p.28). Such contradictory narratives are also evident in current human-companion animal relationships and require a careful curation to ensure that neither narrative ever appears in conflict with the other. Yi Fu Tuan (1984) explains that this contradiction can

be attributed to a human tendency towards dissociating domination from the realms of 'pleasure, play, and art' (p.4). This is made easier still by our delight in 'aesthetic activities', mitigated by affection which "softens" domination:

> How can we be said to abuse a plant when we take such pleasure in it, even if part of the pleasure lies in twisting the stem into the shape of an antelope? Is it cruelty to breed a variety of goldfish with dysfunctional bulging eyes if such fish are well cared for and fetch a high price? Was it right for a lady of eighteenth-century England to keep a black boy as a pet? She thought so, for did she not dress the boy in finery and allow him special privileges? Of course, some of us are now inclined to disagree, arguing that the boy's dignity was compromised by his pet status and even by his mistress's acts of favour and indulgence. (Tuan 1984, p.4-5)

As will be seen in the discussion that follows, humans often take great pleasure in their relationships and activities with companion animals. To enable this, discourses surrounding pets must convincingly normalise ownership, and distance beloved companions from any of the problematic aspects of these entanglements (e.g. breeding, relinquishment, non-medical euthanasia). An anthropocentric view of companion animals is cultivated from a young age. Pets are discursively constructed as cute, soft, cuddly and vulnerable, with the sale of stuffed toy versions of common "pet" species (such as dogs and cats), interactive toys and care-centric games (such as tamagotchis and Nintendogs) (Cole & Stewart 2014). This marketing becomes increasingly gendered as the target age of the product increases, with the more nurture-intensive 'pets' — for example nintendogs which require constant care such as feeding, bathing and playing— being targeted at a feminine market, simultaneously reinforcing an infantilised construction of pets as vulnerable, and women as caretakers (Cole & Stewart 2014).

Brett Mills (2016; 2017) argues that television plays an important role in creating and disseminating normative ideas around pets and petkeeping. Citing the example of the UK TV show *Supervet,* Mills (2016) found that it consistently reinforced the object status of "other" animals by depicting veterinary medicine as a service primarily for humans that, 'might see the animal as the patient, but it places the human as the ultimate beneficiary of treatment' (p.253). Clare Molloy (2011a) draws connections between media and breed fetishisation, citing the example of *101 Dalmations*, a movie that inspired people procure Dalmatian puppies and then abandon them at an alarming rate when they were found to be more than their owners bargained for. Molloy argues that this situation was encouraged by broader discourses in which pet ownership and disposability are normalised, and breed 'types' are constructed — without the ideal Dalmation construct largely perpetuated by the American Kennel Club, Disney would have nothing to fetishise to begin with. The common theme in these arguments is that the discursive construction of pets supports human-companion animal relationships that are human-centric, and fetishises particular nonhuman animals as helpless, desirable commodities and,

importantly, low maintenance. In line with this, a study by King et al (2009) found that participants considered the ideal Australian companion dog to be friendly, obedient, healthy, fully housetrained, safe with children, medium-sized, short-haired and desexed. These expectations are problematic when applied to living nonhuman animals who might challenge the expected role and characteristics associated with 'pets' (Collard 2014) and are often relinquished or euthanised as a result (Carter & Taylor 2017; Lambert et al 2015; Neidhart & Boyd 2002; Pierce 2016). Nonhuman animals who fail to meet behavioural expectations may be denied pet status, instead finding themselves labelled as 'feral', a role that is far less valued in Australian society (Alberthsen et al 2016; Van Patter & Hovorka 2018; Probyn-Rapsey 2016).

Media representations of nonhuman animals have also been linked to breed stigma for so-called "dangerous dogs" (Molloy 2011a, 2011b; Patronek et al 2000; Twining et al 2010). Twining et al (2010) found that stigma around breeds constructed as "dangerous" (particularly 'pit bulls'[8]) was detrimental for owners of these dogs who had to manage negative responses from friends, family and strangers in public:

> …there's some [people] in our family that have said, "Oh their brain will swell up and they'll bite you!" And I [have] said, "Go read something before you come out with that stuff to me! Don't sit there and give me some rumors that… their jaws lock. They don't lock; they don't ratchet shut. Don't tell me this stuff. Go read facts before you bother me with this." And that normally shuts them up. (p.48)

The negative portrayal as a "dangerous" breed is also (and perhaps more importantly) dangerous for the dogs affected. Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) or Dangerous Dog Acts have been adopted in numerous countries and provide official legislative mechanism to restrict ownership and freedoms for "dangerous" breeds, and in some instances even requiring that vilified dogs be killed (Webster & Farnworth 2018). Stigmatised breeds also face blame and scrutiny other dogs do not. For instance, in a study of the comments on youtube videos depicting dog bite scenarios, Owczarczak-Garstecka et al (2018) found that for all recognised breeds of dogs *except 'pit bulls'* commenters would direct the blame for the attack at the humans involved (either victims or owners). But for videos involving pit bull type dogs, the blame was often shifted to the dog (Owczarczak-Garstecka et al 2018). This willingness to believe that certain dogs are 'bad' or more likely to attack makes it far easier for the media to create an atmosphere of risk around dogs that have particular characteristics. A study of dog bite reporting found that 'dangerous' breeds are often implicated in attacks even when incident reports state that the attack was perpetrated by a visibly different dog who could not be mistaken for a pit bull (Patronek et al 2013). Even reporting of dog bites in medical literature has been found to catastrophise dog bites and

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[8] Pit Bull terriers are an interesting example of the power of social construction, given that 'pit bull' is not one breed but rather refers to a collection of characteristics that are now assigned a stigmatised identity (Arluke et al 2018).

demonise particular breeds of dogs, such as Rottweilers, Pit Bulls and German Shepherds who were depicted as 'natural killers' (Arluke et al 2018). Importantly, a study of Australian dog bite fatalities in a two decade period found that none of the attacks were perpetrated by a Pit Bull (Collier 2006) and a review of dog bites incidences post BSL introduction in Spain found that legislative discrimination of particular breeds had no discernible impact on bite statistics (Mora et al 2018). Furthermore research has shown that most of the contributing factors to dog bite incidences are human created (Patronek et al 2013). The vilification of 'dangerous dogs' demonstrates the power of discourse to create nonhuman animals in particular ways that justifies their treatment. Regardless of whether the discrimination against particular breeds is supported by research, 'dangerous' dogs are vilified, restricted, stigmatised and euthanised — and many other dogs along with them, given that the people have generally been shown to be inept at identifying dogs that fit the legislative description (Webster & Farnworth 2018). This discussion then indicates that the power/knowledge that shapes relations with nonhuman animals generally is no less applicable to companion animals. This is a significant point as I now turn to the common themes explored by social science studies of companion animals which largely ignore this anthroparchal context, instead focussing on a micro level of study that frames human-pet relationships as positive, familial, and largely unproblematic.

3.2 Symbolic Interaction and Pets

As discussed above the symbolic interactionist framework has laid the foundation for sociologists interested in human-nonhuman animal interactions to build upon. Notable works by Clinton Sanders (1990, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006a, b), Leslie Irvine (2004a, 2008, 2013) and Janet and Steven Alger (1999, 2003) have applied a symbolic interactionist lens to analyse the complex interactions between humans and companion animals. For instance, Sanders argues that dogs have 'at least a rudimentary ability to construct meaning' (1999, p.5) and, further to this, that through our interactions with them humans give them the social status of 'persons'. A nonhuman animal's personhood arises out of interaction, as human owners ascribe particular identity markers (things that mark someone as 'person' e.g., naming [Taylor 2007]), and engage in interaction rituals with their companion animals (Sanders 2003) that depend on each party being able to meaningfully communicate with the other. Irvine builds on this work, further arguing that nonhuman animals (particularly dogs and cats) possess agency, coherence, affectivity and a sense of history that together constitute a "core self". These theories emerge from Goffman's framework which allows for not just the spoken language humans direct towards their "pets" to be taken into account, but the behaviours of the nonhuman animals themselves. This then creates space to consider, and theorise, the reciprocity of the relationship, and the participation of nonhuman animals in both the

relationships and construction of human selfhood, (re)creating them as subjects, rather than mere objects[9].

However it is in the work of Alger and Alger (1999, 2003) that the significant contribution of symbolic interaction to the study of nonhuman animals really comes to light. In their study of cats at a free-roaming shelter in America, Alger & Alger document not only human-cat interactions, but also the relations between cats, and between cats and the environment within which they dwell. Through paying attention to "bodily activity" they captured complex communications between the cats, through which they negotiated norms and social roles that came from, and were enforced by the cats rather than human actors.   Such findings, according to Alger and Alger (2003a), demonstrate the necessity of challenging Mead's legacy of focussing on human language as the sole means of participation of the social world, arguing that:

> The ability to take the role of the other, define situations, produce shared meanings, and transform objects in to meaningful symbols... is not founded on language. As a consequence of such findings, it will be necessary for sociologists to rethink the whole connection between language and interaction in relation to humans. (p.206)

The influence of symbolic interaction is clearly visible in the discussion that follows, with the bulk of social scientific studies of human-pet relationships emphasising the shared meanings, roles and interactions between owners and animal companions. However what these works also show is a divide between empirical and theoretical or abstract research concerning companion animals, in which critical understandings of pets tend to remain confined to those works that are more removed from the embodied experience of human-pet relationships. This, then, demonstrates that there is a need for scholars to bring together critical understandings of human-companion animal relationships, and empirical research on them, in order to arrive at a critical pet studies that actively advocates for nonhuman animals and resists anthropocentric portrayals of the relationship.

3.3 Pets as minded beings

Scholars studying human-companion animal relationships have extended our understanding of nonhuman animals to be not just a "lively" focus for human affections, but minded beings capable of returning those affections (Alger & Alger 2003; Arluke & Sanders 1996; Birke & Thompson 2018; Cudworth 2011b; Franklin 2006; 2007; Irvine 2004a; 2008a; 2013; Sanders 1999). As Sanders (1999 p.3) highlighted, most people working and living with dogs found them to be 'thoughtful, reciprocating, emotional beings with uniquely individual tastes and personalities'. The expansion of symbolic

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[9] Though there are certainly examples of the contrary, in which symbolic interactionist studies of pets have reinforced their construction as objects, albeit 'interactive objects', rather than interactants in their own right (see Hickrod & Schmitt 1982)

interactionist approaches to include non-verbal communication allows for the consideration of nonhuman animals' capacity for selfhood (Irvine 2008a), directly challenging Mead's understanding of nonhuman animals as lacking the means of meaningful participation in the social world.

Leslie Irvine (2004a; 2008a) has argued that nonhuman animals, particularly dogs and cats, have a "core self'" evidenced through a sense of agency, coherence, affectivity and self-history that is pre-verbal. Drawing on ethnographic and autoethnographic data obtained through participant observation at a nonhuman animal shelter and reflections on her own experiences with companion animal interaction, Irvine demonstrates that these four senses of self are evident in nonhuman animals' interactions with humans (2004a). Agency, in the sense of self-willed action, is demonstrated by a dog whose undesirable jumping behaviour can be modified by human minders giving attention only to more desirable behaviours (four paws on the floor, no barking). The success of this technique (training the dog not to jump on humans) highlights that the dogs behaviour was shaped by the reactions of others — demonstrating an understanding of the distinction between self and other and the control to develop a more desirable self (Irvine 2004a). Coherency — the understanding of the self as a contained vessel within which agency is situated, can be seen in the hide and seek behaviours of cats, demonstrating that they recognise that they are a physical self, as well as the fact that there are external circumstances that necessitate the hiding behaviour (there is a reason to hide) (Alger & Alger 2003; Irvine 2004a). Observable bonds between nonhuman animals indicate that nonhuman animals possess a capacity for affectivity, or the ability to experience emotions. Irvine describes the experiences of her own cats:

> I have seen cats display grief. Two of my cats, a male and a female, formed a very close bond. They slept together, ate and played together, and groomed each other. When the male had to be euthanized, his companion went through a distinct period of grieving. Indeed, her sadness started before her friend died, when he gradually became withdrawn and disinterested. When the male was gone, the female searched their favourite places for him and stopped eating for a few days. She did not become "herself" again until we moved into a new house. (2004a, p.13).

Julie Ann Smith (2007) agrees that nonhuman animals (specifically rabbits) are aware of, and respond to the deaths of their companions, however humans are often locked out of nonhuman animals' experiences and thus can't truly understand the depth or nature of their emotions. Nevertheless, it is accepted by both researchers that nonhuman animals do experience emotions, and those studying them should assume as much (Irvine 2004a; Smith 2007).

Through their interactions with humans, we can also glean insight into what Irvine calls "vitality affects" — that is, characteristics of a nonhuman animal's "self" such as cheerful,

hyper, sweet etc. This was well highlighted by Alger & Alger (2003) who used ethnography to explore the social rules and relationships negotiated between cats in a free-roaming cat shelter. The possession of self-history is evident, Irvine argues, in the demonstration of 'place-memory' such as when a generally affectionate pet 'hisses and scratches the vet's offending hand' (Irvine 2004a, p.14). This then indicates a memory of what has happened to them in the past. Irvine's approach is significant in moving beyond arguments that companion animals are significant to their human owners, instead focussing on the development of self and capacity for interaction that renders nonhuman animals minded beings capable of participating meaningfully in the social world.

While these interpretations of nonhuman animal capacity for selfhood run the risk of being dismissed as anthropomorphism[10], Horowitz & Bekoff (2007) argue that there is a difference between erroneous or baseless anthropomorphism and that which is supported (to the greatest extent possible) by ethological research. While critics of anthropomorphism tend to conflate the two as similarly unreliable, several scholars argue that embracing a form of "critical anthropomorphism" can be useful in moving towards better understanding of nonhuman companions (Burghardt 2007; Fudge 2008; Horowitz 2010; Horowitz & Bekoff 2007; Irvine 2004a; 2004b). Conversely, if scholars were to avoid anthropomorphising to evade criticisms, nonhuman animals would likely disappear from view, thus Erica Fudge (2008) argues that if educated guesses are the best we can manage, then that is what we should do. Nonhuman animal mindedness is assumed in many scholarly explorations of human-companion animal relationship and is a necessary precursor to the framing of nonhuman animals as friends and/or family. These affective roles will be discussed in the following section.

3.4 Pets as friends, family, lifesavers & lifechangers

In 1982, Hickrod & Schmitt argued that the pet is a 'keyed' family member, that is a "pretend" family member of sorts that must be created as such by a human actor who turns the pet into an 'interactional object' (p.61). With the aid of 'tie signs' that communicate the nonhuman animal's petness, such as leashes and signs of affection, this construction signals the transformation of the nonhuman animal to "pet" to other humans who then interact accordingly. Since then, the inclusion of pets in the household and in the family unit has increased, with companion animals being increasingly considered friends or family members in their own right (Blichfeldt & Sakacova 2018; Charles 2014; Charles & Davis 2008; Fox 2006; Franklin 2007; Irvine & Cilia 2017; Power 2008; Shir-Vertesh 2012; Townley 2010, 2017). The pet-as-family is visible in two main areas: 1) in the labelling and ascription of familial roles to animal companions, and 2) in familial 'doings' — that is the performance of interactions associated with family.

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[10] projecting human characteristics onto nonhuman animals

The use of labels to define companion animals as family is not uncommon — increasingly owners refer to themselves as "parents", "mum", or "dad", and their pets as "fur babies", "kids" or "children" (Charles 2016; Greenebaum 2004; Miller 2001; Shir-Vertesh 2012). These labels signal a particular kind of valuing and interaction that take place with the nonhuman animals in question, and these are contingent on owners' own approaches to pet relationships. For instance, Gary Varner (2002, p.463) differentiates between 'mere pets' who may experience little contact with their owner and limited inclusion in the household and 'domesticated partners' who enjoy a close relationship with their humans have their mental and physical faculties adequately exercised. David Blouin (2013) argues that this differentiation in the construction (and treatment) of pets depends on whether owners have a dominionistic, humanistic or protectionistic approach to human-companion animal relationships. While humanistic and protectionistic owners are both associated with more intimate relationships with their companions than dominionistic owners (who view pets as of lesser importance), they differ significantly in focus. Humanistic owners are the most likely to spoil their pets and refer to them as 'children', however their focus is largely on what the relationship means for *them* and their care does not extend to other animals, only their 'owned' pet (Blouin 2013, p.282-283). So while pets owned by humanistic owners are more likely to visit the groomer and be showered with gifts, their owners are also more likely to delay euthanasia of suffering nonhuman animals not for the nonhuman animals' good, but because the humans will suffer without their companion (Blouin 2013). Protectionistic owners, on the other hand, value their nonhuman animals *and nonhuman animals generally,* tending to subscribe to nonhuman animal rights ideologies and viewing nonhuman animals' needs as different, but of equal importance to humans' needs (Blouin 2013, pp.287-288). Blouin argues that because of this focus on nonhuman animals' needs (rather than treating pets as if they were human children), it often appears that there is more distance between protectionistic owners and their pets than humanistic owners and their furry children. But protectionistic owners were generally making decisions that were in (what they perceived to be) the nonhuman animals' best interests, and were consciously avoiding privileging their human interests over those of their pets. Blouin's work, though it falls short of critiquing pet ownerships generally, offers a valuable contribution to this discussion in highlighting that inclusion of nonhuman animals as family (and what this looks like) is heavily dependent on owner's navigation of the relationship. This dependence on owners to set the narrative of human-companion animal relationships also means that nonhuman animals' roles in the family can shift depending on human dynamics, with new relationships/people in the household, divorce, children and death associated with a change in companion animals' role or value — for instance, dogs who were once "children" are considered no longer valued/necessary once human children are added to the household (Blouin 2013; Shir-Vertesh 2012). Most of the literature detailed in the remainder of this section does not differentiate between anthropocentric and nonhuman animal centric approaches to the construction of pets as family, nor does it consider the broader ramifications of these constructions. However the exploration of the active negotiation of familial relations on a micro level does provide

insight into the ways in which human and nonhuman animals engage in "familial doings", and demonstrates that nonhuman animals can be active participants in family life.

Once nonhuman animals have been categorised as pets, owners can enrol them in "familial doings", that is everyday ways of relating that are associated with being part of a family. Oftentimes, though these familial doings are framed as mutually performed, they could well be human enactments of family — performed in relation to pets, but not necessarily *with* them. For instance, Arluke & Sanders (1996) describe the way owners construct their pets as persons by 'speaking for' them at the vet — voicing what they think their nonhuman animals might communicate if they spoke using human language:

> [The client] has brought in a mellow male shepherd—Casey—and is concerned that he is limping on his left front leg. She does a bit of "speaking for" in the most typical manner: "He says, I don't like it here. I want to go home." She also expresses her estimates of dog's perceptual experience. "His eyes are getting cloudy. I don't think he sees the way he used to. Well, he can see cookie when it gets dropped on the floor." (p.72)

Speaking for can be used to construct pets as valued persons, as well as providing a way for owners to build empathy with their companions in trying to imagine experiences from their perspective (Arluke & Sanders 1996). It is also performative — in the example above, the owner is demonstrating their intimate knowledge of their pet for the vet, and speaking for is also used to excuse perceived owner failings (such as poor grooming) or to make amends for poor behaviour (Arluke & Sanders 1996; Sanders 1990). Pets may also be assigned roles within the family, for instance a participant in Patricia K. Anderson's (2003) study stated that their parrot played a key role in 'mate selection' for her daughter:

> When our daughter was in college and beginning to date seriously, the young man had to pass the 'Freddi' [macaw] test. He didn't know it of course. If the bird didn't like him and he didn't show even a possibility of liking the bird he was a washout. When I came home one day to hear our present son-in-law cooing to Freddi while [my daughter] was purportedly in the bathroom (but listening to the interaction) I knew he was the one. (p.407)

Again this reinforces pets as valued persons, whose perspective (or character judgment) is respected. Cudworth (2011a) and Irvine (2013) both examined the self-sacrifices owners made, which demonstrated their valuing of companion animals over their own preferences. In Cudworth's study, owners who were highly nonhuman animal focussed reported having changed their lives significantly in order to accommodate their non-human companions (2011a). These changes included upgrading to a larger car, reducing work hours to spend more time with their dog, refusing to go out or on holidays if dogs are not also welcome, and a general acceptance of mess and destruction in their homes (Cudworth 2011a). For marginalised groups, such as homeless humans with pets,

companion animals were even more than family, they were 'lifesavers' (Irvine 2013). Participants in Irvine's study reported that their pets had forced them to turn their lives around or keep going when things got tough, because they had someone else to keep going for. Again, in these examples participants put their nonhuman animals first, ensuring that their food and medical needs were taken care of before human participants took care of themselves (Irvine 2013). In these instances, companion animals were constructed as family (or even more valued 'lifesavers') through sacrifices made for them.

Other scholars have focussed on the mutual construction of human and nonhuman animals as companions through negotiated everyday relations. Donna Haraway (2003) describes the mutual relationship between human and nonhuman companions as a process of 'becoming with', in which parties mutually construct each other as companion species through the intimate negotiation of everyday life. 'Becoming with' encompasses things like mutual play and touch emphasised by other scholars (Sanders 1999), as well as a shared history and emergence as something other than self-contained individuals, each having been shaped by the other. For more-than-human geographers Emma Power (2008) and Rebekah Fox (2006; 2018), this building of relationships through everyday interactions is strongly connected to the home space. Power (2008) argues that the home setting is integral to the creation of familial relationships with companion animals, offering a vastly different environment than public space in which nonhuman species endure far more restricted freedoms. This means that within the home, human owners are able to construct their relationships in ways that challenge broader societal anthropocentrism and construction of nonhuman animals as objects, granting nonhuman animals more freedoms and embracing shared activities. Citing the example of a human participant and their dog sharing a daily routine of stacking the dishwasher together, Power states that everyday interactions play a significant role in the valuation of nonhuman companions as 'not just 'little hairy people' that needed to fit within existing routines, but instead participants' plans and activities were altered and extended to incorporate the needs, preferences and pleasures of dogs' (p.549). In these moments, the dogs in Power's study actively contribute to defining their role in the family as demonstrations of preferences and mutual interaction mark them as individuals with whom humans can develop a significant bond. Fox (2006; 2018) similarly argues that the 'lived intersubjectivity' that is multispecies companionate relationships within the home allows human owners to embrace a post-humanist transcendence of boundaries to embrace nonhuman animals as persons. For Julie Ann Smith (2003), it is not mere co-existence within a household that facilitates the construction of strong familial bonds with nonhuman companions, but an understanding of how nonhuman animals might experience the home space. Smith gained an understanding of 'rabbit space' through observing her free-roaming rabbits and consequently shaped her home in a manner that suited the rabbits' preferences. Each of these examples indicates not just a different approach to sharing multi-species houses, but also a link between these everyday pattens of relating and the creation and maintenance of familial relations with other animals.

Outside of the home, this spatial navigation is just as important to the construction of pets as kin. Humans and their animal companions (primarily dogs in public space) form a joint public identity that has the potential to improve or degrade the relationship depending on the feedback received by others in the public space (Greenebaum 2004; Sanders 1990). This joint identity shapes both human and animal companions, as owners are more likely to engage in "responsible owner" behaviours such as picking up excrement (Gross 2015; Jackson 2012) when they are being observed, and pets are held to a higher standard of behaviour than in the home (Power 2008; Sanders 1990). Jessica Greenebaum (2004) found that owners who regularly attended "yappy hour" — an event at a bakery for dogs — tended to emphasise how their relationships with companion animals were different to the less intimate relationships other owners might have with their pets. Greenebaum argued that owners who frequented Fido's bakery thought of their dogs as 'children', and given the dog-centric setting were encouraged to 'perform' their entanglements in ways that emphasised this familial intimacy. This negotiation becomes more challenging when companion animals don't support their owners performance of socially acceptable behaviour. When animal companions do not conform to behavioural expectations in public, their owners must engage in excusing tactics on their pet's behalf, lest the poor behaviour reflect poorly on them (Sanders 1990). Where undesirable behaviour continues over a long period of time, owners may seek to distance themselves from their companions resulting in surrender, rehoming or euthanasia and thus demonstrating the tentative hold nonhuman animals may have on their "privileged" position (Sanders 1990). So while owners may consider their pets to be family or kin, this framing of the relationship is subject to change (Shir-Vertesh 2012) and pressured by a broader anthroparchal context in which regulations and social norms require nonhuman animals to be heavily controlled in public (Fox 2018; Wadiwel 2015). These norms dictate where nonhuman animals can go and how they must behave in the scarce nonhuman animal accessible places, with breaches of this acceptable behaviour posing a threat to familial bonds between owners and pets (Fox 2017; Sanders 1990; Wadiwel 2015).

These works importantly highlight the inherent value of companion animals to their human owners, and the mutually constructed nature of these relationships. However, empirical works focussed on these entanglements fall short of explicitly critiquing pet ownership and pet displacement (though some, such as Fox [2018] do highlight the asymmetrical power dynamics inherent in these entanglements). This oversight is due in large part to the anthropocentric slant in research around human-companion animal entanglements, which sees the human benefits and understandings of relationships prized above all else. In the next section I will discuss this trend, highlighting that a large portion of the literature focuses almost exclusively on human-centric understandings of companion animal relationships.

Pets as beneficial for humans

In both academic and grey literature pet ownership is commonly linked to physical, social and psychological benefits for humans. This theme is significant to the social construction of companion animals in two ways: firstly it perpetuates the idea that animal companions exist to benefit human owners, so nonhuman animals are not inherently valuable but rather are valued only insofar as they produce positive outcomes for their owners; secondly it emphasises companion animals as objects, some*thing* that can be prescribed to 'fix' a problem or ailment and leaves little room for their subjectivity. In this section I will outline some of the key works that discuss companion animals in such a way, arguing that when we are wholly focussed on how nonhuman animals can benefit humans, we neglect to ask what benefits pet ownership has for the nonhuman animals implicated in this (if any).

Early works in the 1980s and 1990s have highlighted links between positive health outcomes and pet ownership, including better recovery outcomes from heart attacks (Freidmann et al 1980), less doctor visits (Siegel 1990) and increased exercise activity (Beck & Katcher 1996; Raina et al 1999). These findings have been widely cited in current academic and grey literature (e.g. HABRI 'The Pet Effect' n.d.; Pet Positives 'General Health' n.d.), however more recent studies have produced mixed findings that trouble the positive linking between pet ownership and physical health (Bradshaw 2017; Mein & Grant 2018). Links between pet ownership and increased exercise activity have been consistently supported by data (Mein & Grant 2018), although this increased activity is not necessarily linked with physical benefits to blood pressure or cardiovascular health (Richards et al 2017). Current research continues to support contradictory arguments that pets have either a positive or no/negative impacts on human health but, significantly, this confusion does not seem to impact significantly on pet-positive public discourse. Research conducted by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) indicates that 97% of physicians believed pet ownership was beneficial for human health (Trembath 2014) and 71% of respondents to a 2016 online survey were aware of a scientifically proven link between pets and positive (human) health (HABRI 'Survey: Pet owners and the human-animal bond' n.d.).

The social benefits of pet ownership are less contested, and many of these also have a positive impact on mental health. Adrian Franklin (1999; 2006; 2007) argues that pet ownership is increasingly important to ameliorating loneliness, particularly important, he argues, as single-person household figures rise. In his representative survey (n=2000) of pet ownership practices in Australia, Franklin found that companionship was the primary reason participants acquired an animal companion (80% in married/defacto households), and this figure increased for divorced or separated (88%), widowed (90%) and retired (91%) households (2007). Wood et al (2007) found that in addition to ameliorating loneliness, pet ownership was linked with more positive social interactions, civic engagement, and perceptions of neighbourhood friendliness. These benefits extend beyond those immediately implicated in the relationships, to the broader community. This

is supported by studies demonstrating that pet owners are less likely to report feeling lonely (Garrity et al 1989; Ory & Goldberg 1983), and highlighting that pets provide social lubrication in facilitating social interactions between humans (Beck 1999; Eddy Hart, & Boltz 1988; Hart & Hart 1987; Messent 1983; Mugford & M'Comisky 1975; Wood et al 2015). As one participant in Cudworth's (2017) study of human-dog relationships said 'People say "good morning" to you if you've got a dog. They might just ignore you if you were sort of wandering around' (p.395). Pets also have an important role in family life, often encouraging nurturing behaviour (Melson & Fogel 1989; Beck 1999), particularly in female children who are typically socialised into "nurturing" roles (Cole & Stewart 2014). Finally, pet relationships have been shown to enhance therapeutic interventions, enriching individual and family counselling (Walsh 2009) and in a less official capacity, mediating strained relations between family members (Anderson 2013).

Some researchers have argued that prospective owners are unlikely to be aware of the scientific research around the benefits of pet ownerships and are potentially influenced by a popular discourse that pets are good for us (Arluke 2010; Blouin 2012; Herzog 2011), and stoke an underlying desire to be loved unconditionally (Franklin 2006; Herzog 2010). However, Powell et al (2018) found that participants in an Australian survey did expect particular benefits from their pet relationships, including increased walking, companionship and making new friends. HABRI's 2016 survey of pet owners also found that 92% of respondents were more likely to take better care of their pets if they were aware of the health benefits of pet ownership (HABRI 'Survey: Pet owners and the human-animal bond' n.d.). This, then, indicates that the emphasis on the benefits of pet keeping might result in expectations that humans *will* benefit from their companion animal relationships, and that these nonhuman animals are better cared for when benefits are experienced. While this might not seem like a significant point — of course people are more likely to feel positively about a relationship that benefits them than one that doesn't — this discourse has consequences for nonhuman animals who are expected to create positive experiences for their owners as opposed to owners creating positive experiences for their companion animals. Research that highlights the health benefits of pet ownership in turn supports campaigns such as HABRI's 'The Pet Effect' (n.d.)— which, in its associated brochures, can be seen to discursively construct particular nonhuman animals as a cure-all to be administered. For instance, a brochure for the 'drug' DOG begins with: 'Is DOG right for you? If you have a circulatory system, immune system or nervous system, DOG is just what the doctor ordered'. Side effects for DOG include 'picking up poop' and 'excessive social media posts', and nowhere in any of the brochures are the physical, mental and emotional needs of nonhuman animals discussed (HABRI 'The Pet Effect' n.d.). These brochures, though clearly created in good fun, demonstrate the anthropocentric view of human-companion animal relationships perpetuated by campaigns like 'the Pet Effect' and 'Pet Positives'. Thus research focussing on the human benefits of pet ownership, though potentially increasing positive attitudes towards, and treatment of, companion animals, feeds into a broader discourse that positions

companion animals as beings with no inherent value except in their positive effect on humans. As a side effect, the impact of (and ethics around) pet keeping for animal companions is largely ignored, and though some of the studies mentioned earlier in the discussion do take seriously the mindedness and interactive capacities of companion animals, these are consistently minimised so as to not challenge *our* ability to subjugate *them* as pets. In the next section I will turn to works that do explicitly discuss the problematic and oppressive nature of pet ownership, demonstrating that such arguments do exist though they rarely filter in to qualitative studies of human-owner dynamics. This, then, highlights the need to further develop the field I (following Nast 2006a) refer to as 'Critical Pet Studies'.

3.5 Critical Pet studies

While some scholars have noted in passing that companion animals too are caught up in the same oppressions that other "types" of nonhuman animals face (Cudworth 2011; Francione 2000; Torres 2007), it is rare that these are explored in detail (Rollin & Rollin 2001). Rollin & Rollin (2001) state that 'often our treatment of companion animals is as egregious, shocking, immoral, and unacceptable — indeed more so — than any nonhuman animal use in society' (p.10). However, given the affective framing that traditionally underpins companion animal scholarship, the 'immoral' side of pet ownership is underexplored, 'despite companions being deprived of the rights to fresh air and free movement which most non captive humans enjoy and take for granted' (Sollund 2011, p.443). In this section I will outline several key works that demonstrate a critical approach to studying human-companion animal relationships, as opposed to the depoliticised works outlined in the preceding discussion. I argue that the problem isn't necessarily that scholars aren't thinking critically about pets (though as seen above some clearly do not), but that we lack a framework to bring these critical understandings together with empirical research. It is in this space — deemed Critical Pet Studies — that I seek to position this thesis.

The first notable work examining the 'dark side' of human-companion animal relationships was Yi Fu Tuan's (1984) *Dominance & Affection* in which he argued that dominance underpinned all affective relationships:

> ...affection is not the opposite of dominance; rather it is dominance's anodyne—it is dominance with a human face. Dominance may be cruel and exploitative, with no hint of affection in it. What it produces is the victim. On the other hand, dominance may be combined with affection, and what it produces is the pet (p.2).

Tuan's work was, and still is, significant in uncovering the unequal power relations that underpin *all* human-companion animal relationships, rather than just relationships that are more explicitly "bad". These unequal relations manifest in the "creation" of pets —

purposive breeding, coercive training and physical restriction and adornment. For example, Tuan (1984) traces the prioritisation and cultivation of aesthetically pleasing pets through time, from the gilded manes of tamed lions in Rome (creating a status symbol that was less nonhuman animal and more work of art) to the modern day selective breeding practices creating (nonhuman animal) companions to conform to (human) aesthetic trends (see also: Bradshaw 2011; McMillan et al 2011). Ironically nonhuman animals who fail to meet these aesthetic standards are disposed of immediately, whilst the physical consequences of this quest for superficial perfection (such as breathing difficulties, joint problems and increased medical costs) are considered more tolerable (Tuan 1984). Evidence of these stringent aesthetic requirements are visible in the breed standards of the Australian National Kennel Club in which the "correct" size, colour, proportions, temperament and gait are specified for each recognised breed in Australia (ankc.org.au). The ANKC website states that 'Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault' and although the health and welfare of the dog is mentioned as the utmost concern, this is hardly reflected in the inclusion of superficial requirements which state, for instance, that all British Bulldogs should display 'whole colours (of) reds, fawns, fallows etc.' and that 'Dudley, black and black with tan are extremely undesirable colours.' (Australian National Kennel Club, 2015). Beverland et al (2008) found that owners who were more aesthetically focussed were also more likely to shirk essential responsibilities such as feeding, grooming and toiletting, and allocate most of their pet expenditure on non-essential items like accessories (Beverland et al 2008). These findings suggest a link between aestheticism and status motivated (rather than needs based) pet care that really only serves the human in the relationship (Beverland et al 2008).

Nast's critical pet studies (2006a; 2006b) uses Tuan's Dominance/Affection approach to explore the impacts of/for "pet-animals" dominance-affection-love (DAL) dynamic in broader human societies. She argues that scholarship that does study pets (and many studying the human-animal bond do not) tends to 'shun a critical international perspective, instead charting the cultural histories of pet-human relationships or, like Haraway, showing how true pet love might invoke a superior ethical stance' (2006a, p.806). For Nast, pets and "pet-love"societies present an opportunity for social scientists to develop analytical and theoretical tools that can account for the broader social, political, economic and material geographic processes that make a society more or less likely to embrace particular kinds of loving. The hyper-commodification of pets and pet love is of a particular focus for Nast, who argues that the extensive market around pet ownership is bound up in narcissism and modern industrialism:

> Whether one is buying pet animal boutique clothing or doggie dental braces, taking a pet on vacation, dancing with a costumed dog, engaging in volunteer no- kill activities, or paying large sums of money to dress up like a "pet-i-fied" animal or invest in furry desires, films, and literatures, considerable resources are being invested in practices of pet DAL. (2006 b, p.320)

While Nast's work is helpful in beginning to consider a more critically oriented pet studies, what is missing due to her focus on macro human cultures are the nonhuman animals themselves. She goes as far as to state that a critical pet studies:

> would *not* involve detailed ethnographies of human pet relations in and of themselves; nor would it involve documenting the importance of pets in contemporary societies. It would instead show how global inequalities are implicated in the geographical, discursive, economic, political, cultural and/or psychical ways that pet love is made meaningful. By drawing upon a number of theoretical perspectives and insights, then, CPS may help ground in place and time the etherealizing sentiments of those who claim pet love is emerging because we are becoming more civilized or because those who love pets particularly intensely have a spiritual or psychological leg-up on those who may eat or disdain them. (2006b, p.902)

This then raises the issue of nonhuman animal inclusion in research — specifically is critical pet studies *for – or about -* nonhuman animals? While Nast's approach may be critical in the sense that she unpacks a taken for granted phenomenon (pet-love), it is also an approach that is decidedly focussed on gaining understanding about human societies *for* humans. Given this, and despite the fact that she was the first to issue a much-needed call for a 'critical pet studies', I argue that critical pet studies needs a different approach. To start with, it needs to include, and advocate for, pets.

Works that embody this notion of a Critical Pet Studies *for* pets draw connections between everyday pet-keeping practices and broader structural inequality. For example, Clare Palmer(2006) argues that domination in human-pet relationships is unavoidable as companion animals are viewed with an 'attitude of instrumentalism' that is evident in both harmful practices around pets and 'helpful' educational campaigns *for* them:

> both de-sexing and killing in animal shelters flow from the same underlying attitude toward pets. This attitude is one of willingness to adopt dominating practices that treat animals as means to other ends. If this is right, campaigns to promote de-sexing, while at one level being successful in reducing the number of kittens and puppies born, at another level actually promote dominating and instrumentalist underlying attitudes and relationships that make people more likely to surrender animals to animal shelters. (p.183)

Here Palmer identifies a problem central to the structure/agency debate outlined earlier — although welfare-centric changes may indeed improve the lives of *some* companion animals, unless they challenge the supporting anthroparchal structures they are also perpetuating the very issues they seek to address. As highlighted above, anthroparchy intersects with capitalism to produce complex webs of oppression, and it is this site of

commodification and exploitation that many critical scholars turn to when considering human-pet relationships.

David Nibert (2013) argues that humans have obtained companion animals through a process of domesecration which is a 'systemic practice of violence in which social animals are enslaved and biologically manipulated, resulting in their objectification, subordination, and oppression' (p.12). This then creates the oppressive foundation upon which our relations with companion animals rest, making it unlikely that anything born of these entanglements could truly shirk the mark of domination. Collard (2014) unpacks the process of (re)constructing minded, free-living nonhuman animals as pet commodities, arguing that 'commodity status is not intrinsic to things' (p.155), and thus 'things' move in and out of this status over time. When dealing with 'lively commodities' — commodities whose 'active demonstrations of being full of life—eating a mouse, flapping around a cage, or even blinking eyelids', are essential to their value (Collard 2014, p.153) — the commodity/companion dualism is challenged. Thus the lively commodity essentially leads a 'double life' (Collard 2014, p.155). This double life does not come about without some manoeuvring — in fact, complex processes of entanglement and disentanglement, attachment and detachment must take place before the nonhuman animal can be transformed into a 'tradable being' (Collard 2014, p.156). Drawing on Locke (2002) and Callon's (1998) works on organ transplants, Collard surmises that for something to be tradable, it must first be conceptualised as 'thing-like… detachable from the body' (Locke 2002, p.83). Nonhuman animals must similarly be detached from their existing social relations and environments, though these initial attachments still serve a purpose as a kind of biocapital with the origins of pets adding to their commodity value (Collard 2014). Rather than offer a depoliticised overview of the commodification process, Collard explicitly describes the atrocities being committed against nonhuman animals abducted from their natural habitat in the pursuit of "exotic pets", and the unpleasant 're-wilding' process to return unwanted pets to their free-living status. Collard does not extend this discussion to consider domesticated pets, however. Here, Sollund's (2011) work is particularly useful in highlighting the oppression that underpins ownership of domesticated and wild-abducted nonhuman animals alike. For Sollund, whose focus is predominantly on the exotic bird trade, cages are integral to the physical and symbolic imprisonment of companions:

> The cage underlines that the animal is captive rather than a
> companion, and also establishes a solid physical and mental barrier
> to nearness and to the bird/animals' possibility of displaying his/her
> intelligence and individual as well as species' specific characteristics.
> (2011 p.442)

The act of caging defines nonhuman animals as property and means they have no choice but to be constantly available to their owners, a restriction Sollund argues 'may in turn legitimate other abuse, just as the abuse and death of animals destined for material use is 'legitimated' by their property status' (pp.442-443). Jessica Pierce's *Run, Spot, Run*

(2016) offers a condemning look at some of these legitimated abuses, uncovering the disastrous outcomes the extremely unbalanced power dynamic existing within human-companion animal relationships can yield for the nonhuman participants entangled in them. Pierce argues that the underestimated breadth of emotional and physical abuse experienced by pets, which ranges from social isolation and unmet needs to intentionally inflicted physical harm such as sexual abuse and dog fighting, is veiled by the overwhelmingly positive media messages surrounding pet ownership. The significant and unshakeable power imbalance between humans and 'their' animal companions makes it difficult to judge which exercises of (human) power are abusive, and which are acceptable (Pierce 2016). Again this (ab)use of nonhuman animals is heavily supported by their positioning within capitalism, as nonhuman animal commodities are seen as replaceable — particularly 'pocket pets' such as rats and guinea pigs — and are also affiliated with a range of accessories that fuel a multi-billion dollar pet industry (Pierce 2016, p.176-183). Pet ownership is then seen as unquestionable, as any critique poses both an affront to pet owners whose guardianship might be challenged, and a threat to the pet-commodity industry that surrounds these practices.

For scholars who are critically researching pets, the fact that companion animals occupy a marginalised position is not up for debate (Palmer 2006; Rollin & Rollin 2001), and several have explicitly argued that pet keeping as a practice is simply unethical (Andreozzi 2013; Francione 2012; Spencer et al 2006). Others have drawn parallels between deprivation of freedoms and obsession with purity of breed for pets and grand scale (human) oppressions such as slavery and the Holocaust (Mason 1993; Rollins 1992; Spiegel 1996; Sztybel 2006). However, it is still a rather uncomfortable truth to confront that the joyful relationships we humans hold so dear are actually incredibly problematic (Masson 2008; Mills 2017; Palmer 2006).

While several of the scholars mentioned above argue that critical analysis of human-pet relationships are sparse, I think the issue isn't necessarily that scholars aren't thinking critically about pets, but that we don't have a framework to bring this critique into conversation with empirical studies of human-companion animal relationships. This is reflected in Cudworth's (2016, p.243) critique that scholarship outlining '"how things are" does not always lead to a coherent position on "what is to be done"'. For instance, Leslie Irvine in her philosophical discussion of the morality of petkeeping (2004b, p.5) argues that '[a]lthough a world without pets is unpleasant to consider, the perpetuation of our pleasure is not sufficient reason to enslave other animals'. However, this critical perspective is rarely incorporated into her empirical research which focuses on the strong affective bonds between humans and their animal companions (Irvine 2008a; 2013). Cudworth (2011a) similarly highlights the oppression inherent in pet ownership, which occurs in an anthroparchal setting alongside all other human-nonhuman animal entanglements. However, this critique is not brought into conversation with the

relationships at the centre of her walk and talk interviews with humans and their canine companions (2011b), as critique focuses on the domination "out there" in the pet industry (such as exploitative breeding and abusive relationships) rather than that which is impregnated in the entanglements at hand. Thus human-companion animal relationships are depicted as a positive view of what humans could aspire to in their entanglements with "other" animals. Carter & Charles (2011; 2013) and Birke & Thompson (2018) similarly highlight the restriction of nonhuman animal agency by human actions and environments but go on to explore human-companion animal entanglements as positive encounters. As mentioned in Chapter One: Introduction, I don't consider the use of nonhuman animals as companions to be justifiable, given the exploitation and oppression required to 'get' pet-commodities and maintain their subordinated position. But I can see how, if these oppressive foundations are ignored, human-companion animal relationships do often appear to be loving, familial and positive for all parties. This isn't to say that the lived experience of human-companion animal relationships is wholly good or wholly bad, but rather that they are complex entanglements that need to be understood in relation to the broader social structures that shape them.

This indicates that more work needs to be done on bringing together critical understandings of human-companion animal relationships, and our empirical explorations of them, to arrive at scholarship that better accounts for the complexity of these contradictory entanglements. Part of this is critically examining the methodologies employed to arrive at these understandings, which will be explored in the chapter that follows. But for the discussion at present this section serves to highlight the critical pet studies area in which I position this thesis. In the final section of this chapter I will outline the theoretical assemblage that frames the approach of this study with a mind to construct a portrait of human-companion animal relationships that is able to capture the everyday negotiation of these entanglements in connection with broader structural oppression that underpins them.

3.6 Towards a species-inclusive approach to human-companion animal relationships

In the coming chapters I build on the existing literature outlined above to present a critical project created with and for companion animals, rather than merely about them. Thus far I have argued that while there is a plethora of research on human-companion animal relationships, these efforts tend to be depoliticised (Taylor & Sutton 2018), privilege human voices (Hamilton & Taylor 2017) and are limited in their depiction of the complexity of shared multi-species life (Blouin 2012). Given the power of knowledge claims in shaping what is considered 'truth' in the social world (Berger 1966; Berger & Luckman 1967; Foucault 1980), this anthropocentric skew is not just limited in its portrayal of multispecies life but actively contributes to the construction of narrative that normalise the exploitative use of nonhuman animals as companions.What we now need is

research about human-companion animal relationships that includes (to the greatest extent possible) nonhuman animals' participation, and explicitly advocates for them.

Theoretically this thesis borrows from several of the approaches outlined in this chapter. I frame my analysis through a structure/agency lens, drawing on Cudworth's (2011) system of Anthroparchy to contextualise the everyday negotiations of human-companion animal relationships within a system of dominance that inevitably influences multispecies relatings. However, in line with Archer (2007) I argue that individuals are not passive, and thus use their agency in ways that shape (while being shaped by) overarching Anthroparchal structures. Taking Burkett's (2016) point that Archer's conceptualisation of agency leans too heavily on the internal conversation, I draw on Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical approach to examine everyday relations as performative — a choice that creates space for companion animal participation in this project. I recognise that these theories do not necessarily sit comfortably alongside one another, and the structure/agency debate has existed in sociological works for decades and remains a vexed issue. However, despite the tensions that such an assemblage brings, I firmly believe that such an approach is necessary here. In part this is because this thesis seeks to do something truly novel – to make space for the (at least partial) inclusion of other animals. At the same time. I am arguing for the opening up of a new area of focus – critical pet studies – one that advocates for other species. As a result, this thesis needs to creatively use existing theories as building blocks to facilitate a portrait of human-companion animal relationships that is able to account for the complexity of everyday life, whilst remaining critical of the fundamentally oppressive power structures that support ownership of nonhuman animals.

Politically this project is informed by a Critical Animal Studies (CAS) approach. CAS occupies an overtly political position, distinguishing itself from more mainstream Animal Studies since its launch in the early 2000's, to focus directly on the circumstances and treatment of nonhuman animals and destabilisation of normative anthropocentric constructions (Pederson 2011; Taylor & Twine 2014). Nik Taylor and Richard Twine (2014) describe the rise of CAS as signalling 'a long overdue change in contemporary academia that better reflects the importance of social beings in their own right', reasoning that other animals are affected by humans 'for better or worse (usually worse)' (p. 3). CAS is based on ten guiding principles, as outlined by Steve Best, Anthony J. Nocella II, Richard Kahn, Carol Gigliotti, and Lisa Kemmerer in the 2007 article *Introducing Critical Animal Studies:* (1) Interdisciplinary collaboration; (2) a rejection of 'pseudo-objective' analysis through clear statement of political commitments and values; (3) avoidance of 'theory-for-theory's sake' in favour of linking 'theory to practice, analysis to politics, and the academy to the community'; (4) an intersectional understanding of oppressions; (5) rejection of apolitical or conservative politics in favour of radical anti-hierarchical politics; (6) rejection of single issue nonhuman animal politics, instead forming alliances with other movements challenging oppression; (7) advocating for 'total liberation' of human and nonhuman animals and the earth; (8) deconstruction of socially constructed binaries,

such as human-nonhuman animal, nature-culture; (9) open support for radical strategies of social justice movements, such as direct action; and (10) seeking to facilitate critical dialogue on issues of interest to critical animal studies (Best et al 2007). While in practice CAS scholarship tends to favour the macro-theorisation and broad systemic analysis highlighted in the earlier discussion of structural oppression of animals, Best et al's principles also provide useful guidance for this project which seeks to understand micro-relating as situated in systemic oppression. CAS challenges depoliticised scholarship that fails to centre nonhuman animals, or seriously consider their experiences and interactions with the social world. Theory within a CAS framework must contribute to understanding and changing the material conditions experienced by other animals as well as combatting normative concepts that enable their oppression to continue unscrutinised (Taylor & Twine 2014). This then demands an attention to the usefulness of this project that encourages me and the reader to think about how we might 'do' critical pet studies *for* nonhuman animals, rather than merely about them. This is a theme I take up in the analysis chapters of this thesis (chapters 4, 5 and 6) in which I link the findings of my project to critiques of the material conditions, and approaches to these, that shape the lives of the nonhuman animals at the centre of this study, and nonhuman animals generally.

In the next chapter I outline my methodology which pursues a species-inclusive approach to research (to a modest extent) by centring nonhuman animals in the research questions and endeavouring to have them physically present, as well as including nonhuman animals in data collection through observation components (Alger & Alger 2003; Arluke & Sanders 1996) and ensuring they remain visible in the final write-up (Hamilton & Taylor 2017). While this attempt at a more species-inclusive method is unable to completely transcend the limits of anthropocentrism, it is still an important and necessary step toward generating research that decentres human privilege and better encapsulates the complexity of human-companion animal relations.

3
Methodology

This chapter considers the methodological challenges of conducting multispecies research and outlines the methods employed in my project. Building on the discussion in the previous chapter around the social production of knowledge, I argue that methods are political, both reflecting and shaping the social worlds they purport to study (Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Law 2004; Strega 2005). For nonhuman animals who tend to be marginalised at best in research that concerns them, it is highly important that the methods selected to explore their lived reality do not further silence those they intend to give voice to (Taylor 2012; Taylor & Hamilton 2017). With this in mind, I have chosen a qualitative approach, consisting of interviews with humans and companion animals and observation to create space for the inclusion of nonhuman animal interactions in the data set. Human participants were also invited to submit a photo and biography for their animal companions to be included in this chapter as a visual reminder that the themes discussed in this thesis are drawn from the lives of real, individual nonhuman animals for whom the social construction of pets has tangible consequences. As will be seen in this chapter and throughout this thesis, research with nonhuman animals is messy, crossing theoretical, methodological and physical boundaries (personal space for one!) and posing unique challenges in the process. The anthroparchal context in which these relationships and this research takes place is unavoidable, and while I have tried to carefully navigate the ethical challenges discussed in this chapter, eschewing my own human privilege and analysing results through a non-anthropocentric lens is not entirely possible. Nevertheless, I argue that researchers must seriously consider the challenges involved in multi-species research, and the kinds of realities we are enacting with our methodological frameworks. I argue that my methodological approach, framed within the critical theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter and designed to create space for companion animals' participation, is a step towards research that better entwines critical understandings of human-companion animal relationships and empirical research on them.

1. Why do methods matter - methods as political

Broadly speaking, methods are the tools researchers use to explore the social world (Law 2004; Law et al 2011; Strega 2005). Within an enlightenment epistemology, good research might appear as simple as an objective "knower" selecting the "correct" methodological approach, be it qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys or one of the many other options pre-approved for social scientists, to uncover the "truth" of the social situation being studied (Strega 2005). However, some scholars (particularly those studying underrepresented groups with an interest in social justice) have problematised this conceptualisation of only methods (and analysis) as tools, instead expanding the toolkit to

include the epistemological, ontological, and methodological frameworks surrounding research which greatly impact on the resulting research (Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Law 2004; Law et al 2011; Strega 2005).

Methods are generally constituted as tools for learning about the social world, with little thought given to the potential political consequences a researcher's chosen approach could incur (Law et al 2011). This instrumental take poses a problematic John Law et al (2011) refer to as 'The Methodological Complex' — a concept that rests on three elements or assumptions: (1) A division of labour that conceives of theory, substance and method as entirely separate realms; (2) Resistance to an instrumental view of methods is seen to only emerge from theory (broadening the rift between theory and method); and (3) the construction of a world 'out there' to be studied which sets up binary divide between 'the world' and representations thereof (Law et al 2011 pp. 3-4). This objectivist approach, though appealing due to its straightforwardness, runs the risk of missing out on crucial aspects of social life that don't fit within its sanitised framework (Law 2004; Law et al 2011), and attempts to ground itself in a fundamentally flawed assumption — that methods and researchers can objectively observe from outside the social situation they purport to study (as Karen Barad states, 'there is no such exterior observational point' [Barad, 2003, p. 828]). Instead, Law argues, social scientists need to embrace realities that are 'vague and indefinite' as the world we study is itself indefinite (2004). This then necessitates a broader understanding of the methods through which we come to understand the world, particularly paying attention to the enactment of the world *through* methods. For Law, methods are inherently social in two significant ways: methods are social because they are shaped by the social world from which they came to be and they also play an active role in shaping that social world (Law et al, 2011), thus social science inquiries 'interfere with the world... they always make a difference, politically and otherwise' (Law, 2004, p. 7).

This double social life of methods is enacted through the relationship between what Law refers to as the 'hinterland' and 'method assemblages' (2004). These terms pertain to the processes through which we generate knowledge about the world, and how we come to think of particular kinds of knowledge as "true". The hinterland is made up of texts that build upon each other to produce statements that 'carry authority' (Law 2004). This then defines which realities seem "real" and which seem less so, as "truths" are accepted to the extent that they are supported by existing, accepted literature: 'if a statement is to last it needs to draw on — and perhaps contribute to — an appropriate hinterland' (Law 2004 p.28). Research is shaped by this context, and this is visible in the practical realities of collecting and analysing data and writing up results in which some things are "seen" and rendered meaningful, whilst others are invisibilised by being "written out" (Latour & Woolgar 1986). Research methods are purposively created to suit the research needs of their proponents (Law et al 2011). They are advocated for, attract a following and need an appropriate ecological context to survive (Law et al 2011). Those research methods that no longer suit their intended use or context will cease to be utilised ensuring that surviving

methods will be those that are malleable and able to be shaped by their social world to maintain their usefulness (Law et al 2011). Thus it is impossible to separate created realities, and the statements made about them, from the creation of instrumental practices and inscription devices that produce them (Latour & Woolgar 1986; Law 2004).

This then brings us to 'Method Assemblage', an enactment of relations that renders some elements of social life visible, whilst making others appear absent (Law 2004). Building on the idea that methods enact social worlds, the assemblage of particular methods can shape hinterlands by bringing particular objects 'in-here' and rendering them visible, while rendering others invisible - 'out-there' (Law 2004). To be clear, method assemblages do not present different perspectives on the same reality[11], but rather different objects and different realities are produced in particular method assemblages (Law 2004). Law draws on Mol (2002) to illustrate how different components interacting in particular hinterlands actively produce particular realities — in Mol's work this reality is a medical diagnosis. Describing one patient's experience of being diagnosed with 'intermittent claudication', Mol (2002) argues that it is only through the interaction of particular knowledge frameworks, settings and participants that the patient's 'diffuse' pain is redefined as a diagnosis:

> This does not imply that the doctor brings Mrs Tilstra's disease into being. For when a surgeon is all alone in his office he may explain to the visiting ethnographer what a clinical diagnosis entails, but without a patient he isn't able to *make* a diagnosis. In order for 'intermittent claudification' to be practiced, two people are required. A doctor and a patient. (Mol 2002, p.23 cited in Law 2004, p.46).

Law goes on to say that 'Intermittent claudication calls for both a patient and a doctor. If it is to be enacted it needs to be crafted out of a story by the former and the embedded knowledge of the latter. Here we see the bundling of a hinterland' (p.46).

This productive capacity of methodological assemblages, then, offers a pathway to challenge problematic epistemologies by crafting hinterlands that highlight different realities, challenging the marginalisation of "others" that occurs through mainstream research practices. As Law explains 'In an ontological politics we might hope, instead, to interfere, to make some realities realer, others less so. The good of making a difference will live alongside — and sometimes displace — that of enacting truth' (Law 2004, p.67).

This understanding of multiple possible "truths" differs from an objectivist understanding in which there is seen to be one true "Truth" that, once discovered, will neatly explain

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[11] This is where they differ from triangulation which Denzin (2012) describes as the combination of mixed (qualitative) methods to better uncover hidden realities to facilitate critical research. While Law's approach also includes the visibilisation of the hidden, his focus on combinations of methods and resulting hinterlands as *producing* realities — rather than simply uncovering them — makes this a useful framework through which to consider the deliberate disruption of wholly anthropocentric knowledges in this thesis.

social phenomena and render the social world "known" (Law 2004; Strega 2005). Susan Strega (2005) argues that it is necessary to challenge the problematic Enlightenment epistemology that underpins this objectivist understanding of truth, shaping ideas around what counts as legitimate knowledge, and who gets to be a "knower" (Strega 2005, 202-205). She states that simply being aware of the politics and effects of methods is not enough, pointing out that radical feminist and critical race scholars have been working with this knowledge for decades and still no research has made significant radical change (Strega 2005). Instead, she argues, it is necessary to challenge the Enlightenment epistemology, which imposes a hierarchical dualism positioning "others" (typically non-male, non-white and, I would add, non-human beings) as inferior. Research created within this paradigm produces a truth that mirrors this hierarchy —either excluding or relegating to "object" those that are "lesser" through performance or non-performance of certain realities (Law 2011; Strega 2005). Strega argues that by embracing three key concepts of post-structural research (discourse, subjectivity and power) researchers can work towards creating methodological approaches that challenge the problematic enlightenment epistemology and result in more effective critical research(Strega 2005, 215). In the remainder of this section I will briefly unpack these key concepts, highlighting how the current discourse and hinterlands around nonhuman animals impact on the research exploring their lives and experiences.

By examining discourse as a social product that serves a purpose in (re)producing social structures, relations and identities we can begin to understand its significance outside of mere conversation (Strega 2005). In particular, the sanctioning of particular statements as acceptable within a society's discourse is reflected in what media present as reality, what is taught and what unsanctioned statements are considered punishable (and how) (Strega 2005, 219). As discussed in Chapter 2: Literature Review, nonhuman animals are discursively constructed in ways that legitimate their "use" to humans by minimising their pain and experiences and emphasising their commodity status (Cole & Stewart 2014; Dunayer 2001; Smith-Harris 2004; Stibbe 2001). This context privileges research, statements and depictions of nonhuman animals that support an anthropocentric social order, with positions that challenge anthropocentric approaches often relegated "to the margins" of scholarship and discourse, if not rejected outright (Wilkie 2015). By understanding the discursive context in which this thesis may be read, I can (and have) taken steps to actively challenge the normalisation of nonhuman animal "use" evident in much of the pet studies field. Part of this lies in pursuing species inclusive methods (detailed below) which render nonhuman animals' (inter)actions and individuality visible so as not to further silence them in the research writeup. The critical framing of this research is also crucial to its meaningful contribution to critical pet studies, with its explicitly politicised stance standing in stark opposition to the largely depoliticised field of research around companion animals (Taylor & Sutton 2018).

In line with Strega (2005), it is also important to account for my own subjectivity when conducting the research. An enlightenment epistemology prizes "objectivity",

commending a "knower" or researcher who is rational, neutral and abstracted from the context of research. This position is problematic on multiple fronts. While the general claim of "objectivity" may assume a neutral standpoint, these traits are generally associated with a white, male self (Strega 2005). Researchers who are considered "other" are then left trying to embody the role of an autonomous, rational self while using an epistemological framework that constitutes them as object, essentially working to cement the hierarchical framework that in turn oppresses them (Strega 2005). The alternative is to discard this notion of the rational, abstracted self and draw on a feminist, post-structuralist understanding of agency - which Davies describes as a capacity to recognise that the self is discursively constructed - and use this awareness to resist and change the discourses themselves (Davies, 1991). Furthermore, this prized neutral, objective, value-free research simply does not exist when doing actual research in the field. Stanley and Wise (1993) reason that:

> Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher (p.157).

Thus, as Kim V. L. England (1994) argues, researchers need to be aware of how their biography — personal characteristics and presence in the research setting — affect the research. Researchers occupy different social positioning — I am a white, straight, vegan, university-educated, able-bodied Australian (human, cis-gendered) woman in my late twenties, and my social positioning comes with particular privileges, awarenesses, and limitations that impact on my perceptions in the field. Some elements of my identity (white, straight, able-bodied, human) position me within privileged groups in a society that structurally advantages certain ethnicities, bodies, sexualities and species. As a sociologist I look for the influence of these structures in the field, however my own privileges undoubtedly produce blindspots and limitations to my own understandings and interpretations — my ability to accurately interpret the communications and actions of nonhuman participants, for instance, is severely limited by my human standpoint. My veganism underpins the way I view human-nonhuman animal relations and my history working with nonhuman animals in various contexts (outlined in Chapter 1: Introduction) means I am sensitised to particular things in my observations and interviewing, for instance constraint of nonhuman animal agency and nonhuman animal interactions, which potentially draw my focus more frequently than human behaviours. I am also a pet owner, enmeshed in these tangled webs of love and power relations like the participants in this study and painfully aware of the complexity and contradictions inherent in these relationships. To an extent I think this put the participants at ease — I was not an outsider to the depth of emotion and negotiation of "unusual" relations that make up everyday life for owners and companions and, as will be seen in the example with Asha below, being

familiar with animal companions often meant owners would allow their companions more freedom in their interactions with me. This is all to say that that this thesis doesn't purport to present a totalising, objective view of human-companion animal relationships, but rather offers a partial knowledge, a 'view from a body' to borrow from Haraway (1988, p.589).

My presence in the research field most definitely altered the social situation observed in the interviews. Although it was made clear that nonhuman animals were not expected to be present for the interview if they chose not to be, most owners introduced me to their nonhuman animal immediately. Each interview entailed a getting-to-know-you period with at least one of the nonhuman animals in the household, and on more than one occasion there were moments when the human participants were observing (and commenting on) their animal companion's interactions with me, rather than me observing them. Take the following exchange for example:

> Note: Asha (Cat) has strolled over and started 'smooching' my leg before flopping down on her back to expose her belly
>
> Me: Does she like her belly touched or is that a no-go zone?
>
> Tara: Oh she'll tolerate it but it's a bit of a no-go zone
>
> Me: I never know if they are presenting it or if it's a trap!
>
> Tara: Yeah (laughs) I think it's a bit of a trap with her. But she does that a lot and I think it just shows how confident and chilled out she is because it's not normal behaviour
>
> Note: Asha has started wrestling enthusiastically with my foot.
>
> Tara: Oh now she's starting, like she won't bite but she's starting to like get a bit enthusiastic so if it gets too much just let me know and I'll.. is she clawing into you there?
>
> Note: I'm wearing an ankle brace which she vigorously claws while she chews on my shoed foot, it seems to be in good fun (for her) rather than an act of aggression.
>
> Me: No, it's fine (laughs)
>
> Tara: Ok just let me know and I'll move her away. It's because the smells she gets this weird.. like it goes a bit wild. Aww oh no what are you doing cat I don't want her to hurt you!
>
> Me: I have two cats, it's fine.
>
> Tara: (laughs) oh ok then, you know what they do when they get a good smell and they just get involved.. She's just getting involved with your smells. [to Asha] Asha you be gentle! ... [to me] They had the same thing with my housemate as well coz she's got a cat too and

they'll do the same thing with her feet. And they'll start madly grooming her feet and nibbling her feet (laughs).

Me: That's fine, as long as you don't mind her licking my shoe I'm fine!

Tara: No, no of course not [to Asha] aww Bisha.

These snippets of interaction, though not at all a glimpse of "normal" everyday life between the participants, offered rich insights into the negotiation of social situations between humans and companion animals. This interaction — observing how participants reacted to their pets reacting to me — formed an invaluable part of the data set and greatly informed my understanding of the negotiation of nonhuman animal agency, norms and human privileging/decentring in homes whereby some owners (like Tara above) would embrace nonhuman animal agency and create space for "unusual" behaviours, while others would actively try to curtail them (see Chapter 5: Choreographing Human-Companion Animal Relationships for an extended discussion of agency in the home).

Partway through the data collection process, an injury saw me moving around with aid of a walking stick, with some sizeable abrasions on my leg. During this time I became acutely aware of how even this small shift — the abrasions were covered by clothing but the stick was rather more obvious — impacted on the interview setting. Some nonhuman participants were notably wary of the walking stick and would only approach me once I was seated and had placed the stick on the ground. Some nonhuman animals were utterly fixated on the wounded leg, and I had to explain to their humans that the reason their pet was so thoroughly obsessed with licking my jeans was likely the wounds hidden beneath them. As above, I checked with human participants if they were ok with the pants licking and, if they signalled that they were (which they all did), continued the interview while the nonhuman participants happily licked the shins of my jeans. While perhaps an unorthodox interview practice, multispecies research is riddled with "unusual conditions" — whether it be nonhuman animals' vocalisations, their focussed and extended genital licking or ever-wafting farts — and these elements add to, rather than detract from, the rich data collected. That is to say, by creating space for nonhuman participants to react to the interview situation (and to me) I was able to observe how they engaged with this new situation, how their owners reacted to their companion's norm-breaking behaviour and gain insight into more candid experiences of multispecies life. Of course this disrupted any chance of a controlled interview situation and questions were often sidetracked by these 'interruptions', but as findings will indicate in the coming chapters it is often in these unexpected moments that new information comes to light.

However accommodating nonhuman animal participants in this way also brings up questions of power — owner permission is sought for interactions with nonhuman animals, the interview itself is influenced by interpersonal power dynamics and my role and responsibilities as researcher reflect the control I have in the research construction and write-up. This brings me to the final key concept of post-structural research outlined

by Strega: power. A post-structural understanding of power as something that is dispersed throughout society, rather than simply "owned" by some groups over others allows us to explore how power is exercised relationally in observed situations (in this instance, human-companion animal relationships) (Strega 2005). Of particular interest to this project is the Foucauldian idea that power is only tolerable on the condition that it masks a significant portion of itself. Strega (2005) argues that uncovering these mechanisms of power and showing how they operate within us and our daily routines will provide better rationales for resistance. Wadiwel's (2016) Foucauldian analysis of the tools of oppression as a site of fish resistance (discussed chapter 2: Literature Review) is an illustration of how a micro analysis of power can expand understandings of resistance. My project, which seeks to challenge depoliticised representations of human-companion animal relationships by critically analysing the everyday negotiation of these entanglements, is similarly focussed on everyday, hidden manifestations of power. In creating space for species inclusive research, I was able to highlight the asymmetrical power dynamics that underpin both human-companion animal relationships, and the research that surrounds them. This

understanding then informs my argument that scholars can, and should, more meaningfully include companion animals in their theories of resistance against nonhuman animal oppression.

Managing power in the interview setting was especially challenging with multiple species present (see discussion below for extended consideration of power dynamics), as the aim of the project is to highlight the experiences and material conditions of companion animals, however this exposure is not always in the best interest of human participants. This then raised tricky questions around the importance of producing sociology *for* nonhuman animals, whilst also justly portraying their human counterparts. I explained to human participants that I felt it was important that the nonhuman animals be central to the research, to which they agreed readily. Given the nature of the study, participants assumed I was an "animal person" and many remarked after the interview was over that they had been very excited to talk about their animal companions with someone who would understand. Participants were reminded of their right to stop the interview at anytime or withdraw consent but overall participation was willing and enthusiastic — human participants wanted their nonhuman animals to be the central focus. The meaningful inclusion of nonhuman animals in research, however, is easier said than done, and it is to the practicalities of this inclusion that I now turn.

2. The challenge of multi-species research

Underpinning this thesis is the argument that nonhuman animals are significantly entangled in the social world, necessitating their study therein. As mentioned in the previous chapter, sociologists have used ethnographic and symbolic interactionist

approaches to research other animals in an attempt to make visible those who have previously been written out of academic works. However the study of other animals poses more – and unique — challenges than simply a lack of visibility that must be overcome or, at the very least, given serious consideration when constructing a species-inclusive methodology. These challenges include negotiating power imbalances and ethical considerations, as well as practical methodological conundrums that require some creative negotiation. Furthermore, given the privileged positioning of humans in the social world, the onus is on researchers to construct knowledge, and therefore hinterlands and realities that challenge the oppression of nonhuman animals and create space for nonhuman animal agency. As Hamilton and Taylor state:

> We have to consider our own status not only as researchers, world-makers, text-creators and so on but also as members of a researching species. In pursuits of very specific types of knowledge, animals search within and think about the world rather differently than we humans (2017, p.44).

This section will explore the challenges of multispecies research as identified by scholars in the field, as well as potential ways forward in negotiating these.

In order to explain the kind of multispecies research I think scholars *should* be striving for it is perhaps useful to give an example of problematic methods. It is not simply the case that including other animals in multispecies research necessarily helps them, or addresses the asymmetrical power relations. In fact, if done 'incorrectly' it can both harm other animals and reinscribe the very asymmetry it claims to oppose. In 2016, Kirksey, Hannah, Lotterman and Moore published an account of their performance piece which involved "using" a Xenopus frog to test human urine for pregnancy by injecting it into the frog's dorsal lymph node to see if she laid eggs. This live-streamed event was intended to highlight the cruelties forced onto nonhuman animals in labs that occur behind closed doors, in a way that left no lasting damage on Loretta the test subject. However, the test was not without discomfort for Loretta as can be seen in the description below:

> Held firmly between gloved hands, Loretta did not seem to notice when the fine needle of the syringe pierced her skin. But as a millilitre of fluid entered her body she contracted her legs and extended her claws in an apparent expression of discomfort. A wave of anxiety and mixed emotions passed through the room as Loretta's movements quietened and she was returned to her water-filled tank, where she would be monitored for the following twenty-four hours via a live webcast on U-stream. We generated public field notes on a blog as we settled in to wait for Loretta to lay eggs — an event that would indicate that the woman was pregnant (p.37).

While the intention behind the above experiment — to highlight the treatment of nonhuman animals in testing facilities — may be "for" nonhuman animals in some respects, the methods do little to challenge the objectification of Loretta, and thus can be said to feed into the very oppression the researchers seek to address. In scientific research settings, nonhuman animals are used as research "objects", subjected to invasive, often fatal procedures that would hardly be permissible outside of the lab, all without any semblance of informed consent (Arluke & Sanders 1997; Birke 2003; Hamilton & Taylor 2017). Kirksey et al (2016), despite declaring pro-nonhuman animal motivations, underscored the very kind of work they were trying to criticise by situating Loretta as an 'object' of study.

Several scholars have condemned this use of nonhuman animals as "objects" of study, instead advocating for multispecies research that holds, at its centre, a thoughtful consideration of how researchers should go about conducting ethical and effective research with nonhuman animals (Birke 2014; Hamilton & Taylor 2017). Drawing on posthumanist theory and ethnographic methodologies to inform their understanding of the current methodological landscape, Hamilton and Taylor (2017) argue that researchers need to construct a 'a way of studying social spaces without the unwitting suppression of species that are other-than-human' (p.13). Resisting the rendering of nonhuman animals as "measurable materials" or objects of study is a key aspect of multi-species methods, a sentiment reminiscent of Cudworth's (2016) call for the need for a sociology *for* nonhuman animals (rather than merely about them). Given that Ethics Committees are rarely equipped to deal with social scientific research with nonhuman animals, ethical considerations specific to nonhuman participation are likely to go unraised. For this project no requirements that related to the nonhuman animals were raised throughout the ethical approval process, yet there are certainly some areas that warrant careful consideration. This meant that I took more care to consider these challenges for myself, discussing ethical problems with my supervisory team rather than the committee that had failed to notice them. Given the extreme power imbalance between humans and nonhuman animals in society, nonhuman animals' have very little control over whether and how they participate in research. Nonhuman animals in research settings are almost always under the control of a (human) researcher or (human) participant. Therefore Lynda Birke (2014) argues that researchers should carefully consider the ethical issues inherent in their inclusion of nonhuman animals, particularly remaining mindful that nonhuman animals are not able to provide informed consent. Researchers need to think about how intrusive their research methods will be for the nonhuman animal, and if there is likely to be any benefit for the nonhuman animals involved, or for nonhuman animals more broadly (such as political outcomes). To challenge the rendering of nonhuman animals as mere objects of study, researchers should be aware of the need to address nonhuman animals in subjective, rather than objective terms (ie. she, he, they, rather than 'it'). In addition to the above, drawing on Kellet & Nind's (2002) discussion of managing

ethical research where informed consent was challenging to negotiate, I found that having human participants present was also useful in negotiating nonhuman animal inclusion. Although human owners are in a position of control over their animal companions, their familiarity is also an asset in helping the uninitiated observer to interpret nonhuman wants — for instance in letting me know that a particular action means that a cat wants to play or that they have had enough interaction, as these tells can be specific to individual beings.

There are also serious questions around the writing up (or writing out) of nonhuman animals in research findings. Hamilton & Taylor (2017) explain that the writing up process of research has the power to change the way nonhuman animals in research are seen:

> Animals may be brought to life or silenced by the inscription methods that we humans use in our research; they may be anthropomorphised, given symbolic meaning, objectified, rendered monstrous, or simply ignored. We have an ethical as well as an intellectual duty to confront that reality-making process and, if possible, to conduct forms of ethnographic work that help explore the richness of human-animal interaction rather than reducing it to simplistic terms. (Hamilton & Taylor 2017, pp.51-52).

It is the responsibility of human researchers, they argue, to challenge our own role in the creation of knowledge, and, particularly, in the creation of particular kinds of knowledge that reflect only a human perspective. This includes Birke's call for use of subjective terms stated above but extends beyond this to consider the hinterlands we researchers sculpt through the realities we portray (Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Law 2004). Even when companion animals are present in the data collection process, their participation is often minimised or limited to a discussion of how their presence shaped the participation of humans. This inadequate inclusion of nonhuman animals in the final writeup of research reflect two issues: the exclusion of nonhuman animals via anthropocentric methods, and the standpoint of the researcher that shapes what is and isn't "seen".

As was highlighted in the previous section, the identity and presence of the researcher inescapably shapes the research process (England 1994; Haraway 1988; Strega 2005). In multi-species research, we also need to consider how anthropocentrism is embedded in research methods, resulting in methods and research that excludes nonhuman animals and privileges human participation (Griffin 2014; Taylor 2012). Since it has been established that methods are political and shape the social world they are a part of, it is important to ensure that the chosen methods don't reinforce or instantiate the same oppressions they are intended to combat (Law et al 2011; Taylor 2012). In relation to the inclusion of other animals, anthropocentrism needs to be noted and attempts made to decentre the human perspectives that are overwhelmingly privileged over those of "other" animals. The language focus central to many research methods excludes other animals

who do not engage in human speech (Griffin 2014; Taylor 2012). Alternative approaches, such as visual methods, are more inclusive and allow the other animal to be meaningfully involved in research, rather than oppressed by research intended to give voice to them (Birke 2014; Griffin 2014; Taylor 2012). This then leads us to the practical considerations around multispecies research. Put simply, while the above discussion demonstrates the need to conduct research that is species inclusive, how might we actually go about it?

Several scholars have pursued attempts to understand what it is to be nonhuman animal, adopting creative methods to "get at" other animals' umwelten, or experiences of the lifeworld (Bastian 2017; Horowitz 2010; Uexküll 1992[1934]). These endeavours, though in many ways far more ambitious than the modest aims of this thesis, nevertheless provide food for thought around how researchers might sensitise themselves to "other" ways of experiencing the world, and how we create space for nonhuman animal participation in our methods.

Arguably the most ambitious of these efforts are those that see humans attempting to embody an nonhuman animal role, in order to glean some understanding of what it is like to be nonhuman animal. For instance, designer Thomas Thwaite (2016) designed a prosthetic goat body for himself, complete with an external 'stomach', in order to live as a goat for several days. Charles Foster (2016) lived as various nonhuman animals (badger, hare, fox, swift, deer & otter) in several geographic locations, eating, sleeping, and generally existing as the nonhuman animals did in an attempt to gain an understanding of what 'being a beast' was like. However, as Foster highlights, one can never truly 'know' what another animal experiences, but rather the experience allowed the construction of 'imaginative extrapolations':

> My attempt to enter the scent world was partially successful. But there were obvious and frustrating limits. I could, and did, learn to pay more attention to scent, and I knew glimmeringly, for full, fat fragments of a moment, what a landscape painted in scent might look like. But these glimmerings were imaginative extrapolations from what I actually sensed. The limiting factor was the magnitude of the inputs. I couldn't multiply the number or the sensitivity of my sense receptors to anything approximating those of a badger. All I could do was to say: 'Well, if inputs totalling x do that, what would inputs totalling $1000x$ do?' (2016, pp.44-45)

While these approaches don't necessarily highlight how *nonhuman animals* experience their worlds, they do serve to sensitise the humans involved to other ways of experiencing the world—an important step towards decentring humans in research.

Other efforts have focussed heavily on participant observation and visual methods to explore nonhuman animal interactions and understandings of the world. Marc Bekoff's "Yellow Snow" (2001) study focussed on his dog Jethro's scent marking practices by moving urine-soaked snow around to see if Jethro was more interested in his own urine-

snow, or that belonging to other dogs. This is an attempt to gain insight into a dog's perspective by taking into account canine umwelt, namely their olfactory navigation of the world. Other researchers have focussed less on nonhuman animals' sensory navigation of the world, and more on their meaning making. Alexandra Horowitz (2010) filmed dog-dog interactions in play settings to theorise the play markers used (such as play bows to signify behaviour is light hearted, rather than aggressive) and navigation of play behaviour between dogs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Alger & Alger's (2003) ethnography of a cat shelter examines social roles, rituals and norms as created and maintained by the cat residents in their study. One cat, Marquis, had taken on the role of "security guard" and sanctioned the other cats who did not conform to social norms:

> I'm told that Tucker has attacked Opie. Both of them were just recently freed from the living room cages. Well, Tucker comes running into the kitchen and swats another cat. I think it was Betrice. Marquis attacks Tucker and drives him off (Alger & Alger 2003; p.114).

In using thick description to describe the actions and interactions of the cats, the researchers not only "show" how research that centres nonhuman animals can uncover a good deal about their complex social lives *despite* a spoken language barrier, but also textually and visually ensure that the nonhuman animal remain present in the resulting book.

Julie Ann Smith (2003; 2005) draws on observations and photographs of the rabbits she shares her home with to try to understand rabbits' navigations of space, relations, and bodies. In Smith's household, when a rabbit dies their mate is given the opportunity to inspect the body:

> Arlo stretched out full-length by Hattie's body... Arlo did this only after he had tried to rouse the body, after seeming to know something of "here but not here." As I watched, I became disturbed by my inability to protect Arlo from his loss. (2005, p.194)

Some of the observed behaviours — such as the 'rabbit funeral dance' — were confusing to the observer, however as Smith points out one does not have to understand a ritual to recognise it as a 'specific and dramatic response to death' and must simply 'accept that humans are often deprived of rabbit meaning' (2005, p.199). Smith's approach, '... presupposes that humans will come closer to understanding rabbit response to death when they stop denigrating rabbit experiences in order to valorize human ones' (2005, p.201).

These examples differ from other works that include nonhuman animals (sometimes rendering them "present" in the writing quite well) but whose primary intention is not to understand them in their own right. For example, some approaches have relied solely on human participation, such as surveys (Franklin 2007) or interviews without nonhuman

animals present (Fletcher & Platt 2018). Others have relied on interviews in settings that included nonhuman animals (Blouin 2012; Redmalm 2015) but did not include nonhuman animals in the data collection outside of a brief mention that they were present and this had some influence on the situation. In each of the examples explored above, the researchers have used non-language based methods to open up the research process to nonhuman animals, and in doing so have arrived at a richer understanding of nonhuman interactions — one that stems from the nonhuman animals themselves, albeit interpreted through a human lens.

My project takes into account the arguments and examples described above in order to construct a method that creates space for nonhuman animal involvement, whilst still addressing the human participant's navigation of the relationship. As will be outlined in the methods section below, I adopted (language-based) semi-structured interviews with human owners, but supplemented this with an observation component that allowed me to capture elements of "other" animals' navigations of the spaces they inhabit, and the interactions they participate in. A visual component, by way of photographs and biographies for some of the nonhuman participants, is included to reinforce that the data described in this thesis pertains to 'particular, embodied, creatures' (Taylor 2012, p.40), and the discussions that follow this chapter impact on real lives. The biographies are not unproblematic — these were authored by owners and are therefore reflections of how human participants choose to present their relationships rather than an accurate reflection of companion animals' existences. However they still serve an important function in visibilising the nonhuman animals at the centre of this research. This thesis, then, provides a critical, species-inclusive contribution to understanding the material existence of these participants, as well as nonhuman companions more broadly. This project is not an example of a fully-fledged 'ethnography of being a companion animal'. Rather it is a modest attempt to create space in sociological methods for nonhuman animal participation, and an example of the different and rich data that results from this inclusion. Given the messy new terrain this project ventures into, my methodology is not informed by a singular theoretical framework, but rather an 'assemblage' in which aspects of several useful theoretical approaches have been appropriated and combined to better approach the mess of social life (Law 2004). It is to this configuration that we now turn.

3. Methods

Given the above discussion, I have carefully considered the political and ethical ramifications to devise a methodology that best fits the project without completely marginalising the nonhuman participants. My own (human) subjectivity means that it will not be possible to escape anthropocentrism entirely, as my observations and interpretations of data will be filtered through my own human experiences and privilege, however I have tried to meaningfully incorporate the non-human participants to the greatest extent possible. Similarly my leanings as an ethical vegan will likely impact on the research in that the project is intended to critically analyse the human-companion animal

relationship, and push nonhuman animals to the centre of discussion. This method consists of three elements: semistructured interviews, observation and visual representation, and was approved by the ethics committee of my institution (Project SBREC 6781). I will outline this approach in the discussion below, including sampling, data collection and analysis.

3.1 Population, sample & recruitment

Purposive sampling (Cresswell 2007; Yin 2011) was used to target participants who were aged over 18, located in South Australia and currently cohabited with a companion animal. Participants were recruited via an online recruitment flyer which was shared on my professional facebook and twitter accounts and a university research webpage. A limitation of this approach is that it restricted potential participants to those who had access to the internet (or knew someone who did) and were likely to view one of the online locations the flyer had been shared to. The study also benefitted from snowball sampling (Yin 2011), as participants informed me of their enthusiastic forwarding of the flyer and information sheet to others they thought would be interested in taking part in the research. All participants self-volunteered by signalling their interest to me via the email address included in the flyer and were then provided with an information sheet and consent form to read. Again, this approach necessitated access to the internet (and email) and the possession of technological familiarity to access the shared documents, which may have excluded some potential participants. Those that were still interested in participating organised an interview time and location and were required to sign a consent form prior to the commencement of the interview.

Interviews were conducted between February and July, 2016. Participants were located in both inner-city and regional areas of South Australia, though all were within an hour of the CBD. A total of thirty humans (twenty-five female, five male) were interviewed, and twenty-two dogs, seventeen cats and numerous birds and fishes (an exact number is unable to be determined as several participants were unsure of how many birds or fishes they 'owned') were observed. Other animals present in the interview discussion (but not physically present) included guinea pigs, rats, birds, cows, horses, cats and dogs. Some of these nonhuman animals were excluded from participation due to interview location (two of the thirty interviews were conducted out-of-home at participant's request), whilst others were located elsewhere in the home during the interview (see chapter 5 for discussion on exclusive uses of space). The sample included two couples who elected to be interviewed together (though this did not mean they were talking about the same nonhuman animals). Human and nonhuman participants have been assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. I was uneasy with the decision to rename nonhuman participants, given the invisibilisation of nonhuman animals in research discussed above. For the animal companions in this study, their names were heavily tied to their (owner perceived) personalities and changing these impacted on the representation of the histories, stories and personalities tied up in how these beings were named and how these names 'fitted' who they were perceived to be. I do think that this choice to use

pseudonyms for nonhuman participants has erased their 'selves' in this work to an extent, however, ultimately, the need for human and nonhuman participant confidentiality needed to be upheld.

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' homes to facilitate the inclusion of non-human participants (particularly non-canine pets that would likely be excluded from the research if a public setting was favoured), as well as ensuring a more comfortable environment for participants which is likely to result in richer interview data (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Two of the thirty interviews were conducted out of home at the participants' request which resulted in much more human centric data being obtained in those instances. As human interview participants are at risk of feeling an obligation to participate against their wishes or divulge information they would rather not due to their perceived lack of power in the interview process (Fontana & Frey, 2005) they were reminded often of their right to refuse to answer or participate. Mindful of the issues around consent and agency for nonhuman participants (Birke 2014), I made clear that nonhuman participants were not required to participate, and nonhuman animals who elected to stay out of the interview zone in the house were not forcibly brought into the room, however most free-roaming companions wandered into the interview zone at some point in the interview.

Of course, multi-species interviews introduce some new challenges, namely that nonhuman animals did not seem to particularly know or care that the interview was taking place (see also Cudworth 2018) and many an interview was punctuated by nonhuman animal vocalisations:

Maddy (Dog): AROOOOOOOO

April (Human): Not yet have to go [walking] later now

Maddy: AROOOOOO

April: (to me) See how her lip stays up when she howls?

Maddy: AROOOOO

[all laugh]

Me: Has she always done that or did you teach her that?

April: No she's done it, um, that's what she was doing when we picked her up

Maddy: AROOOOOO

April: She was like really vocal like that, and then she stopped doing it when she got here and then started again

Maddy: AROOOOOOO

April: Once you start her she doesn't stop [laughs] I think it's.. beagles howl and she's

Maddy: AROOOOOOOO

April: But theirs is a bit more high pitched hers is a bit lower

Maddy: AROOOOOOOO

Me: Thats probably good, lower's a bit easier on the ears

April: Yeah [laughs] (to Maddy) Isn't it [babytalk]? What you doing? Where you going?

Maddy: AROOOOO AROOOOOO

April: (to me) Yeah so.. (to Maddy) No more, it's all gone [laughs]

As can be seen in the quote above, this interaction was, in some ways, disruptive to the interview process. However it also enriched the data in a multitude of ways. In the above example, while Maddy's vocalisations shifted the conversation away from the participant's response to the question most recently posed, it allowed for April and Maddy to demonstrate, and talk about, a key form of interaction they both engaged in daily. Nonhuman participation added a richness to the interviews as human participants were able to talk and think through their companion animals, and their attention remained on the relationship, and parties, being discussed. It also made for much messier interactions with efforts needed to ensure that the interviews remained on track despite any interruptions. The transcription process was also rather interesting, as I tried to best represent the myriad of different vocalisations in written form. My approach to this was not to attempt to 'accurately' represent vocalisations and their meanings in any ethological sense, as my focus was on how these interactions were negotiated and understood between human and nonhuman participants. However I did try to represent how these vocalisations *sounded* so that the reader might have enough information to imagine the exchange. Future researchers might consider whether a deeper level of training or understanding of nonhuman animal communication would add needed depth to critical research projects by allowing us to engage more with what nonhuman animals are 'saying'.

The interview questions were designed to encourage narrative responses that were largely companion animal-centric, covering three main areas: (1) (human) participant experiences and descriptions of shared life with their companion(s) and how they had negotiated the relationship, (2) (human) considerations of how their companions might experience their shared life, including limits they might face and their experience of social relationships, and (3) owner reflections on broader issues and ethics around petkeeping as a practice. This element of my method (nonhuman animal vocalisations aside) is human-centric, soliciting (human) participant accounts of their relationships with companion

animals, therefore an observation aspect was incorporated to better create space for nonhuman participants' interactions.

3.3 Observation

While the interview component privileges human participation with its focus on human language as the primary means of communication, the observation component of my method better facilitated nonhuman inclusion by accounting for the "bodily activity" of all participants. Drawing on the idea that ethnographic methods, such as observation, can be used to give voice to oppressed groups (Angrosino & Rosenberg 2011) and potentially hold promise for multispecies research (Hamilton & Taylor 2017) observations of the setting and interactions were recorded. The observation component allowed me to capture nonhuman animal interactions with other participants, the environment and me.

Drawing on Goffman's Frame Analysis (1974), I recorded as many details as possible about the interview 'frame', particularly noting the interactions between nonhuman participants and other (human and nonhuman) participants, the environment, and myself. During the interview I took notes on these interactions, expanding them into lengthier descriptions shortly after the interview. These notes are included in the thesis as thick description that further captures nonhuman participants' contribution to the research, albeit through my human gaze which is admittedly problematic. This was invaluable in enabling the inclusion of nonhuman animals to the greatest extent possible and rendering them more visible in this thesis — as highlighted earlier in this chapter, companion animals are often invisibilised in the write up of research. It also meant a more comprehensive snapshot of the relationships studies was obtained, and rich data was obtained regardless of whether nonhuman animals chose to remain hidden for much of the interview (one cat in particular was seen only as a cat-shaped bulge in the curtain). Even in lieu of nonhuman participation, the home setting was a useful source of information in the negotiation of shared multispecies space, as the co-mingling of human and nonhuman "stuff" indicated how shared life might be negotiated (for further discussion see chapter 5).

3.4 Visual Representation

Finally, human participants were invited to submit an (optional) photo and biography for their non-human companion(s) to be included in the final thesis (included below). Nine human participants opted to do this, with seven submitting photos and biographies for thirteen nonhuman animals (three humans submitted two nonhuman animals each, one human participant submitted four nonhuman animals). Two participants submitted photos only. This allows the non-human participants to be visually inserted to become a prominent feature in the final document, ensuring that the research remains as nonhuman animal-focussed as possible, as well as reminding the reader that the themes

discussed throughout the research have real consequences for individual nonhuman animals living in the material conditions described. Although the biography is an instance of humans 'speaking for' their companions (Arluke & Sanders 1996), it also allows a snapshot of their (human interpreted) personalities to come to light, tying in with the data dispersed throughout this thesis to craft a portrait of the nonhuman participants. Visibilising nonhuman animal participants was the sole purpose of including these images — as Taylor and Fraser (2018) note, such representations serve to further challenge the invisibility of nonhuman animals in research (and in society). Cronin (2018) highlights the key role images have played in (re)constructing nonhuman animals as subjects, rather than objects and the biographies below contribute to this. The fact that these biographies are human-created is not necessarily contradictory to the motivations of the project, as in this instance their purpose is to cement the nonhuman participants as *someone* — someone with individual likes and dislikes and an experience of a life. They are also illustrative of the tangled web of social relations that companion animals occupy in being both contained and supported by their human owners. Some participants were quite eager to contribute to this visibilisation of their animal companions, and to have these contributions valued rather than dismissed (Taylor & Fraser 2018). Thus while the content below might include evidence of the anthroparchal relations critiqued in the rest of this thesis (and their inclusion should not be seen as endorsement), providing this 'free' space for human participants to share their significant relationships outside of the analysed interviews felt important. While the decision not to analyse these might seem odd, I would argue that the content — a curated identity for these animal companions — is not strictly relevant to the aims of this project to capture the *lived* experience of human-companion animal relationships. But this does not mean that their inclusion is redundant — it keeps the nonhuman animals visible and integrated in the discussion about the material conditions of their existence, moving closer to research for and with companion animals, rather than simply about them (Birke 2014).

4. Meet the nonhuman participants

With the exception of removing identifying places and names, what you see below are the unedited biographies submitted by human participants. As explained above, participants were advised that these submissions would not be analysed and merely serve to make sure the nonhuman animals are prominent in this thesis. At the end you will see photo submissions without accompanying biographies as these participants elected to only submit the photo portion.

Figure 2: Maddy

Name: Maddy

Maddy is about 20 months old, she has often been described as a 'giant beagle'. She is as curious as they come, and to satisfy her curiosity she will become 'Houdini' and get out of any fortress her dad can create. Maddy does not bark but has a very distinctive howl, which she does when she is excited, it involves her closing her eyes, lifting her snout to the sky, and bellowing out from the bottom of her heart.

Maddy is mischievous and this always gets her into trouble, but she does not let this stop her, she believes the consequences are always worth the pleasure of digging holes in her dad's fresh lawn or chewing up her brand new bed.

Maddy has so much love to share and sometimes doesn't know when to stop, once she knows you, you won't be able to escape her 'kisses'.

Figure 3: Mara

Name: Mara

Nicknames: Snow Princess

Words to describe personality: Apprehensive, playful, cautious, affectionate (when she wants to be), intelligent, independent, princess (Elegant, agile, quick), territorial (patrols the house doors to make sure no other cats get inside or near the house), inquisitive (needs to know what everyone in the house is doing and what's behind every door).

Mara was adopted from the RSPCA with her brother Clint. When the RSPCA said two for the price of one, we could not resist. Her favourite human is her father and she will sit on his lap when he is working at home or watching T.V. on the couch. Mara will also sometimes lean up to you and bump noses with you. She is very

affectionate, but on her terms and when she feels like it. Mara needs to be brushed with her long and fine fur, but will not agree to being brushed inside the house. She will only allow you to brush her outside. It is like she understands the exchange process! Mara enjoys sitting in closets and clean piles of clothing, usually a towel is placed so her fur doesn't get on our clothes. Mara also enjoys rolling in peoples shoes. She seems to like the smell of her family around her when she sleeps.Mara is very inquisitive, somewhat of a sticky beak! At times she needs to know what everyone is doing and where everyone is. She likes to know what is behind closed doors and will reach up to try and open the door handles to get into a room or try and escape outside. She has been caught on the ironing board trying to open a door handle she couldn't quite reach.

She is very intelligent and picks up on cues. For example when we are packing to go to the holiday house, she will observe and then at some point wander off and hide in the bedroom as she doesn't always like getting in her cat carrier. When she is in her cat carrier and traveling in the car you will not hear much from her until the car slows 10 mins from the house, and she will stir and start to meow.

Figure 4: Jitters

Name: Jitters

Nicknames:

Buddy

Bung Frank on legs

Captain Cute

Words to describe personality; Confident, affectionate, clumsy, playful, funny, talkative, expressive (with his voice and tail).

Jitters was also adopted from the RSPCA. Unfortunately Clint (Mara's brother) passed away suddenly after an operation, and Mara spent the next few days wandering the house aimlessly looking for him. Her Dad was also a blubbering mess, so it was decided that another cat may ease the pain. After careful observation of the kitten room and an interview process, Jitters was selected for his calm and confident nature.

Mara was not happy about having a new kitten in the house and would hiss at Jitters. Thankfully Jitters does not take no for an answer and after a number of weeks the hissing

stopped and you will often see them walk up to each other and sniff faces, which makes it look like they are giving each other a kiss.

Jitters craves companionship, and he will often cry out when a door is closed and he knows someone is behind it or he can't find you. He is very affectionate and will drop and roll on your feet when he wants some attention and pats. He is quite confident, which was good, as Mara did not like him at first. They aren't the best of friends, but they do play together, looks out for each other, and cross tails when they eat.

Unfortunately Jitters favourite thing to do is eat. He would eat all day if you let him, so we had to put him on a diet! He also has the tendency to drink from water or milk glasses when you aren't watching.

Jitters has a lovely nature, and has made himself at home. He will sleep in different places each day. Some days you have to search for his new bed, and often you will find him sleeping on his back in his cat tunnel. Jitters does not particularly like car travel. More often than not an emergency stop is required an hour and a half into the trip to clean him up! Once he gets to the holiday house, he loves it! The sea air, the extra freedom to roam the yard and sleeping on the bed at night are a real treat.

Figure 5: John

Name: John

I have a lovely companion animal called John.

He is a pound-rescue dog. He was about 18 months old when we met. He is coming on 5 yo now.
Just the two of us live together. He is a staffie-sharpei cross.

Figure 6: Frankie

Name: Frankie

Breed: Border Collie Cross

Birthday: 12th July, 9yrs old

Bio: Adopted from the Animal Welfare League when she was only 6 months old by my Mum and myself. Was presented the class clown award at puppy school despite being clever and a quick learner, also loved to have a bit of fun. She stole our hearts with her faithfulness, loving nature and beautiful soul. She is very active and loves to run and chase/herd waves at the beach, chase tennis balls in the park and help water the lawn (aka chase the hose around). Her favourite food is anything I am eating! Our special time together is going to [the beach] and having a coffee or lunch down [the main street], sometimes this might entail doggie ice-cream from the [icecream] shop if it's hot and it's time for a treat!

Figure 7: Missy
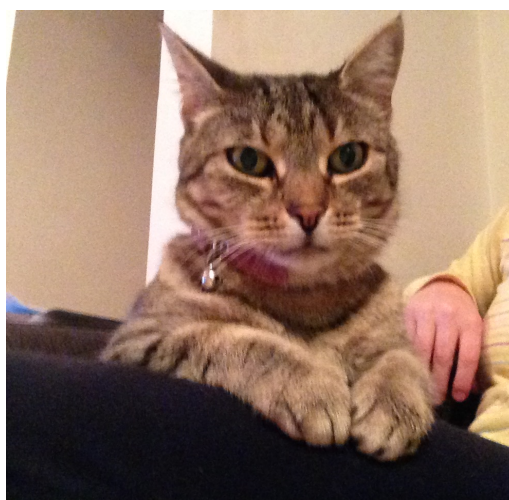
Name: Missy

Breed: Tortoise-shell domestic short hair

Birthday: 4th January, 11yrs old

Bio: Adopted from the RSPCA South Australia by my Mum and myself. Loves being the centre of attention and a bit of a diva! She's very affectionate to anyone who will scratch her ears. Loves to snuggle on the bed at nighttime and purr loudly until I fall asleep. Enjoys hiding in the grass outside and exploring anything and everything, if there is a nook or cranny she's in there investigating, very inquisitive! My favourite food is chicken and tuna (only Greenseas because I'm very

fussy). My favourite activity is hiding amongst the washing when it is hanging inside on the airer and running up and down the bathtub pulling down all the towels in the middle of the night, this has been dubbed "Mad Missy Time".

Figure 8: Ari

Name: Ari

DOB not sure but about April 2015

Ari was a rescue pup from the APY Lands, the only survivor of her litter. Her breed is unknown but suggestions are she has kelpie, greyhound, and dingo among other things. She came down to Adelaide with Adelaide All Breed Dog Rescue and I adopted her at 16 weeks of age. I was told her name means Peace. I decided to keep the name because she responded to it, it finished in ..ee which is one of my criteria for a dogs' name and I thought it had some meaning given her back ground.

She is a regular beach walker and loves the water and balls. A little hyper active but quite quick to pick up new ideas during training ... it is me that is a little slack on the training front!

Figure 9: Benny

Name:Benny

Benny the cat came to us via a death of a family member. He is about 10 years old we think. Neither of us sought out to have a cat but have come to love Benny. He has shown he can take whatever is dished up including numerous foster puppies over the years. He does find Ari's over-exuberance to be a little challenging at times but manages to maintain his composure and has never resorted to hissing!!

Benny is a mixed breed that started life in a "random litter of kittens" and spent the next 7 years a much loved pet until the owner died.

Figure 10: Quincy

Name: Quincy

Quincy was born on 6 August 2008 and came to live with my husband and me in September 2008. He's a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel x Maltese and he was absolutely beautiful from day one. My husband was dying as a result of cancer and they were able to bond in the short time they had, until my soul mate died on 28 February 2009. Since then Quincy has been my constant companion and flies with me when I go to Sydney to spend time with my adult children. His closest fur friend is Curtis, the fur baby of my daughter who lives in Sydney.

Quincy was named after the volleyball in the movie Castaway. The volleyball was Chuck's sole companion on the island and allows him to have dialogue in a 'one person only' situation. Just like my Quincy. Also the movie was filmed in Fiji, where [husband] and I had lived and worked in the early 2000's.

Quincy loves humans and is ok with other animals for short periods, but prefers to return to his familiar human contact. He has attended both puppy training and is a graduate of

Scholars in Collars basic training, where he learned to respond to the 'clicker' system and a variety of words. He continues to be easy to train as long as he is rewarded with his second favourite thing... food! Quincy's favourite place is sitting on the shoulders of his human when you are comfortable on a chair or lounge. He loves to touch humans and spends the majority of his time with me.

Quincy loves wearing his winter jackets especially his purple hoodie.

Quincy has his own facebook page where he shares photos of his humans and furfriends. Also advice about taking care of your fur family member.

The three main worries I have around Quincy are that he does not always respond to 'come' and has escaped from my front door on several occasions, including jumping into a person's car, when she stopped to help, secondly his from left are bowed and due to his breeding he has a long body (more spaniel like) on short legs (maltese) and large spaniel like feet. My vet has said it is likely he will have pain in the future and possible surgery. Neither of which I want for Quincy, but I have had pet insurance in his name since he was a few months old. My third and biggest worry is that one day I will have to let him go to the Rainbow Bridge and I can't bear to think how I will cope.

Figure 11: Bear

Name: Bear (left)

Bear is a ragdoll cat who is almost three years old. Bear is a spirited, independent cat who would love nothing more than to go outside all day and explore. After many escape's at various households, we decided to keep him indoors due to his lack of street smarts. Bear loves being alone, sleeping a lot and catching anything that flies, however when he wants love, he makes it known. He will cuddle into you in the bed, rub against you constantly and loves being held and patted, producing a large purr when he is happy. We have friends who hate cats, but say that the only cat they like is Bear. Bear loves people (especially males) and isn't shy when meeting new people. Bear knows when something is wrong and will always give you extra love during these times. He also loves biting anything he can get his teeth into.

Figure 12: Philippe

Name: Philippe (right)

We got Philippe, known as 'snuffles' at the RSPCA when Bear was just over a year old. Philippe was only around 8 weeks old, a scrawny, tiny little black and white kitty with ribs protruding and a silent meow. He was alone in a cage, and although there was an abundance of beautiful, needy cats and kittens, something

about him clawing at the side of the cage melted my heart. There were many warnings about how to slowly introduce Bear and Philippe with recommendations to separate them and slowly introduce them to each other's scent and sounds over weeks and months. When we brought Philippe home, the plan was to keep him in the laundry, to heed the advice of all, however Philippe had different plans and quickly escaped through the house. When Bear first saw Philippe, he hissed but didn't attack. Philippe was more interested in exploring the house. With our careful observation, Philippe explored his new home, with Bear watching on from afar. That evening they slowly got closer to one another. After a night of separation, the next morning we were worried that they would attack one another when we heard some loud cat noises. Alas, they were just playing, much to our pleasurable shock. They were best friends already, and started eating their meals together and playing. Philippe followed Bear around everywhere he went and instantly was Bear's little brother, sometimes to Bear's dismay. Philippe had a lot of health issues, having some bad viruses, and a rare disease for cats, cryptosporidium. After several vet visits, and lots of medication and testing different foods, months later, he finally started putting on weight and was looking much more like a healthier cat. Philippe has become more independent and has a lot more street smarts than Bear. Philippe did not like being touched or cuddled in any way when we first got him, but now it warms our hearts every time he rubs up against us, plays with us, or sleeps in the bed with us. Now we can pat him for around a minute before he runs away, and he will come to us for love instead of us chasing him. He has come a long way and gets better every day. He still gets scared with new people, but once he loves someone, he loves them forever. He will always follow his big brother around and love him the most (maybe after food).

Figure 13: Luke

Name: Luke

Jed is a 6 year old keeshond cross Japanese Spitz, but looks much more like a keeshond. He is the most well behaved dog I have ever met, and will probably ever meet. Luke lived in north Queensland until we purchased a house and brought him down to Adelaide. Brighton beach is Luke's favourite place in the world, and he loves interacting with other dogs, although can be somewhat weary of them. He also loves cats. When Luke first saw Bear and Philippe he chased them around just wanting to play, but the cats were obviously scared of him having not encountered dogs prior to this. Eventually, they all became relatively

good friends in their own way, especially Luke and Bear who would tease each other and chase each other around. Luke loves love and hates being alone. He just wants to be with people constantly and has a huge heart. Jed would not hurt a fly and if told off for doing something wrong will be sad until he gets a hug and told that we still love him. Luke is highly obedient, and the only two times he may not listen to orders is firstly when chasing cats and secondly if he really, really wants some food. Every morning Luke would jump into bed and cuddle into me, wanting his morning bed and love time. He would hate to get up, unless we were doing something exciting i.e. a walk, or trip somewhere or even just spending time in the garden. Luke could be very stubborn if he wanted to, and sometimes not go outside for a wee if he knew we were not going to be home all day. He is the type of dog that would prefer to get a bladder infection than say goodbye to anyone, even for a couple of hours. He has a bigger heart than most people and would do anything for the people that he loves.

Figure 14: Perry

Name: Perry

Perry is a 16 year old toy Pomeranian, originally named Cricket for his jumping, excited personality. Now at 16 years of age, and riddled with arthritis, he sleeps a lot, but still loves being in the sunshine, food and wandering around. Perry didn't even realise that he moved house and lived with two cats now, just as the cats were not disturbed by him. Perry is the one that everyone gives so much attention too, and is so excited and shocked when they see him because he is so small. Everyone thinks he is a puppy, or a puppy of Luke, and when told his age and that yes he is in fact fully grown, and has been for a long time, they are almost so much more excited. Perry doesn't really care about these people and just wants to keep sniffing everything, but he's always in the mood for a long belly rub. Once you start rubbing Perry's belly, he never wants you to stop. Almost everyday it was a surprise to see he was still alive, but he is a trooper that isn't fazed by much. He will keep yapping away until he gets what he wants, which is generally toilet time, food or love. Much like a baby, Perry has a gorgeous spirit and despite the years working against him, he continues to act like a youthful puppy.

Figure 15: Eva
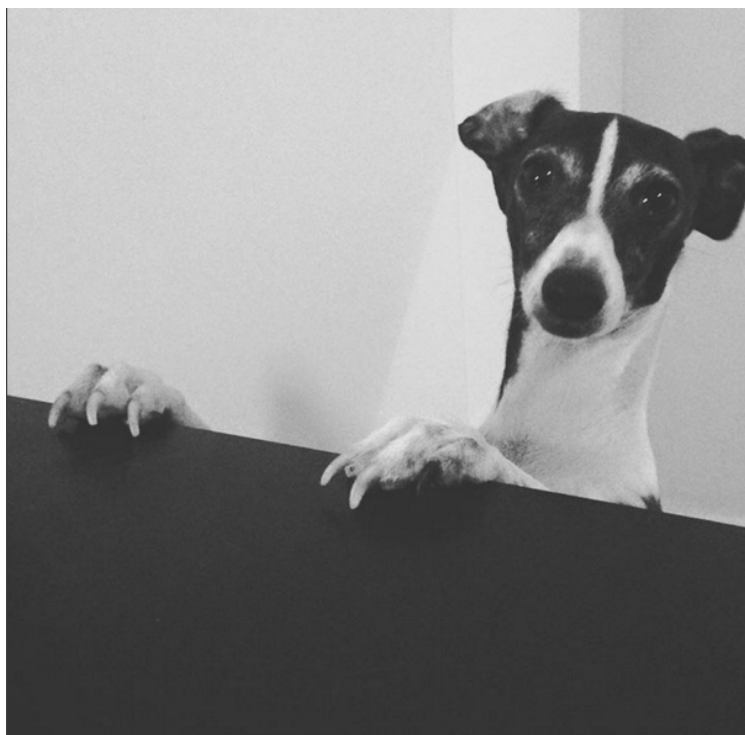
Name: Eva

Figure 16: Angie & Mischief

*Names: Angie (left) &
Mischief (right)*

5. Analysis

Interview and observation data was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is useful for providing a detailed and complex account of qualitative data, but has been criticised for lack of consistency as the theoretical flexibility that enables rich interpretations also means there is little agreement on how a rigorous and reliable analysis should be done (Nowell et al 2017). Reliability of analysis can be improved by a clear statement of epistemological and theoretical framing of research, as well as providing sufficient detail to demonstrate the rigour with which the analysis has been undertaken. Following the recommendations outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell et al (2017), I analysed my data in 6 phases using Nvivo 12.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data involves a deep immersion in the data to become familiar with the content (Braun & Clarke 2006). I transcribed the interviews and field notes, taking notes on any potential common themes or ideas that stood out in the process e.g. 'lack of depiction of cats except "internet cats"… cat knowledge acquired from having cats - less outside reinforcement [than dogs]'. Once each interview was transcribed I read through the transcript, continuing to make notes that would contribute to the generation of initial codes in phase 2 (Braun & Clarke 2006; Nowell et al 2017).

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. Data was coded inductively in NVivo 12 by highlighting extracts from the transcripts and assigning them a code that captured their essence (Braun & Clarke 2006). Once all transcripts were coded I reviewed the data extracts in each code to ensure the classifications were appropriate and, in the process, identified extracts that should have been coded to additional codes. I included the text either side of relevant passages when coding so that the context of quotes was evident when reviewing extracts within codes. This increases the validity of coding by ensuring quotes are not taken out of context (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Phase 3: Searching for themes. As can be seen in figure 17, codes were then organised into themes — overarching ideas that encompass several codes into a broader narrative (Braun & Clarke 2006). Some codes were included in multiple themes, such as 'Pet behaviour' which was included in several themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. Once codes were collated into themes the data extracts in each theme were reviewed to ensure the categorisation was correct (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. Themes were then named and defined so as to outline the essence of the theme and what is interesting or pertinent about it (see figure 17 for names and definitions).

Phase 6: Producing the Report.

Themes were then organised into three distinct narratives that became the analysis chapters of this thesis. Some themes overlapped two or three chapters, the distribution of themes into chapters is documented in figure 17.

Figure 17: Coding Map

* denotes a code that has been included in multiple themes

Initial Codes	Consolidated Themes	Corresponding Chapter
Classification of Petness Naming Speaking for Discourse Consumerism Nonhuman animal Personality Nonhuman animal exclusion Acquisition Family	Creating nonhuman animals as pets/non-pets: The material, interactive and discursive construction of nonhuman animals as pets or non-pets	4,5
Owner identity Early experiences (When first brought home) Prior expectation/experiences Barriers to pet ownership Information sources Information wish they had prior to relationship *Family	Development of owner identity: Process and factors contributing to the development of 'owner' identities	4
Death Pets' grief Why love companion animals Why have companion animals Surprising aspects of relationship	Emotion: Manifestation and recognition of human or nonhuman animals' emotions	4
Companion Animal relationships with other nonhuman species Nonhuman animal exclusion Nonhuman animal inclusion in home (including pet 'stuff')	Companion animal-Companion animal interaction: Manifestation and owner facilitation of past and present interactions between pets in the home	5,6
Nonhuman animal exclusion Human-Nonhuman animal Interaction Everyday life with pet(s) Human-Companion animal communication Human-Companion animal activities	Human-Companion animal interaction: Past and present interactions between owners and pets	4,5,6
Companion animal agency *Surprising aspects of relationship Pet Behaviour	Expressions of nonhuman animal agency: Descriptions and demonstrations of nonhuman animals' agency	5,6

*Pet Behaviour Limits on nonhuman animal agency *Nonhuman animal inclusion in home (including pet 'stuff') *Nonhuman animal exclusion	Constraint within the home: limiting of nonhuman animals' behaviour and uses of space	5
Challenging problematic relations/power dynamics * Nonhuman animal inclusion in home (including pet 'stuff') * Companion animal agency	Decentring Human in relationship: examples of privileging companion animal wants/needs over maintaining human dominance	5,6
Compliance with anthropocentric norms * Pet Behaviour * Limits on nonhuman animal agency	Inside/Outside Nexus: Anthropocentrism infiltrating home/public space	5,6
Pet displacement What needs to happen to make sure pets are well looked after Ethics of pet keeping * Barriers to pet ownership	Attitudes to broader issues around pet keeping: owner beliefs around issues and 'best practice' of pet keeping	6
Attitude change * Human-Nonhuman animal Interaction * Consumerism * Information sources * Surprising aspects of relationship	Rupture moments: factors contributing to attitudinal shifts around pet keeping practices	6
* Information sources * Owner identity * Ethics of pet keeping * Speaking for * Challenging problematic relations/power dynamics	Challenging human-companion animal power imbalance: active efforts to challenge (owner perceived) problematic attitudes and practices around pets/ petkeeping	6
* Limits on nonhuman animal agency * Pet Behaviour * Compliance with anthropocentric norms	Compliance/lack of resistance to power imbalance: Complicity with or actively upholding human-centric norms in petkeeping	6

6. Conclusion

Multispecies entanglements, and the social world more broadly, are complex. As such, there is no singular approach that can adequately capture the "mess" of these entanglements. However, if human-companion animal relationships are to be better understood, capturing the "mess" of them is exactly what needs to happen. In this chapter I have argued that methods are social and political, not just describing but enacting the social world they purport to study. In many instances, for research concerning nonhuman animals, the social world enacted is a wholly anthropocentric one. Thus to create a methodological approach that is equipped to deal with the tangled reality of human-companion animal relationships, it is necessary to employ a "method assemblage" that

can effectively visibilise the experiences of companion animals and challenge their marginalisation.

As mentioned in chapter 2: Literature Review, this project borrows from critical animal studies and symbolic interactionism, in a step towards research that is able to capture multi-species relations and understand them as a heavily human-centric phenomenon, while creating space for nonhuman participation and maintaining a stance for the betterment of the material existences of nonhuman animals. This is no small task and there are certainly limitations to my approach. Research with nonhuman animals comes with unique ethical considerations around informed consent for nonhuman participants and the huge power imbalance between human and nonhuman interactants in the interview setting. Keeping nonhuman names unchanged and including their photos in this thesis is valuable from a data point of view, but ethically challenging as principles around anonymity are not equally applied to nonhuman and human participants. So the question remains, is the intrusion of this project on the lives of nonhuman animals justifiable? I believe it is. The rich data obtained, as will be seen in the chapters that follow, facilitates a deeper understanding of the tangled web of social relations in which companion animals live. The inclusion of their images gives them presence in a space in which nonhuman animals can easily be lost or relegated to an object of research. In allowing them their names, and displaying their faces I aim to remind the reader that there are lives behind the term "pet" or "companion animal". This grounding of the research in real individuals is, I think, invaluable and justifies the intrusion insofar as it can be justified.

Though admittedly there are shortcomings to this approach, it is unlikely a perfect method exists that would fully encapsulate the companion animal experience of relationships from a non-anthropocentric position whilst still encompassing the structural and discursive factors contributing to the material conditions of their existence. Given this, I am not making the argument that this approach is the answer to a search for a methodology that is fully species inclusive, but rather that it is merely a step in the right direction towards research for and with nonhuman animals, rather than simply about them. In the remainder of this thesis I will present my findings and discussion, and in doing so demonstrate that this methodology has facilitated a critical, empirical exploration of human-companion animal relationships both reject the "use" of nonhuman animals as pets, while furthering our understanding of them.

4

Making Pets

This chapter explores the journey of "becoming pet" in western society. Building on existing accounts of the social construction of pets outlined in the literature review, I further problematise the depiction of "companion animal" as a taken for granted category, demonstrating that it is much more complex than an anthropocentric narrative would suggest. I unpack how my participants were entwined with the broader social processes that enable a deconstruction of minded agential (nonhuman) beings and the (re)construction of companion animals that follows. I argue that in this constructed form, the companion animal has value only insofar as this is bestowed by a human owner or carer, and thus although pets may be considered the best possible outcome for our relationships with domesticated nonhuman animals, this only applies to a portion of those designated as companion animals. By acknowledging this, we can begin to understand the human-companion animal relationship as part of a broader, anthroparchal system of relations. Ideas around what constitutes "pet" and "petness" are not fixed, and rather depend on owner classifications which reflect self-constructed owner identities. This individual validation of nonhuman animals-as-pets results in simultaneously held, conflicting narratives of pet-keeping that are allowed to exist unchallenged when the complexity of these relationships is not adequately considered. In short, critically exploring the making of "pets" highlights a process that is human-centric, actively exploitative and cleverly constructed in ways that disguise problematic aspects of pet keeping. While human owners report very real feelings of love and respect towards their animal companions, I do not foreground these; doing so would reinforce the trend of centring human affection in discussions of companion animal experiences and owner emotions have been covered well elsewhere (see, for instance, Charles 2014; Irvine 2008a). However I do consider the role of loving interactions as a means by which nonhuman animals resist their construction as mere goods, but argue that the clear value of this interaction necessitates acknowledgement of the emotional labour of pets. This chapter, then, positions the creation of pets as something which is done *to* nonhuman animals for human benefit, but also demonstrates the need to critically consider the complexities of these entanglements to uncover the challenges and potential they hold for nonhuman animal recognition.

1. Becoming "Pet"

As multiple scholars have noted, anyone who shares their lives with a companion animal would be in no doubt that they are thinking, feeling beings, fully capable of independent

thought. And yet, much of our society and, in fact, the practice of pet keeping itself relies upon the premise that nonhuman animals are of lesser emotional and mental capacity than humans, thus justifying their forced breeding and sale as goods (Fudge 2008). In this section, I draw on the literature around the social construction of pets outlined in chapter 2: literature review, as well as Collard's (2014) work on the creation of exotic pet commodities to argue that the creation of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities is a two part process. First, we must deconstruct the nonhuman animal as minded, emotional beings, effectively separating them from any sign of the social lives they led prior to commodification. Second, we must actively remake them as "pets" — commodified beings who are lively enough to provide affection without demonstrating a level of mental or emotional capacity that might trouble their owned status. While the owners in my study were more actively engaged with the remaking process, I begin with a discussion of the deconstruction of nonhuman animals as minded beings, drawing on data which highlights the ways owners limit (or are limited) in their engagement with their pets' lives prior to being owned. This separation then facilitates the construction of human-pet relationships as loving and unproblematic, despite the exploitative practices upon which these entanglements are built.

1.1 Deconstruction of nonhuman animals as minded beings

Collard (2014) argues that in order to be reconstructed as "things" or "lively commodities", nonhuman animals must first be detached from their social and physical environments. In the context of the exotic pet trade, '[t]he objective is to secure the animal from its ecological and biological supports without killing it' (Collard 2014, p.156). While the context of "domesticated" pets is a point of difference, this is a difference of degree, not of kind, with traditional pet species also separated from their social and environmental ties in order to facilitate human commodification of them. However this separation is not absolute, as Collard argues the prior ties nonhuman animals experience also function as a sort of biocapital. For companion animals, their bloodlines, socialisation and the conditions under which they are bred all contribute to their marketability:

> We liked the way she [breeder] talked about her dogs ...she only bred one dog at a time, she didn't believe in having multiple litters um that they were in her home um that they were basically on alert for when Bernadette, his mom Bernadette so cute Bernadette and Frank were his mum and dad, how cool is that? And um you know they were on alert for when Bernadette was going to go into labour and she was going to deliver all the puppies and we've actually got birth certificates with the exact time and date when he was born and um and I just thought this is a woman that has not just got dogs in cages just letting them do what they do, you know? She actually is engaged with the whole thing but not completely fruit loopy. But then um and then we learned more about the socialisation and how important that

was and and you know we just went that's really cool because it's not possible to find lots of people with glasses and beards (Laura).

Interestingly, awareness of the above aspects of life prior to ownership did not lead owners to question or even notice the social and biological bonds that were severed in order for their pet to become 'theirs'. Outside of a general awareness of the social and environmental conditions pets had lived in prior, participants did not mention their companions' experiences or social relationships prior to being owned. As will be discussed in chapter 6: challenging human-companion animal relationships, some participants realised this blindspot during the interview, with one in particular remarking that they had never thought about their pet's familial relationships or whether they miss their biological parents or siblings. The participant quoted above, although noticeably enamoured with the parental narrative presented by the breeder, interestingly referred to the breeder as their companion's 'original mummy' — that is, the human breeder rather than the nonhuman animal's biological mother. In all instances, biological parents and their offspring were denied any emotional experiences tied to their separation, with owner narratives restricting consideration of life prior to being owned to aspects that related to qualities of their pet-commodity (temperament, colouring, prior mistreatment). Participants rarely took steps to maintain companion animals' bonds with their biological family — the only example of this was a participant whose close family member purchased their dog's sibling and they were able to maintain contact between the canine brothers as a result. This denial of emotions reinforces the narrative that pets are creatures of instinct (rather than emotion) (Fudge 2008), and thus justifies nonhuman animals' "use" as companions.

Participants also spoke with mixed feelings about the experience of being 'judged' as either worthy or unworthy of adopting a pet. While one participant recognised the reasons for, and benefit of, a thorough screening process for prospective owners:

> It's like getting a house loan or a car loan or something like that you have to ask all these questions. I guess coz it's not just … 'go buy a dog today' coz it's gonna change your life. Yeah so I think people aren't prepared for that and that's probably why people need to be made aware (April).

Other owners were less appreciative of being asked to prove they were worthy of a pet. Those who were critical of strict placement criteria had either been denied a companion animal previously or refused to take part in an interview they anticipated to be overly invasive. While this aversion to being judged as unfit (or at least needing to prove fitness) is heavily tied up in humans' identity construction — and shock that they might be labelled as unfit owners — it also speaks to the unequal valuing of humans and nonhuman animals. These participants had gone on to procure their companions from breeders who were less 'fruit loopy', meaning that they didn't ask too many questions about the humans buying their nonhuman animals. The majority of participants in my study had not gone

through a rigorous interview process prior to acquiring their pet(s), even those who had adopted nonhuman animals from shelters known to have a screening policy. This is relevant to the deconstruction of nonhuman animals as minded beings as it immediately diminishes prospective companion animals' best interests, instead positioning them as "things" for whom one does not have to be worthy.

1.2 (Re)construction of nonhuman animals as companions

Once nonhuman animals have been effectively separated from their social and environmental links, they can be re-linked in a manner that reflects their use value to humans (Cole & Stewart 2014; Collard 2014). Collard explains that, in the case of 'wild' animals captured to become exotic pets:

> To survive in these new networks, animals must adjust to a radically different life. They do not have kin; they do not search for their own food, they do not fly, swim, or swing through the canopy; they do not reproduce, unless they are selectively bred in a controlled manner. Instead, they might be given iPads, stuffed animals, colourful plastic rings, and ice cream. They also have different bodies, with clipped wings or surgically removed teeth or claws. They might even be dressed in clothing and diapers. Their survival now depends on the extent to which not only the new life is adequately enriching but also whether they can unlearn wild behaviours and acquire new habits and methods of communicating (p.158).

The domestication of traditional pet species is so extensive that in some ways it is difficult to imagine what a life outside of human ownership might consist of, however some aspects of owned life are a clear departure from life prior to, or outside of, becoming a pet-commodity and thus can be linked with this reconstruction process. For instance, the dogs and cats in my study were sterilised, a common practice that (along with microchipping) is now legally mandated in South Australia once puppies and kittens reach 6 months of age (Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017). All of the nonhuman animals were behaviourally and/or physically controlled and expected to adapt at least somewhat to shared living with humans. If nonhuman animals don't adapt to this new shared life, or when lively commodities are no longer wanted or serving their purpose, they can simply be "unmade" or disposed of — surrendered to shelters or otherwise displaced. "Rescued" companions can be made and un-made time and time again, although the success with which they can be re-made into lively commodities is affected by nonhuman animal agency and the damage inflicted by this cyclic process (Collard 2014; Taylor 2004). This section will consider two lines of re-making which occur concurrently to reinforce nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities: 1) a broader discursive construction of the nonhuman animal-as-pet-commodity that serves to perpetuate the normalisation of certain nonhuman animals as companions, and 2) a micro construction of honorary

personhood that occurs between individual companion animals and their human guardians. Both streams of re-making reflect a broader anthroparchal power structure, in which human privilege and power grants the capacity to decide what constitutes appropriate use of 'other' animals, as well as the power to grant (and revoke) honorary personhood to those who would otherwise not qualify for the privileges attached to this status (Cudworth 2011a). At a broader societal level, the discourse surrounding nonhuman animals generally, and companion animals specifically, reflects and instructs normative patterns of relating between species (Cole & Stewart 2014). While this explains why a version of lived reality is more visible for animal companions, it must be highlighted that what we are talking about is an anthropocentric view of companions' lived realities, one that often affirms the affective gaze through which owned companion animals are cast (Tuan 1984).

Broader societal (re)construction

As discussed in chapter 2: literature review, companion animals are socially constructed through structures and discourses that perpetuate normative expectations of what a pet is, and how they should behave. From the very beginning, the pricing of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities signifies that they are saleable goods. As Zelizer (1985, 1994, 2005) notes, the pricing of "things" in society (from goods to children) is reflective of the values of that culture. Zelizer argues that the transformation of the worth of a child—from useful source of labour to economically worthless but emotionally priceless— saw the price of a child on the baby market skyrocket from $1 for an infant in 1890 to $50,000 in 1939.

> the value of a priceless child became increasingly monetized and commercialized. Ironically, the new market price for babies was set by their non economic, sentimental appeal (Zelizer, 1985, p.64).

During this time, babies were advertised in the newspaper alongside companion animals and goods for sale, and "baby farms" became a huge social issue. Changes to the fee structure of adoptions were employed to separate the "'cost" from the child—essentially re-constructing adoption costs as fees for services, rather than an exchange of money for child (Zelizer 1985).

Parallels between the commodification of babies in Zelizer's account and the sale of pets in the modern social world are clear. Like the children in Zelizer's work, the most aesthetically desirable pets fetch the highest price tags, with purebred nonhuman animals fetching costs in the thousands while those from shelters "go for" a few hundred dollars. Unlike children, the fee structure around pets remains, for the most part, a cash-for-goods arrangement — only one purchased nonhuman animal in my study had the "cost" separated from the kitten, with purchase fees instead paying for a voucher to cover the cost of desexing the kitten. One participant in my study recalled purchasing their cat in a "sale" type deal, clearly reflecting the links between the sale of goods and the sale of pets:

> ...we picked out Mara after an interview with her and she was a kitten
> and then they had two for the price of one so we bought home her
> brother Clint (Dawn).

The use of this typical "sales" structure of pricing reinforces the construction of companions as a type of 'living good'. Other participants focussed on the "value for money" with particular avenues of acquiring pets:

> I mean rescue dogs are sort of a little bit cheaper but then they also
> come like all, like um desexed and microchipped and all of that kind
> of stuff. And he came as a puppy and he was just from a little.. that he
> wasn't maltreated or anything and getting him from as a puppy we
> knew that we could shape him and um yeah I dunno how I'd feel
> about getting an older rescue dog coz I'd just be concerned about
> their history and stuff but my sister got a pedigree german shepherd
> from a breeder and he like has severe anxiety issues ... and that kind
> of made me think it's still very much pot luck you just don't really
> know what you're gonna get and you don't want to pay all that money
> just to still get.. yeah (Audrey).

The framing of rescued companions (for the most part obtained from a shelter) as good value, or 'a little bit cheaper' with extras like desexing included, as well as a potential risk of older nonhuman animals, is reminiscent of the framing of inanimate second hand goods (Spiller 2014). Keith Spiller (2014) argues that second hand goods come with added questions around authenticity and supply chain and so need to be re-invested with value. This held true with many of the rescued pets in my study as participants recalled making sure there wasn't anything "wrong" with their nonhuman animals and often preferred those who were obtained as infants so that there was less chance of trauma being inflicted at some point in the "supply chain". These nonhuman animals often had value re-instilled through online marketing that utilised attractive photos and biographies emphasising personality and benefits (such as "friendly" or "loves to cuddle"). The only nonhuman animals who differed from this pattern of overt commodification were those who were inherited or acquired through non-transactional means. For instance two participants had acquired their pets after the death of the nonhuman animals' original owner who was a close friend. Jack the "horse" was rescued from being tangled in a barbed wire fence and was simply kept as a pet after he healed. Outside of these exceptional situations, broader structures effectively construct nonhuman animals as pet-commodities, goods for sale.

Nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities must be responsive and interactive, 'lively' enough, but not go so far as to have actual emotions or behave in ways that contradict human intended uses for them (Collard 2014). Nonhuman animals who are too alive become difficult commodities who do not live up to their promised purpose. Thus while scholars have described a defining feature of the pet as 'non-functional', "affection" should be considered a commodity in and of itself—requiring constant emotional labour

(Hochschild 1983) on the part of the nonhuman animal that, if no longer performed, jeopardises the nonhuman animal's "pet" status, raising the possibility of their disposability. Companion animals may also be bred, often with use of excessive force (Pierce 2016), in order to produce a steady supply of "pet" animals. Accordingly, companion animals can be conceptualised as both producer of goods and goods themselves, with their emotional labour, offspring and selves all able to be commodified in the pet industry (Torres 2007). This conceptualisation of companion animals as both producer and product is messy, but necessarily so; for in companion animals we are dealing with a tricky liminal space—between object and subject (and sometimes object again), between nature and culture, between nonhuman animal and human. It follows that our conceptualisation of companion animals would occupy that same awkward space —unable to settle solely in one concrete area.

The multi-billion dollar pet industry shapes the culture around companion animals, influencing how owners feed, clothe and interact with them (Nast 2006a). There is a focus on the aesthetic aspects of pets, with products often emphasising "cuteness" or infantilising nonhuman animals, rather than foregrounding their mental and physical needs. The companion animal commodity also provides many opportunities to find extrinsic value in the relationship experienced through what one can do with a companion animal, though not "with" in the sense of intersubjective activity (Beverland et al 2008). In this context, a companion animal commodity's worth might be determined or influenced by the extent to which they are able to accommodate or facilitate their owner's desired activities. Inherent in this is the suppression of nonhuman animal agency and minimising of human owner's responsibilities, as owners who focus excessively on the external value of their pet relationships tend to pay less attention to necessary caring duties (Beverland et al 2008). This aesthetic pet culture is further supported by media (as seen in chapter 2: literature review) and gaming depictions of companion animals as cute, infant-like and devoted to humans. Cole and Stewart (2014) note that media depictions of pets encourage the infantilisation of them, and often show anthropomorphised representations of nonhuman animals "enjoying" human activities (such as playing with a turntable) further reinforcing the human-centrism of these relationships.

Companion animals are also shaped by the legislative frameworks that govern them. Dinesh Wadiwel (2015) highlights the discriminatory regulation of companion animals in anthroparchal societies which "involve compulsory body modification, regimes of surveillance, and controls over movement and bodily function" (p.203). Such regulations perpetuate hierarchies which place nonhuman animals well below humans, and reinforce that "society" is really "human society". While certain companion animals (usually only cats and dogs are included in these regulations) gain limited access to this society, it is very clear that the terms of their doing so are dictated by humans and as such their public behaviour should subscribe to human standards. In chapter 5: choreographing human-companion animal relationships the impact of this restriction on relationships in public will be further explore. For now, suffice to say that the legislative regulation of companion

animals serves as an important factor in the (re)creation of nonhuman animals as pet-commodities in both expressly defining who is and isn't considered a pet under this legislation and how they should be expected to behave in human society.

Our treatment of companion animals as a society appears at face value to be one of consumerism—pets are priced, bought and sold as goods and disposable. With no inherent value of their own, it is really only "owned'" pets that are seen as valued (though as Taylor [2010] noted, unowned nonhuman animals in a shelter may be valued as 'pets in waiting' by dedicated shelter staff, however this valuing is specific to the workers and does not extend to broader society). Nevertheless, as Fudge (2008) argues, one of the legitimating narratives underpinning pet keeping is that companion animals love us and choose to be owned. This narrative depends on an inter-subjective (re)construction of nonhuman animals as commodities, one that is accompanied by a perception of mutual affection. It is to these micro-interactions that I now turn.

1.3 Inter-subjective (re)construction

The intrinsic valuation and bestowal of personhood occurs at an intersubjective, rather than broader societal, level. The privacy and control afforded to the home space and intimate relations allows humans to construct their pets within a framework that does not necessarily reflect broader societal norms, without posing any real challenge to the normative patterns of human-nonhuman relations. Several works point to the existence of four elements of 'petness' which form the foundation of our scholarly understanding of the "pet": (1) being named, (2) not being eaten, (3) sharing the domestic space and (4) providing entertainment and emotional companionship for humans (Arluke & Sanders 1996; Tague 2008; Thomas 1983). In this section I will explore each of these functions of 'petness' with reference to the data obtained through my research in order to demonstrate that whilst these elements might apply to *most* pets, they are no longer sufficient to encompass the lived realities of modern human-companion animal relationships.

1.3.1 Naming

From a sociological perspective, naming is a practice that contributes to the recognition of the individual at an interpersonal and State level. It is also reflective of broader structural patterns such as gender, ethnicity and class and can thus give insight into the social construction of the individual within society. In relation to the construction of pets, naming represents a recognition of the companion animal as an individual and creates a sort of "honorary personhood" which allows the nonhuman animal to be temporarily viewed as belonging within patterns of human relations.

Norbert Elias talks about naming as an essential part of recognition of the individual citizen by the State, with the registration of newborn children now a compulsory practice enforced through the necessity of birth certificates on many occasions through one's life (2001, p.183). For Elias, names serve a dual purpose:

> on one hand the name gives the individual person a symbol of his or her uniqueness and an answer to the question who that person is in his own eyes, it also serves as a visiting card. It indicates who one is in the eyes of other (p.184).

From this, he purports, we can see that a person's existence as both an individual and social being are 'indissoluble'.

Erving Goffman (1963) states that naming is 'a very common but not very reliable way of fixing identity' (p.59); names act as an 'identity peg' of sorts, tying the individual to a set of 'life history items' (p.57) that constitute their identity as a unique individual. Goffman also mentions other 'identity pegs' such as the photographic image in one's memory that ties the individual to a visual cue (p.56). Jane Pilcher (2016) picks up on this point to argue that sociologists need to consider naming as an embodied practice, reflective of broader social processes:

> Once the body of a new-born individual has been 'forenamed' by others, based on the interpretation that has been made of its sex, then a whole host of other negating cultural practices also begin to be enacted to construct and reinforce feminine or masculine embodied identity. These range from, for example, colour-coded celebratory balloons and flowers at birth, to gender-appropriate clothing and toys in childhood, and as I discuss shortly, adult women 'giving up' their birth surname at marriage in order to 'take' the surname of their husband. (p.768).

She also explores the de-identifying process of rendering bodies nameless, 'an expression of power and control' as seen in the prison system or the Holocaust when imprisoned individuals were numbered, rather than named (p.773). This is a sentiment echoed in nonhuman animal studies works, as numbering nonhuman animals signifies a denial of personhood that renders them killable as unwanted pets (Taylor 2007), laboratory animals (Phillips 1994) or food (Gillespie 2018).

The practice of naming pets is a similarly embodied process, reflective of broader social practices such as species and gender. A 2007 study undertaken by Ernest L. Abel and Michael L. Kruger found that American and Australian naming practices reflected consistent gender related patterns for both children and pets—the same 'naming rules' applied for both. This is supported by my findings which saw non-human participants' names following traditional gendered patterns. One participant recalled searching for a gender appropriate name for her dog:

> I have a bit of a thing with names. I spent ages researching female names for a dog … they both basically mean beautiful flower. (Willow)

In this instance, the name chosen and its associated meanings are congruent with a form of emphasised femininity, in which beauty and fragility are seen as undeniably feminine (Connell 1987).

However, nonhuman animal naming can also be used to reflect the separation of non-human species as "other", a being not bound to the norms around human naming. These names were not expressly linked with any gendered or ethnic identity, but rather were seen to reflect the "personality" of the nonhuman animals themselves.

Pets' names, like human names, are similarly important in constructing a unique identity for the individual nonhuman animal. In a column for *Veterinary Economics (2013)*, Marty Becker writes that in asking clients about the origins of their pets names, one communicates that they are a person that values the companion animals. He goes on to argue that pet names, and the stories behind them, contribute to the individuality of the nonhuman animal: 'When you combine the name with the story, each pet is as unique as DNA' (2013, p.10).

For participants, the act of naming was an important process that warranted careful consideration to ensure the chosen name "matched" the pet's personality:

> Philippe was originally called snuffles when we got him from the RSPCA um we did not like that name at all, did not want a cat called snuffles, so we thought alright we'll change it and actually ended up changing it to um i want to say Rafa like Rafael for a little bit. But that didn't suit him either like it didn't. It was more just about like what suited him and eventually for some reason Philippe just suited him like we just…again just going through names and trying to figure it out and you sort of say names and try to see how they react and see how it feels for you to call out their name and all that and then Philippe felt like a comfortable name and he sort of seemed black and white and looked a bit french so we thought it suited him. (Kelly)

However not all nonhuman animals considered "pets" were named, and not all named nonhuman animals were considered "pets".

The first example comes in the form of a chicken named Helga. When asked if Helga was considered to be a pet, the participant replied:

> No. ah its interesting isn't it? Um no .. no she's got a name ah coz I don't see her everyday I go down and check her water and food every couple of days um I mean I like to see her and it would be lovely to have her wandering around the yard but no I don't see her as a pet. (James)

In this instance, naming is clearly not indicative of pet/non-pet status—this participant lived with a dog and a chicken, both named. This suggests that "petness" is determined by

more than naming—something else prevented Helga from being considered pet; a point which will be explore in greater detail later in the chapter.

Similarly, non-naming was not uniformly linked with a denial of "petness". Two participants shared their lives with a large (indeterminate) number of small (pet) birds— too many to count, let alone name. Instead a notable few were identified by distinguishing attributes: 'the dark brown', 'the whistler'. Notably, while these distinguished few were considered to have personalities, the less-identifiable birds did not— reflecting Goffman's (1963) 'identity pegs' (or lack thereof) and their importance to perceived uniqueness. Yet in this instance, the lack of names—though linked to a lack of personality—did not change the 'pet' status of the birds in question.

However, other participants did view naming (or refraining from) as synonymous with an nonhuman animals pet/non-pet status. One participant who lived with dogs, birds, and guinea pigs had named only the dogs. When asked if he considered the birds and guinea pigs to be pets, he responded 'no. I don't think their engagement with us is the same' (Phillip). Similarly another participant who lived with both companion and "stock" animals viewed naming as part of a functional process by which "Rescued" "stock" animals transitioned to pet:

> If I have a rescue um I just come up with a name, it's whatever I think of because if you're talking to them maybe they can't understand what you say but they do understand the inflections and it's like are you going to say 'you big fat heap of beef' or are you going to actually call it a name? So yeah Jack's just the name that I gave him. (Bridget)

In this instance, naming was not necessarily linked to affection—this came later if the "rescue" survived—but was definitely linked to the transition from stock to companion, and perhaps the anticipation of a future affectionate relationship.

Whether constitutive of pet or non-pet status, these examples of non-naming can be interpreted in line with Pilcher's (2016) conceptualisation of the unnamed body. Regardless of whether adored (as in the case of the birds), exploited ("stock" animals) or treated with indifference (guinea pigs and birds), all of the non-named nonhuman animals are denied an individual uniqueness that can be seen as a reflection of human power in designating who 'counts' as an individual of value, and who does not.

Thus while naming is clearly a significant ritual in both human-human and human-nonhuman animal relations, it is not a necessary condition of "petness". It is, however, a highly socialised process, whereby nonhuman animals are enmeshed in a web of social patterns and practices and constructed as social and unique beings (Cole & Stewart 2014). Therefore, while an interesting and worthy area of study in relation to human relations with nonhuman animals, we must turn to other areas to try to gain a full understanding of what constitutes "petness".

1.3.2 Inedibility

Our relations with other animals are never more uncomfortably contradictory than when considering who we can eat and who we can't. Broadly speaking, in western society, cats and dogs are off the menu—something that becomes starkly obvious in response to those cultures who do eat either (Herzog 2010). Such a disjuncture was detailed by Thomas:

> When Mountstuart Elphinstone, the ex-Governor of Bombay, was travelling in Italy in the 1840s, he reacted with horror to the local habit of cooking nightingales, goldfinches and, worst of all, robins: 'What! Robins! Our household birds! I would as soon eat a child.' Yet in the Elizabethan age 'robin red-breasts' had been 'esteemed a light and good meat' (1983, p. 117).

However, for other species, the food rules may be strictly applied to the individual nonhuman animal, rather than all members of a species. While traditional pet species — those who are mostly sensible in a pet role such as dogs and cats — were not edible and neither were others of their species, this was not the case for other animals. For example, two participants who lived with chickens also ate meat—they wouldn't eat *their* chickens but did not abstain from the entire species. In both cases they didn't hesitate to tell me that they considered their chickens to be pets. Jack the "horse" was not edible, however his owner despite not eating meat herself was not opposed to others of his (biological) species (see discussion below) being eaten and had ties to cattle farming. These findings suggest that inedibility still stands as a defining feature of pets and, more than this, that designation of 'petness' elevates otherwise edible nonhuman animals to the level of non-consumable. That inedibility didn't extend to others belonging to these edible species indicates that nonhuman animals are elevated to petness as individuals — marked as special or deserving of higher status compared to others of their species, thus facilitating their different treatment without challenging normalised flesh-eating practices.

1.3.3 Sharing the home

Thomas writes of pets as 'a creature domestical' (1983, p.112) with 17th century pet dogs being allowed into the home, as well as other traditionally nonhuman animal free places, such as churches, while working dogs were not permitted. This is another area in which modern pet-keeping may differ.

In their 2000-2004 survey of Australian pet owners, Adrian Franklin and Steven Crook found that up to 76% of respondents allowed their companions into some areas of their home (cited in Franklin 2006), and, evidently, that 24% of participants did not allow their nonhuman animals in the house at all. Though Franklin argues that the 50% of respondents who allowed nonhuman animals onto the furniture marks, 'a major shift in their status and position relative to humans and human society' (2006 p.212), the frequency and consistency with which this access was granted was not reported in survey findings. What these findings *do* indicate is that sharing domestic quarters is not a

necessary component of "petness" for modern Australian pet owners, something which shows a marked differentiation from early human-companion animal relationships in which sharing domestic quarters was considered a marker. This variable inclusion into the home is reflected in Gary Varner's (2002) tiered approach to human-pet relations which, though not unproblematic, offers a conceptualisation in which a pet's status is dependent on their human's interaction with, and inclusion of, them. Varner's approach consists of three levels: mere pet, companion animal and domestic partner. A mere pet is one who is neither a companion animal, nor a domestic partner, but still maintains their pet status— Varner gives an example of a dog tied up in a yard with little to no interaction (2002). Even though the dog may— and most likely does— crave interaction with their human, they are restricted from it by the constraints placed on the relationship by the human (2002). Companion animals and domestic partners are both included in the household, but the level of freedom and respect afforded them is dependent on human owners' engagement with them (2002). This approach offers us the opportunity to consider the shared domicile as an important element of human-companion animal relations— for even the mere-pet is defined in its relation to domestic inclusion— but reaffirms that such home-sharing is not a prerequisite for "petness", but rather a complex element of it. The complexities of inter-species space-sharing in the home will be taken up further in chapter 5, however for the discussion at hand it is sufficient to highlight the role of this element in constructing human-nonhuman animal relations.

As my research included other-than-dog pets, such as birds, fish, cats, rats, horses, and cows, the relevance (and suitability) of in-home access was variable depending on the species and habitat arrangements. Based on this, I argue that it is more useful to focus on *why* companion animals are placed in certain spaces in order to understand *how* this placement can inform our understanding of the relationship being studied.

For example, several cat owners lamented having to keep their cats inside, citing safety as the primary reason for doing so (though wildlife destruction was a secondary consideration):

> We had Minty our other previous cat and he sort of would potter
> around a bit more and sort of have more interaction with other
> animals and nature and stuff. But yeah I guess the main thing for
> Ollie was keeping him safe firstly, because we didn't want him getting
> run over ... We didn't want him hurt so that was the main thing of
> keeping him inside. (Sarah)

For these cats, inclusion within the home wasn't necessarily celebrated as owners perceived their companion's desires to be able to leave the home. One participant, who was currently keeping their cats inside but had allowed them to roam more freely in the past, spoke of the challenge in balancing these conflicting interests:

> I know it's better to keep them as indoor cats but this one especially
> she's so much happier when she can get a bit of a stroll outside and
> get a bit more territory under her belt yeah. (Tara)

In this sense, restricted movement was a source of guilt and conflict for many owners— a challenge to an uncritical framing of "inside" pets as undeniably privileged.

In most instances, nonhuman animals who were kept exclusively outside were either too big to physically fit inside (eg. horses, cows), or their accommodation requirements were too big or inappropriate for an in-house location (eg. chickens, birds in aviary, fishes in pond). In all of these cases, the lack of sharing the in-house space did not contradict the nonhuman animal's categorisation as "pet", thus implying that sharing the home is not a necessary requirement for "petness" for some species.

However, whilst sharing the home space was not a necessary condition of "petness", it was linked with "good" ownership. The continuous exclusion of "pet" animals deemed "home suitable" (particularly if it was seen to be to the nonhuman animal's detriment) was not considered an acceptable behaviour:

> My neighbour next door just leaves his dog out. I don't know if you
> remember the other day that huge thunderstorm? That dog was out in
> the thunderstorm and that dog was barking the whole time and I
> thought it's like that guy he's some aussie guy who's working all the
> time and just leaves his dog outside to bark all day … now the dog
> assumes you're going to leave him forever or something like that. It's
> just yeah people don't understand the implications of owning a pet.
> (Grace)

Another participant had tried repeatedly to have a dog that was continuously chained up, removed from their neighbour's house:

> The RSPCA were telling me that .. I've had them twice they've been
> out twice and checked and he's got water he's got shelter he's got
> food… and South Australia doesn't have the law that says that a dog
> must be off lead for a certain period of time every day. and until they
> do they can't do anything. And it's just sad, he just cries, he was
> crying down there before I had to come inside and shut the door. I
> can't stand it, it just breaks my heart I start crying too … (Penny)

The above quotes also highlight the constraint place on those who care about nonhuman animals in an anthroparchal context — as cultures of exclusive humanism constrain individuals from acting in animals' best interests. Instead, companion animals and individuals who might care for them outside of the immediate owner/pet relationship are subject to the actions of owners who may or may not conform to 'good owner' ideals. This is not just unfortunate for the nonhuman animals who must endure their living situation, but also for human others such as Penny and Grace who are impacted by this awareness of

ill-treatment and their inability to do anything to change it. Other participants reported removing nonhuman animals from properties that were being kept chained up in the yard, considering the legal requirements for pet ownership to be insufficient enough to warrant direct action despite potential legal repercussions (participant action will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6).

Pets, once declared to be such, remain pets whether they enjoy complete freedom of movement, restriction to particular spaces or varied levels of inclusion. However, an owner's inclusion of their companion inside the home space, along with their justification for that inclusion, impact on how they, as "owners", are perceived. This moves us toward an understanding of "pets" and a relationship therewith, which centres greatly around the defining and construction of relationships by human owners, rather than conditions pertaining to the pets themselves. Regardless of whether the human-nonhuman animal living arrangements are considered appropriate or "good", the nonhuman animal's "pet" status remains unchanged. Thus even though it is likely in many cases that a companion animal would share the home, it is not a necessary condition of their "petness".

1.3.4. Affection and entertainment

Tague (2008) lists affection and entertainment as defining features of "petness". According to Franklin and Crook's study, the most prevalent reasons for engaging in companion ownership are company for yourself or children and amusement/ entertainment of adults or children (Franklin 2006). I would argue that affection, in this instance, is different to love in that it can be seen as part of a companion animals 'liveliness' without challenging the underpinning assumption that nonhuman animals are incapable of complex thought or emotions (Collard, 2014; Fudge 2008). Furthermore, as these elements of "petness" presumably precede the procurement of the nonhuman animal, it is fair to say that these ideas around companionship and entertainment are ideologically linked to the pet commodity, rather than a deeper connection with the nonhuman animal. The importance of this element to "petness" is evident not just in the statement of affection as a driving force behind acquiring a companion animal, but also in the negative response to nonhuman animals that did not provide the expected affection.

Affection and entertainment were significant drivers in companion animal procurement for many participants. As evidenced in the quote below, many associated companion animals with having 'someone to love', indicating an expectation of affection (or at least acceptance thereof) that preceded the relationship itself:

> I needed to have an avenue for the love that I, that I have. But I couldn't kind of pinch someone else's child and I didn't want to ruin somebody else or you know or but I knew I needed exercise I knew I needed to get fitter and I also needed something, someone to love. (Laura)

In fact, the distinction between affection and love was such that several participants reported feeling surprise at their companion's perceived capacity to love them, despite having acquired the nonhuman animal for companionship purposes:

> I was also surprised with how much love they give to you, you know you'd never think that an animal could love you so much you just realise that they do so it's worth it. (April)

Even those nonhuman animals who were not considered to have individual personalities had entertainment value for their owners, in being aesthetically pleasing and 'just nice to listen to' (Frank).

On the other hand, companion animals who withheld affection, or overtly favoured one human in the household over others proved challenging for owners to come to terms with:

> I really, really struggled with the dog, um with Moe like just loving (partner) and not giving me the time of day. I found that really difficult, when it was something that we got together and it was really fixated on her and not me. I found that really difficult. And that was another part of the reason I got a second dog, coz yeah I think that was really hard and I hadn't even thought of that... (Olivia)

These nonhuman animals were less likely to be "claimed' as pets by the rejected humans, and more likely to occupy a lesser position in the household, or be less highly regarded by those members.

> She is very different with me than she is with my husband. Like she hardly ever sits on my lap, and I think it took her years to just ... I remember the first time she sat on my lap, I swear it was like two or three years after um moving in and I was like 'oh it's the best thing ever' but even now if my husband is here it's.. yeah there's just not a chance that she's gonna sit on my lap and it's like yeah ... and again if she comes on the bed it'll be yeah his side of the bed or near his pillow or like, I don't know, I think she's sort of like yeah you're here and maybe if I'm desperate for affection, maybe, *maybe,* I'll snuggle next to you or take some pats... when I was younger I never really hankered for like a cat and I was never like 'oh I must have a cat', I never asked my dad for a cat at Christmas I was always like, I wanted a dog. (Audrey)

The distancing comment of never wanting a cat anyway can be interpreted as indicative of the impact a lack of affection has on human-companion animal relationships. This reinforces that of all the elements discussed above, affection is the least negotiable requirement of "petness".

1.3.5. Exclusions

While the above discussion indicates that the category of "pet" is complex and difficult to define, so too is the criteria for 'non-petness'. By looking at what participants identified as constituting "non-petness", I further demonstrate that the line between "pet" and "non-pet" is highly subjective, and dependent on the criteria of the labeller. This distinction primarily occurred in relation to species and death rituals (or lack thereof).

For one participant this "pet" status was strictly linked to ideas around species: specifically, that cows are livestock and horses are pets. As a result, the bovine animals with which they felt a closer connection were rebranded as "horses" and raised as such:

> This is Jack he's a kind of funny looking horse isn't he? My husband
> wouldn't let me keep him as a steer but I'd bonded with him so I had
> to turn him into a horse. (Bridget)

In this instance, the reconstruction of Jack was not only discursive, but material— he was broken, ridden and shared a paddock with other horses. He had even taken on behavioural traits, such as eating mannerisms, otherwise expected of biological horses. For all intents and purposes, Jack was a horse and therefore a pet.

This adherence to species expectations was reiterated by another participant in relation to their finches and guinea pigs, which were denied "pet" status, instead considered merely a play thing for the grandchildren:

> The grandchildren get the guinea pigs and that out of the cage and
> work with them so the guinea pigs are comfortable around humans,
> but they're not engaged in the same way. Don't have the same
> interaction. (Phillip)

This stood in stark contrast to the canine members of the family, who were perceived to have far greater emotional and interactive capacities, and thus were considered to be more appropriately labelled as "pet". Though it is unclear whether the grandchildren would have considered the guinea pigs "pets", for the participant they were excluded from "petness" due to their ideas around species capabilities and interaction possibilities.

For another participant, the distinction was in death: A chicken whom they named and interacted with often was considered "non-pet" as in death she would go 'in the bin' like her fellow chickens, and unlike the dogs who would be buried.

> I don't see her as a pet um and when Betty died there was a— ok what
> do you do with the body? And I thought well she's going in the bin, I
> cant be arsed burying her because burying in summertime is actually
> really hard um so I just put her in a plastic bag and put her and
> council took her away.. didn't quite feel right it really it had those well
> not metaphorical quite literal overtones of this is just rubbish to be
> taken away and I didn't like that but I couldn't think of what else to

> do really um and I think that will happen to Helga sooner or later as
> well so.. no not a pet. (James)

In other instances, although nonhuman animals were considered "pet", external factors encouraged a situation in which their "petness" could be revoked. For instance, one participant who stated that he loved his dog, birds and fishes equally, granted the dog a name and individual identity, whilst the birds and fishes were "loved" as an amorphous group[12]. The birds were able to be traded for more desirably coloured ones, indicating disposability (or revocation of petness) at an individual level that, for the participant, did not contradict the fact that he loved, and considered them indispensable pets as a group.

> I got to get rid of some so I can put some fresh ones in there ...I just
> go [to the pet store] to see if there's one there I want because I like to
> have a variety of colours. (Frank)

Although these exclusions demonstrate clear privileging of some nonhuman species (dogs, for instance, were never excluded from the "pet" category), the inclusion or exclusion of non-canine species was highly dependent on owner categorisations. Thus, whilst for some chickens were instantly excluded from "pet" categories, others considered their chickens irreplaceable family members. Some participants engaged in rich interaction with guinea pigs and small birds, while others didn't believe them to have the capacity for even simple communication. What this tells us about companion animals and "petness" is that it is not inherent, but rather socially constructed by owners. And whilst this categorisation may seem systematically explainable when considering more traditional pets, when non-dog and cat participants are encouraged our picture of human-companion animal relationships is far more complex. These findings support Kathy Grier's (2006) assertion that 'the most important quality pets share is that they have been singled out by human beings' (p.8).

At this point it is worth pointing out that these factors are anthropocentric in that they consider how *humans* define what is/isn't considered "pet". In some ways this is appropriate— human-companion animal relationships *are* anthropocentric. Humans hold the cards in this situation—they choose their pet, they control the environment and, although companion animals are undoubtedly minded beings, the extent to which they can exercise their agency is almost entirely dependent on the parameters set for them by their human owner. Given this it is important to examine the construction of owner identities that undoubtedly shape the navigation of human-companion animal relationships and thus the lives of nonhuman animals within them. It is to this identity construction that I now turn.

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[12] This is not unusual according to Barber (1993), who suggests that people tend to assess birds as a group rather than as individuals, and Tuan (1984) who observes that fishes tend to have a status more akin to a house or garden plant than a nonhuman animal, adding ambience to a home.

2. Shifting the focus to owner identities

The lived experience of companion animals depends largely on how humans —as the privileged party in human-companion animal relationships— construct themselves as "owners". As seen above in regard to "acceptable" practices in sharing the home, these identity narratives align owners with particular approaches to, and performances of, human-companion animal relationships. The following discussion will consider both the speculative pre-definition of owner identities— those occurring prior to engaging in a companion animal relationship, as well as those defined through the ongoing performance of a human-companion animal relationship in which the owners engage in a practice I refer to as "becoming owner".

2.1 *"Trying on" owner identities*

Prior to procuring a companion animal, many owners engage in what Leslie Irvine (2008a) refers to as 'trying on possible selves'— a process of considering potential relationships with nonhuman animals, and how these might work with the owner's assumed self:

> Like window-shopping, looking at animals offers new opportunities and new possibilities for selfhood. *Remember that cocker spaniel I used to have? What would it be like to have a dog again? I wonder what would it be like to have that dog?* Those *kittens? What would I be like if I had a black cat? (*Irvine 2008a, p.81).

Many participants reflected on a similar process in the procurement of their companion, in which they imagined certain selves and potentialities as being tied to particular "kinds" of nonhuman animals, as well as particular avenues of procurement. The consideration of 'lifestyle' was an important factor for some participants:

> I was sort of umming and ahhing because I really wanted a golden retriever but they're not good with chickens um I wanted a pug but not really but then border collies are the way to go because they just suit your lifestyle so much more. I mean not that I'm active or anything but they encourage you to be active…(Eve)

In this instance, the companion animal was chosen to suit an aspirational lifestyle— a source of encouragement to keep active, and thus be a particular version of one's self.

Others were more concerned with a desired trait— a particular sex, an outgoing personality or a noteworthy introduction:

> Milly, the first time I met her shat in my eye. Um she was sitting up on a fan and because I'd made my decision on which one I got—they all flew away and then she flew back to me and I'm like ok I want you, you like me. But yeah she sat up in the fan and I was looking up at her and she shat straight behind my glasses and into my eye. (Willow)

This then constitutes a moment of "connection", in which the prospective owner feels something of a special bond with an nonhuman animal, giving the impression that they have found the "right" companion (Irvine 2008a).

The final contribution to owner identity occurs through the politics of consumption, as individuals construct themselves through what (or who) they buy and where they buy from. In relation to companion animals this issue is often divided amongst those who buy from pet shops or puppy farms, registered breeders, backyard breeders or shelters. This issue reflects elements of identity along two lines — ethics and quality of product. On the one hand, participants that are opposed to over-population and over breeding tend towards adopting from shelters, rather than "contributing to the problem" by buying from a breeder and encouraging production. On the other hand, participants who believe that "better" nonhuman animals will result in less surrenders choose to support breeders they consider to be breeding "responsibly" resulting in "good" nonhuman animals. Either way purchasers construct their owner-identities in some way in relation to their chosen purchase point.

> We definitely wanted to rescue I didn't actually want to go to the RSPCA but I sort of ended up there anyway. I was going for another dog that um they wouldn't let me take (laughs) so I took Tyler instead. But yeah I, neither of us were interested in getting a dog from a breeder I don't think at all, I think that's just, I don't know, it just makes sense um to go and get them from a rescue coz like it's full, they're full of them. Like I don't know, I don't want to like pay someone to breed a dog for me like I don't feel like a particular connection to any specific breed of dog I'm not like 'I need this breed', like 'it needs to be this'. And like all my favourite dogs for my whole life have been mix breed just from wherever — my dog as a kid was from a pet shop before we knew that petshops weren't good but um she was mixed and um my sister's dog was a mixed breed as well and um both of my friends' dogs that I was talking about before they were both mix breeds as well. And I just feel like yeah I dunno it's more fun that way like yeah you don't what you're going to get. And I feel like now from having Tyler I'd never thought too much about kelpies before like he's mixed with other stuff as well but I actually really love kelpies now. Like just from living with, like, he has a few traits that are like very kelpie and it's given me like a whole new appreciation of that breed and I'm actually quite fond of them and like I would have another kelpie in the future like from that yeah but not from a breeder. (Cara)

Though this manifests as a discussion of "suitable' breeds", what this actually implies is that there are particular lifestyles or owner traits that accompany particular "types" of pets. Irvine explains that, in part, this trying on of "possible selves" allows prospective owners to effectively distance themselves from nonhuman animals (and responsibilities) they don't want, and thus absolve themselves of any guilt they might feel about leaving abandoned pets to their unknown fate in the shelter:

> The "I could never" emotional-distancing device allows for the pleasure of looking at animals while evading responsibility for their abandonment and subsequent care. In many ways, this device also allows for the trying on of "possible selves," because it poses certain actions as out of the question, given the presumed self of the speaker. (Irvine 2008a, p.85)

She goes on to detail the way both prospective adopters and browsers construct their identities through imagined relations with the nonhuman animals in a shelter. Those that appeared to be browsing without intention to buy in the shelter used the nonhuman animals as an opportunity to bolster their identity as "animal lovers"—through expressing 'feeling sorry' for the homeless nonhuman animals as well as differentiating themselves (positively) from the workers at the shelter by exclaiming 'I could never do what you do' (2008a, p.85). Bearing this in mind, workers in Irvine's study tried to create spaces in which potential owners could imagine themselves in relationships with adoptable cats, as it is the sale of this identity, rather than the cats themselves, that is likely to result in an adoption.

2.2 Becoming owner

In making choices and overcoming challenges, participants sculpted a sort of owner identity; something which "made" them the owners they now saw themselves as. Many participants talked about themselves before and after "becoming owner", using phrases like 'if I had known then what I know now' or 'I'm different now' to differentiate their current owner identity. A big part of this was learning to overcome challenges, as well as undergoing some form of self-education or personal growth. Owner identities were signposted by stating preferred terminologies (for instance, rejecting the term 'owner'), declaring beliefs around pet keeping and highlighting the "type" of owner they did not identify with. Once established, these owner identities tended to be self-sustaining—in part due to the avenues of self-education embraced, with "rupture" moments seeming to occur in relation to new pets rather than through rethinking established relationships.

One of the most blatant acts of identity creation was a re-negotiation of terms. Many participants objected to the terminology of "owner" and "pet", instead sharing their own preferred labels which they felt better suited their relationship experiences:

> Actually [I'm] a mother of animals… I always says I'm Benji's mummy
> coz I'm mummy bear and he's baby bear, puppy bear. So we have a
> daddy bear and a baby bear and yeah it's a bit.. he is my little baby
> bear (to dog) aren't you? (Laura)

Other participants reported a strong opposition to the power imbalance implied by the "owner" label:

> I don't like the term um I prefer to believe that I exist with my pets
> but I don't think that I own them, they're their own individuals so um
> I don't know I don't like that term to be technical … I just say that I
> live with a dog and four birds as opposed to own. So I'm a house
> sharer? (Willow)

This was echoed by another participant who, despite recognising that by 'general society's' definitions they were classed as an owner, still objected to the term which did not fit with their own view of the human-dog relationship.

> We always prefer guardian um because I think that's how my
> relationship with my dog is…I think that it's different because I don't
> think possession is an important part of a relationship with a dog
> specifically and the way that dogs have been selected. And also you
> know the way that they started out selecting themselves as wild dogs
> they became juvenile so they do need guardianship and they do need
> us to a degree that a wild animal doesn't, so I think that guardian
> works well because we kind of help them through life and make sure
> they have a good time in the society that we've constructed um but
> ownership is just kind of unnecessary you know? You have to say that
> for legal reasons but it means nothing in terms of a relationship.
> (Brooke)

These objections are significant for several reasons. Firstly, they indicate a human discomfort with asymmetrical power relations, particularly the implication that their own relationships might be associated with such an imbalance. Secondly, they demonstrate a determination to differentiate ones' own human-companion animal relationship from others that would be more suited to the owner/pet terminology. In most cases, this differentiation was not uncritically made— participants were quick to acknowledge that they did have control over many areas of their pets' lives. However, for these participants, the distinction between "owner" and "guardian" was still significant, and indicated a level of depth and respect in the relationship that extended beyond the norm.

Another important part of "becoming owner" is the self-education process— that is, the ways in which they acquired the information they needed to facilitate their companion animal relationships. 87%[13] of participants reported drawing on a combination of online

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[13] Figures have been rounded and may not add up to exactly 100%

sources (50%), formal (nonhuman animal) training (27%), and prior experience (27%). The remaining 13% adopted a 'wing it' approach, working things out for themselves as they went along based on common sense understandings. The latter tended to make decisions by taking cues from their companions' reactions to situations and drawing on anthropomorphic reasoning 'I probably wouldn't like this…' to understand and work with their pet's perceived needs. The decision of how to inform ownership practices effectively shapes the owner and, in turn, the experiences of the companion animal who will be the recipient of chosen rules and behaviours.

Participants engage in self education around companion animal care, with most citing social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube, as well as online search engine Google as their main source of information.

> It's really hard to find stuff for Italian greyhounds because they're a weird shape um so I quite often buy things online or like Facebook is good … I follow people on Instagram who have Iggys [Italian Greyhounds] like there's this girl in Perth that has an Iggy who is from the same breeder as us and is from a litter that was born a month before mine and her puppy and my puppy look exactly the same so they're like a month apart and she has the sighthound collars as well and so that's yeah.. Instagram has been really really useful in learning what people do and don't do and I follow a lot of people .. not so many in Australia but a lot in like Japan and in Korea and in the Netherlands um have Italian greyhounds because they're really good like apartment dogs so yep yeah so then you just pick things up from there and people share like hints and tricks for what you can and can't do or 'oh this is happening with my dog what do I do?' or just send some love her way. Yeah so Instagram's actually been really good for that for me like especially since it's just been me and her, I've learned a lot… I don't know where I would have found information if it wasn't for that, there's not much about that breed anywhere it's quite an unusual breed. (Olivia)

SNS use is relevant to the creation and maintenance of owner identity with users developing trust relationships through joining groups and socially interacting (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter 2013; Lu et al 2010) which in turn influence the decisions made in regard to their companion animal. SNS connections provide both emotional and informational support (Ballantine & Stephenson 2011) often through "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973) which serve as '"local bridges" to distant others possessing unique information'(Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter 2013, p.61; Rowley et al 2000). Trust within a specific network (such as a Facebook group) is likely to be based on past interactions with members of the network or joint values (Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter 2013) and can significantly influence user decisions particularly in regards to consumption of goods (Gefen 2002; Hajli 2013). This means two things for companion animal owners: 1) They now have access to, and trust, a broader

information base, which allows them to extend their knowledge beyond common sense thinking or the much smaller knowledge pool they would otherwise be limited to and 2) as users join networks that reflect their own views and interests, the information they receive through these groups is likely to affirm whatever owner identity they already identify with, or aspire to, rather than challenging their already held assumptions.

For participants who identified with an nonhuman animal-centric owner identity (aspiring to make decisions based on companion animal benefit, rather than owner preferences), SNSs opened them up to new ways of providing for their nonhuman animal that they otherwise might not have discovered through offline sources. This is particularly relevant for non-dog owners for whom information was harder to obtain:

> ..unless you actually get involved with these tight knit [facebook] groups and this is what it was like when I had my budgies at first and then I only really started to learn more when I started doing my own research and then once I got really passionate about birds I decided I wanted a Conua. And so I got like involved with all these groups. Once I did that like my knowledge just went from this (brings palms together indicating small) to this (widens hands indicating growth) like I just learned so much from other individuals but before that I wasn't involved in them so I had no idea about a lot of stuff. I always checked if things were toxic and that sort of stuff but there's so many other things that I had no idea about (Willow)

This is a way for owners to equip themselves to better meet the needs of their companions, particularly in terms of enrichment and mental health, areas often neglected in public discourse. As Irvine (2008a) explains, this type of knowledge — 'animal capital' — is indicative of the development of close companionate relationships in which human owners enhance their understandings of their animal companions in order to provide them with appropriate care and non-exploitative living conditions. Although all participants indicated that for medical situations they would rely on a vet for information, those with pets other than dogs or cats often still did their own research so that they could advocate for their nonhuman animals in a medical setting:

> If it's like an actual proper medical issue obviously the vet is the way to go, but I've gotten better advice from online people than I have from normal vets. Like I've had one normal vet nearly overdosed my budgie to the point like she gave me dog strength antibiotics um yeah she didn't realise she had to dilute them I was really angry coz I had um Marie has um recurring respiratory issues so once a year every year we go and get antibiotics and she's got to be treated for it and then she gets over it. So I've had it before and I knew exactly the dilution for it and so I got it and I looked at it and sort of thought hmm thats not right so I sort of looked it up and managed to go back

and go 'you gave me the wrong stuff'. But sort of that was all the information I know from past experience and also the internet talking to people like that um its hard to find other people like in your life that have parrots because its not not super common like people have budgies and cockatiel's and that sort of thing but not um South American parrots. (Willow)

Online research and social networking sites, then, can serve as "proof" to support a particular approach or practice. However this is not without danger. As mentioned above SNS users are likely to make decisions based on "trust" in sites and users. This means that any site that aligns with the users favoured views and approach, through which they have interacted with others favourably, is likely to be persuasive on owner decisions. Willingness to undertake this independent research was also dependent on owner's attachment and valuing of animal companions. Whilst many owners did make this effort and locate specialist care, for others who were less attached to their 'starter' pets this meant the nonhuman animals simply did not go to the vet. This reflected lesser attachment, coupled with a shorter lifespan than dog or cat pets which some owners used as justification to 'let them go' unless they were visibly suffering, in which case they would consider euthanasia but not treatment (Pierce 2016)

Formal training was slightly different, in that owners were unlikely to accept, or remain, in training clubs that they did not agree with. For one participant, who was rurally located and had limited access to different dog training schools, rejecting the approach of the local dog club led to a journey of self-education that saw her gain several behaviour and training qualifications:

> Jada ended up with her behavioural issue where she was has problems with other dogs and um I went wow the people at this club can't help me they just like 'tell her off, just tell her no' and I'm like if you're highly stressed if your kid is scared coz of a thunderstorm and is crying because of a thunderstorm, do you just push them over and go stop doing that? Does that help? No it doesn't help. And I started to learn that on my own and then when I picked up that the dog club just couldn't, didn't get what I was talking about, that's when I did a certificate three in behaviour and training. (Hayley)

Owners who were not heavily invested in, or opposed to, particular "kinds" of training were more open to the techniques being espoused. For instance, one owner who was unaware of breed stigma around "Bully Breeds"[14] became fearful when she was made aware of the stereotypes around her new puppy. She was then amenable to the choker chain-based training methods selected by her partner, as they 'had to make sure [dog] was

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[14] A colloquial term that is often applied to dogs displaying physical characteristics targeted by breed specific legislation, e.g. Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Pit-Bull Terriers, Boxers (Animal Planet, n.d.). See literature review for discussion on issues surrounding breed classifications.

safe' (Alice). Another participant, who did not have strong views about training, went to the training school with which her partner's family was heavily involved with little questioning of methods.

Positive reinforcement training was the most transformative element owners interacted with, and was often credited for changing the way owners thought about their companion animal relationships:

> So many people and me included and my daughter included, we growl coz when the boys are together they pee and it's annoying and coz me and [daughter] when we get home from doing the shopping or whatever else and they've peed and peed and peed... um you growl at them they come and they're so excited to see you and you go 'oh no!!' and see that's taught me now and I've had to teach [daughter] the same and that the minute we did that were responding to them being excited to see us and we're breaking their little hearts and you just suddenly realise that oh shit.. so that was a huge lesson to learn...first off i was like 'what don't bring Quincy along a session and go on my own?' but by jeepers it made sense coz you realise that a lot of what we do is confusing. And then we expect them to obey and they haven't got a clue what we're talking about. (Penny)

These owners were also the most likely to extend their knowledge to their friends and family (for an extended discussion of this see chapter 6: Challenging human-companion animal relationships).

Owners who adopted a "wing it" approach did not recognise any external sources of information, indicating that they likely relied on common sense understandings and anthropomorphism to navigate their relationships. actions that achieve the desired result (eg. blocking off a corridor to prevent defecation in it, reducing nonhuman animal fitness so that less exercise is required) are therefore seen to be effective, a successful navigation of a challenging situation. Behaviours that are not able to be effectively tackled are dismissed as "weird".

Prior experience was linked, but not limited to, a similar approach in that owners were not necessarily referring to prior experience in which they embarked on a self-education journey, but rather just a past relationship with an nonhuman animal they perceived as "successful". This had more to do with an owner's confidence in their ability to navigate an interspecies companionate relationship, than appealing to any prior education or critical understanding.

Finally, an essential component of "becoming owner" is declaring an "other" against which to define the constructed identity — plainly put, owners are quick to describe the type of owner they are not. This commonly included owners who: left their nonhuman animals outside, didn't access adequate medical treatment for them or displaced their nonhuman

animal through surrendering to a shelter or otherwise rehoming them. One owner who had previously rehomed two nonhuman animals to their mother made a distinction between that past 'self' and their current, more responsibly owner identity:

> I've actually done it before with a dog and with a cat when I was younger and a lot less responsible and uh also some personal things that were going on with my life....My mum would freak out every time I got a pet coz she'd go oh it's going to end up at my house and I'd always think 'oh my god she was absolutely right' that's what I was like. I'm not like that now. (Eric)

While this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, it is worth noting the complete focus on the owner in displacement scenarios— at no point is the pet's character called into question. This illustrates that, ultimately, the success or failure of human-companion animal relationships is on the shoulders of the human, at least in the eyes of participants. This becomes particularly interesting later in this chapter when we will discuss the 'pets' which *can* be displaced without challenging this belief.

The above discussion clearly shows that not only do owners construct complex narratives around their companion animal relationships, but that these narratives are very much owner centric in that they centre on owner perception, identity aspirations and self-education. If companion animals seem to have taken a back seat thus far, it is intentional in order to demonstrate that whilst companion animal welfare *may* be the declared intention of owners, the process of 'becoming owner' might not require much companion animal interaction at all. However, as will be seen in the discussion that follows, companion animal interactions do actively contribute to building relationships and work to challenge their relegation to "mere" commodity status.

3. Interactive "love": a challenge to objectification?

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, while I am conscious of not foregrounding humans' emotions and experiences in the research write-up, the themes of attachment and love were prominent in the interviews. Positive emotions have been used to challenge the depiction of human-companion animal relationships as purely oppressive (e.g. Irvine 2008a), and as such operate as a mechanism of disguising asymmetrical power relations. However I also found that in "doing" love-related interactions with their owners, companion animals actively resist their objectification, instead fostering feelings of love, or respect for nonhuman animals as minded, living beings. This, then, makes interactive love a significant site of exploration to understand how power relations are negotiated on a micro level and the potential to challenge anthroparchal patterns of relating between species.

Unsurprisingly, all participants talked about their companion animals in relation to "love", describing an intense and intimate connection that was highly valued. As seen in the discussion above, companion animals were described as 'part of the family' with many

participants constructing a family narrative (e.g., 'baby bear') in which the companion animal was an integral member. Whilst the nonhuman animals in this context often occupied a child-like role in the family unit, they also served additional functions less likely to be attributed to children, such as emotional support:

> You know this dog has had more of my tears on him than anyone else (to dog) coz it was just you and me kiddo wasn't it? (to me) And when you get, you know sometimes there are no words you just sit there and cry, and then to have him jump up, lick the tears you know? Far out it makes you cry a lot more let me tell you. (Laura)

These experiences of emotional support (for humans) relied on specific companion animal interactions that built a sense of intimacy and care between species. In describing a particularly low moment, a participant outlined the specific behaviours their cat used that made them feel that there was an interspecies understanding about their need for emotional support:

> There was one night since I've had them where I was really really depressed, like really depressed. And um she's never done this before or since and I was in bed, it was about quarter to twelve and she just jumped up on my bed and she was just purring and rubbing herself all over my head and my body and was just letting me pat her anywhere and was just rolling around here while I was. And that's the only night that she's ever done it and it's the one night that I was really really depressed. And I don't really get that very often, but this was one particularly bad night and she just came and was sweet and was just really nice to me. So I don't think that was a coincidence, know what I mean? Considering it was that night when I really needed someone and she was there. (Eric)

These narratives about the closeness formed in vulnerable moments were significant, as they demonstrated that owners didn't just recognise their companions as "someone" rather than "something", but that they were a trustworthy someone who could be relied upon for support (Taylor et al 2018). Another participant talked about her morning routine with her cat:

> If I wake up in the morning and like especially at the moment, life, recently going through a breakup and stuff and they're just laying in the bed with me and then it just makes me that much happier like um — oh god now I'm getting all emotional sorry— um but yeah they just um you know every morning Philippe comes into the bed like if he's not already in it asleep and he knows once I'm awake he knows them once I'm awake its good time and his favourite time is food time so he will come and say for example even if I go on my phone in the

> morning or something like that, he will come and he will almost sort
> of graze his teeth against the phone and like my hand and stuff and
> just those little interactions are just really beautiful … It would be a
> very lonely life I think without them yeah. (Kelly)

The actions that constitute companion animal love in these examples are small: licking tears, nibbling hands, contact. They are clearly significant for the human recipients, enough so as to be considered evidence of feeling and mindedness. As Fudge (2008) argues, a belief in nonhuman animal's emotional capabilities is necessary to the facilitation of human companion animal relationships. In short, 'we need pets to be able to love if we are to be able to claim that dog love really is a kind of love' (Fudge 2008, p.50). Recognition of love rather than "coincidence", as shown above is as much to the benefit of the human owners, to have their relationship taken seriously, as it is for the nonhuman animals who are recognised. Where children would most likely be shielded from the darker aspects of everyday life such as death, relationship breakdown and mental health struggles, companion animals often served a crucial role during these times; indeed acting as 'lifesavers and lifechangers' (Irvine 2013). The embodiment of these extra roles of responsibility requires a recognition of the emotional and intellectual capacity of nonhuman animals that far exceeds the general acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of nonhuman animal intelligence. It also necessitates acknowledgment of nonhuman animals' emotional work as a form of labour, and a largely unrecognised one at that (Coulter 2016; Taylor & Fraser 2019). This renders problematic the underlying justification of domestication as a "natural" subordination of nonhuman animals that rely on instinct and lack the capacity for emotions and mindedness (Fudge 2008). In fact, many participants reported being surprised, stating they 'didn't think that she'd bring that much love, like I just love her to bits' (Alice). This was not the only area in which participants were surprised, in fact there are many aspects of pet ownership human owners were not prepared for.

In particular, episodes of sickness or emotional issues further challenged the construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities, instead highlighting the "aliveness" of the nonhuman animals who experienced afflictions much like their human owners:

> Philippe was sick for a long time and we hadn't had him that long
> even then you sort of, you knew something wasn't quite right with
> him…it took a lot of time for him to be diagnosed with what he had
> and that was probably something that I hadn't really yeah prepared
> myself for. (Kelly)

Just as Jada's emotional challenges (discussed in the previous section) caused her owner to pursue alternate education to find ways of training that suited her individual needs, Philippe's sickness meant that his owner had to immediately engage with him as a living (ailing) being, rather than as a commodity. Participants in these circumstances recognised this disjunction between their living companions and the goods they are constructed as,

particularly in reflecting on their diminished commodity status as a result of their conditions.

This interactive "love" transformed companion animals from "lively" goods, to highly valuable, minded kin. Participants then talked about how their (emotional and monetary) investment into the relationship far exceeded that which one would expect for a "mere" animal.

These ranged from practical efforts that exceeded the expected care requirements:

> Every day I had to come home and wash cow shit off her after work, it was not fun—it was stuck all in her collar and it was all manky and green and she was like 'look at me! I'm so happy!' (April)

Health costs that were much more expensive than owners had anticipated:

> For Clint, when he had the bowel obstruction he, um I was in a conference in Sydney and he had a bowel obstruction coz of his fur, and the operation was like $1500 and then um he woke up from the anaesthetic and had a blood clot so the vet's ringing up [partner] and going do you want me to do CPR and do this and that and [partner]'s going yeah yeah yeah and I'm going there's another $300 type of thing to do that. So you know if they do get sick or injured or to take them to the vet does cost quite a lot of money. (Dawn)

One participant persevered through a severe cat allergy and eviction when their (forbidden) pet was discovered, reasoning that because of his intellectual disability he would be unlikely to have a good life if she hadn't agreed to take him:

> It was so worth it and I love him, and I think that it would have been pretty bad for him if he had gone to a shelter coz he's like brain damaged and I don't know like what they would've done with him. So that was really good that we had him. (Cara)

This mutual construction of the companion-animal-as-subject saw human owners valuing them differently than they would a "mere" commodity. However, as evidenced in the quote below, this recognition of the inherent value of nonhuman animal beings was not necessarily recognised by others and thus owners were often alone in their experiences of strong emotions:

> That's become, I think, um one of my biggest fears in life. Crazy isn't it? But you know, you hear of people taking casseroles and stuff when people have um.. I've already told my family and my friends you know, 'when he goes I'm gonna be in bed for a month. You're gonna have to bring casseroles, you're gonna have to put me on suicide watch'. It's gonna be horrible because he is, you know, there is that closeness... And that's the shit thing about being a dog owner really,

um you know people are very understanding um obviously when a child dies, but they don't ,they don't.. you get dismissed and it's not fair you know. I spoke to a woman yesterday who didn't have children and she had a similar thing of a dog that became quite sick and they nursed this dog for years and you know they got someone in to look after the dog so they could go to work you know it was, it was a family member. (Laura)

As pets occupy a liminal space between grievable and non-grievable, it falls to owners to decide whether and how to mourn their companions (Redmalm 2015). A lack of socially recognised rituals around pet death mean that, as Laura described, owners are not guaranteed to have the support of loved ones when their pet passes (Redmalm 2015). Because of this, Stewart et al (1989) labelled pet-grief 'disenfranchised bereavement'. This, then, further reinforces the argument that valuing individual companions does not mean that companion animals in general are valued in society. It is not my intention in this chapter to discount the strength of emotions some humans feel for their companion animals, nor the emotions nonhuman animals may feel for their owners, but rather to highlight that which is often overlooked because of our focus on them.

This not only applies to individuals and their companions but to scholarly work around companion animals as well. Scholarly works investigating the human-companion relationship are generally undertaken by those who already have an affinity and close connection with companion animal(s) (eg. Irvine, 2008; Sanders, 1999). In chapter 2: literature review I outlined Kemmerer's (2011) argument that our theorisation of "other" animals often reflects human biases. In this instance I would argue that these are not necessarily inherently "bad" biases, but rather reflect a deep affection for the nonhuman animals studied. However, this leaning also has the unintended consequence of reinforcing the 'veil of affection' which keeps exploitative aspects of pet ownership from view (Fudge 2008). Theories that encompass the inherent dominance of pet keeping practices should not be hastily dismissed simply because they are not reflected in the researcher's (presumedly positive) relationship experiences. And human emotions similarly should not be dismissed simply because they stand in contradiction to the objectification and commodification of nonhuman animals as pets. Rather both need to be taken into consideration, in the interests of working towards an understanding of the complexity of human-companion animal relationships (Blouin 2012).

4. Conclusion

The construction of pet and owner identities is far more complex than previous understandings would have us believe. When the scope of research is expanded to consider non-traditional pets in a modern setting, the criteria for what constitutes "petness" becomes messier still, to the extent that one could not undoubtedly know, just by looking at an nonhuman animal, whether they were "pet" or belonged to another categorisation of nonhuman animal. What this means is that, although there are some

common themes among pets— naming, inedibility, and expectations of affection— none of these are so tied to "petness" that their non-presence would render an nonhuman animal "non-pet". The only truly consistent criteria for pet animals is that a human owner has elevated them as such, granting an honorary personhood (Taylor 2007) that brings with it certain entitlements not granted to 'other' nonhuman animals. As seen in the above discussion, even this elevation is not above revocation, further highlighting the extent to which nonhuman animals' lives are dependent on the choices and continued favour of their human owners. The subjective nature of this classification, and accompanying treatment of nonhuman animals, serves to constrain both the nonhuman animals subjected to it, and other humans who might strive for a higher standard of care than that provided by owners (the baseline standard for which is quite low in the human-centric Australian context). Explained through a structure/agency lens, it is apparent that anthroparchal structures have severely constrained individuals' ability to resist norms that devalue nonhuman animals, with very few willing or able to pursue illegal means to achieve between outcomes for ill-treated animal companions. This then highlights the reach of anthroparchal norms in constraining nonhuman animals' lives and stifling efforts to challenge the ill-treatment of them.

What is clear, is that the power to determine a nonhuman animal's life experience falls to human owners. Owner identities have a significant role in the creation of human-companion animal relationships in that the aspired to identity is likely to inform a humans approach to almost all areas of the relationship— from nonhuman animal procurement to negotiation of the relationships day-to-day and information sought. This identity, and an individuals' adherence to it, are also dependent on companion animal fulfilment of what their owners consider necessary conditions of their pet status— as was seen to be the case with non-affectionate pets and owners who felt rejected as a result. For some animal companions the power of owners was not wholly bad — owners who were pet-centric in their focus might be more inclined to do individual research to provide a standard of healthcare and lifestyle that is more appropriate than norms of society dictate. However this was a burden on their owners who had to advocate for their companions — particularly non-dog companions — to ensure needs were met and adequate care was provided by health practitioners.

The relations between humans and companion animals are informed by, and result in, these co-constitutive identities which see owners holding undeniably more power in the relationships. What this chapter has highlighted is the burden this power places on owners who endeavour to treat their animal companions with respect and care beyond the bare minimum dictated by anthroparchal norms, and the impact this has on their companions and pets more broadly. However the data discussed above also highlights that the negotiation of these relationships is co-shaped by companion animals whose actions resist conceptions of them as 'mere goods'. It is to the day-to-day negotiation of these relationships that I turn in the next chapter.

5
Choreographing Companion Relationships in Place

In the previous chapter I explored the complex process of making pets, in which minded nonhuman animals had to be deconstructed and reconstructed as 'lively' pets. In this chapter I turn to the socio-spatial elements of the relationship to argue that examining human-companion animal entanglements in a spatial context — or 'in place' — gives new insights into the mechanisms of power between owners and pets. As will be seen in the discussion to follow, human-companion animal relationships are choreographed, predominantly by human owners in relation to their animal companions' actions and reactions, with physical spaces and props used to create more or less space for animals' agency. I combine the human narratives of relationships derived from my semi-structured interviews with my observations of companion animals' interactions during the interview process to present a more extensive snapshot of shared multispecies life that highlights previously unnoticed areas. My findings indicate that the extent to which nonhuman animals can exercise agency in the home and be free to initiate the kinds of interactions that build positive relationships is highly dependent on human constructions of space and place. Finally, by considering the influence of "outside" anthropocentric values, even homes which otherwise challenge human domination are shown to be clearly steeped in anthroparchal power structures. This then demonstrates that the oppression of nonhuman animals is not limited to their construction as pets, but rather is inherent in the everyday conditions of their lives.

1. The importance of 'place' in human-companion animal relationships.

As discussed in chapter 4: making pets, nonhuman animals exist within a complex web of (anthroparchal) social relations that consistently privilege human wants and needs over those of 'other' animals and the natural environment. To 'create' pets, minded nonhuman animals must be deconstructed, severed from the social and environmental ties that predate their commodity life, and recreated as pets: creatures that are affectionate, but not minded; lively, but never fully alive (Collard 2014). Despite this construction, nonhuman animals *are* minded, and can and do show us their capacity for agency and their preferences in creating 'beastly places' (Philo & Wilbert 2005).

Before we can unpack the significance of place and space in constraining and enabling companion animal agency, it is necessary to first explain some relevant terms. I use place to describe a fixed territory that is staked out geographically (Goffman 1972), whereas space is a malleable area, one which can be imbued with meaning to become a 'place'. Yi

Fu Tuan (1977, p.6) explains, 'if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place'. Jacob Bull and Tora Holmberg (2018, p.6) argue that there is value in conceptualising human-nonhuman animal spatialities as 'a series of *movements',* in which spaces are viewed as a 'series of flows involving humans and other animals' that form a 'network of relations'. While scholarly works often refer to *human* spaces and places, the rise of critical animal geographies demonstrate that it is no longer sufficient to study the social world through human experiences alone (Bull, Holmberg & Åsberg 2018; Gillespie & Collard 2015; Philo & Wilbert 2005). This, then, encourages a consideration of the differences between human and nonhuman animals' conceptualisations and uses of space and place (as highlighted in Smith 2003). Philo & Wilbert (2005) make a distinction between 'animal spaces' — in which nonhuman animals are conceptually placed, framing them as separate from complex geographical relations but also crucial to human's experiences of space and place — and 'beastly places' which are nonhuman animals' constructions of place, paying little mind to human constructions of, or preferences in, space. In this chapter I place emphasis on 'beastly places' to explore not only how nonhuman animals shape places according to their own preferences, but also the ways human actions constrain their ability to do so.

I also argue that it is necessary to consider complexity in spatial relationships, as nonhuman animal agency is enabled and constrained to varying degrees depending on the socio-spatial context. While all nonhuman participants were constrained to some degree, the extent to which their agency was curtailed differed significantly. By considering the significance of private space (the home) and public spaces (consisting of species[15] inclusive spaces, species tolerant spaces and species exclusive [human only] spaces) I highlight that while some spaces are more conducive to creating space for nonhuman animal agency, the anthroparchal norms that govern public spaces (and the social world generally) shape the relationships humans and companion animals can have as they move through spaces. Given this, I propose that human-companion animal relationships are better understood as situated 'in place'; as constantly occurring in relation to, and interacting with, the social and physical construction of spaces and places.

Henri Lefebvre (1991) argued for the conceptualisation of space as socially produced, reflecting and informing broader social relations:

> Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a 'room' in an apartment, the 'corner' of the street, a 'marketplace', a shopping or cultural 'centre', a public 'place', and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they

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[15] for the purpose of this discussion, species refers to nonhuman companion species unless expressly specified otherwise.

express and constitute. Their interrelationships are ordered in a
specific way (p.16).

For nonhuman animals, the social relations (re)produced in the spaces they inhabit reflect broader anthroparchal structures which consistently position human interests as paramount over those of the environment and other animals (Cudworth 2011a; see chapter 2 for an extended discussion of anthroparchy). Nonhuman animals are, "placed' by human societies in their local material spaces (settlements, fields, farms, factories, and so on), as well as in a host of imaginary, literary, psychological and even virtual spaces.' (Philo & Wilbert 2005, p.5). However, Philo and Wilbert argue that nonhuman animals are not passive in this placement, but rather that:

> …it is animals themselves who inject what might be termed their own agency into the scene, thereby transgressing, perhaps even resisting, the human placements of them. It might be said that in so doing the animals begin to forge their own 'other spaces ' , countering the proper places stipulated for them by humans, thus creating their own ' beastly places ' reflective of their own ' beastly ' ways, ends, doings, joys and sufferings. (Philo & Wilbert 2005, p.13).

Though Philo and Wilbert are largely concerned with "wild" animals, I consider the themes of socio-spatial constraint and agency to be of relevance to domesticated companion animals, whose lives are perhaps more subtly yet extensively shaped by human-controlled spaces.

The relationships analysed in this chapter were observed and largely occur in one place— the home. Although human owner identity has a significant role to play in shaping relations and subsequent space making, companion animal experiences of the relationship are largely restricted to the interactions and physical layout of the home. "Setting" is an integral aspect of Goffman's Front Stage performance space (1956), consisting of:

> furniture, décor, physical lay-out, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human[16] action played out before, within, or upon it. A setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it. It is only in exceptional circumstances that the setting, in a sense, follows along with the performers… (p.13).

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[16] Although Goffman was clearly writing about human action and interaction, I take the position that this idea can comfortably accomodate, and therefore should be extended to, nonhuman actions. Further to this, and as discussed in chapter 2 literature review, Goffman himself incorporated animal interactions into his work further supporting this application.

For humans and their companion animals, this means that their in-home relations are likely to be enabled and constrained by setting, and that these relations will change in different places. Though the home setting is likely to be initially influenced by the human owner's identity, ideas of home, and expectations of pet ownership, companion animals may also exercise their agency to alter the space and thus create a more 'beastly place' (Philo & Wilbert 2005). One nonhuman participant, for instance, would stash belongings in the room of a human roommate (not their owner) including, in one unfortunate incident, the remains of a recent kill which resided in the roommates luggage for some time. The extent to which owners are willing to accommodate a more 'beastly' abode, and for whom, can tell us about power and hierarchy in the home, as well as between pet species. But first we must consider the significance of the home for humans, in order to understand why and how the negotiation of home space is of particular significance for humans and their companion animals.

2. What does home mean for humans?

The interviews for my study, as well as the relationships at the centre of this project, took place primarily in the home. As such, human participants spoke quite a bit about their homes — giving tours, highlighting the decor, apologising for "mess" etc. For me, this highlighted the need to understand how humans relate to their homes, in order to theorise how these feelings around the home might shape the multispecies relations that occur within it. Sociologists have taken a multidimensional approach to the study of the home, expanding beyond investigations solely into the physical structure to include feelings, practices and relationships. This has resulted in a sociology of home that includes 'location, material form, and meaningfulness — in one bundled package' (Anderson, Moore & Suski 2016, p.3; Mallett 2004). Of course, these understandings of home, like the Sociological field generally, focus on human experiences and human behaviours, largely neglecting nonhuman beings who also share the homespace. They also privilege western, colonial understandings of home (Mackenzie et al 2017). Nevertheless, these anthropocentric understandings of home are integral to understanding the context in which human-companion animal relationships largely take place. Sociology of the home encompasses numerous themes including, but not limited to: home as a haven from public space (Butler 2016; Lasch 1977); somewhere to escape from (Butler 2016; McDowell 2013); a site of identity construction and maintenance (Goffman 1956; Scott 2009; Veblen 1994); homemaking as a practice, in both traditional home-spaces and non-traditional spaces such as public spaces (Borchard 2013; Roberston 2012); and home as a site of belonging or exclusion (Butler 2016). This section will briefly expand on sociological understandings of the meaning of home (for humans) under three main themes that broadly address the many approaches outlined above: (1) identity creation and maintenance, (2) belonging and exclusion, and (3) the interplay between public and private space. This discussion highlights the strong connection humans have to their

homes — serving as important context for later discussion around the challenge of negotiating shared multispecies spaces.

2.1 Identity construction and maintenance

Given the privacy and control humans typically exert over their homespaces, the home is a place that enables the construction and maintenance of identities. Humans use their sense of style, home furnishings, gardens and the house itself to demonstrate elements of their identity and class positioning (Bourdieu 1996[1979]; Fox 2004; Maleuvre 1999; Veblen 1994[1899]). Consumption and displays of goods in the home can be indicative of an individual's class and social adequacy (Grier 2013; Veblen 1994[1899]) as well as displaying markers of the self through aesthetic taste and design choices (Bourdieu 1996[1979]; Goffman 1956; Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen 2004).

Conversely, when individuals are restricted in their ability to shape their home space according to their identity, they can experience a loss of ontological security. Ontological security is defined by Giddens as, 'a sense of continuity and order in events' (1991, p.243), and is tied to positive emotions and the creation of meaning for one's life. In the increasingly fast-paced and unstable modern world, the home serves as a constant source of comfort, a feeling of being 'at home'. Without this source of security, an individual's ability to cope with instability or tumultuous times is weakened (Giddens, 1991). Maersk et al (2018) found that participants undergoing cancer treatment who could no longer manage their home space saw this as a reflection of the 'gap' between how they saw themselves, and how their body is able to interact with the environment. Mary Douglas (1991) stated that humans might experience a loss of control in the home through 'contamination' of the space by dirt and other uninvited intrusions. Those living in rental properties might have limited ability to make aesthetic decisions, which in turn impacts on the extent to which they can express themselves through their home (Mackenzie, Mwamba & Mphande 2017). Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen (2004) found the while some participants in their study had a primarily use-oriented focus in the construction of their homespace, many viewed the presentation of the home as communicative of their identity. This was a gendered pattern with women more likely to be focussed on identity maintenance through the home than men (Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen 2004). Although what constitutes a correct presentation of home might differ according to structured identities, what remained a consistent pattern was a link between some aspect of an individual or family's identity and the homespace, as well as an experience of stress when the desired presentation was not realised (Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen 2004). These findings become significant later in this chapter as this attachment to the presentation of the homespace (and the meaning imbued in this) was a clear motivation for the constraint of nonhuman animal agency in the home — particularly when nonhuman animals used their agency in ways that threatened the home being 'under control'.

Identity construction is also entangled with experiences of belonging and exclusion in the home, which sees some identities enabled while others are constrained as individuals may be prevented from effecting their home environment. It is to this dynamic that I now turn.

2.2 Belonging and Exclusion

Whether or not a home is a reliable source of ontological security can depend on whether it is experienced as a place of belonging or exclusion. Any positive association is challenged by not feeling 'at home', or not being able to live freely in one's home environment (Fudge 2008). Belonging and exclusion as tied to the home space occurs on two levels: belonging and exclusion between household members, and exclusion from accessing the homespace itself. This section will explore both levels in order to demonstrate that relationships, architecture and ownership status impact on whether or not someone belongs at home — and as I will argue later in this chapter, that someone can be human or nonhuman.

In her study of the lived experiences of youth in care, Kate Butler (2016) found that feelings of belonging and exclusion were not clearly defined or restricted to particular households or particular people, but rather:

> belonging and exclusion are not exclusive: one can experience both in
> a particular home, from the same individuals, in the same place.
> Across narratives, then, there are discussions of abuse, neglect,
> discrimination, but also of support and inclusion.' (p.113)

For the young people in Butler's study, exclusion within the home could take the form of abuse, neglect and/or discrimination, with the home representing an unsafe place for many individuals. This exclusion was tied to the relationships with family in the home and impacted on the agency of young people within the homespace, particularly their ability to practice citizenship (Butler 2016). Physical and emotional violence in the home is not uncommon in Australia, where millions of people (and companion animals, as Taylor & Fraser [2019] importantly highlight) are affected by family violence each year (AIHW 2018). Abusive relationships between individuals in the home create situations of exclusion, where home is not a haven, but rather somewhere to escape from (Ascione et al 2007; McDowell 2013; Taylor & Fraser 2019). This research demonstrates that relationships within the home — whether positive, occasionally discriminatory or outright abusive — impact on the extent to which individuals can freely participate in the home. The relationship dynamics of a space, then, impact significantly on individual experiences of place.

Belonging is also impacted by physical restriction or enablement in accessing the homespace. Imrie (2010) found that people with disabilities can be excluded from participation in the home if the home environment does not enable their actions. This exclusion was largely facilitated by the 'micro-architecture' of the home, in which

inadequate space, furniture and appliance placement, and unsuitable flooring limited the access people using wheelchairs had in their own homes:

> Can I fully function within my house? Well, I can get in and out and my care could be provided within that facility, etc. but no, I can't use my home in the way I still think I would be able to, given the sort of facilities within it that are available to be put in (Pete, participant, Imrie 2010, p.30)

Thus, for the respondents in Imrie's study, 'domestic experiences are, potentially, at odds with the (ideal) conceptions of the home as a haven, or a place of privacy, security, independence, and control' (2010, p.23). Other inhabitants might not be physically excluded in such an immediate sense, but rather restricted through rules or regulations over home use which impacts on the ability to feel 'at home'. For instance, Mackenzie et al (2017) found that for many migrants with an African background, residing in rental accomodation was seen as a barrier to experiencing a sense of belonging as they were unable to make physical changes to personalise their living space. In the previous section I argued that customising the home was significant for identity maintenance, however in this instance it holds increased significance. For migrant populations whose culture is not reflected in broader society the home may be the only location where this culture can be expressed and, as the authors argue, when they are restricted in their ability to do so this extends their exclusion to the private sphere (Mackenzie et al 2017). These studies then highlight that prevention from accessing the home space, whether physical or regulated, is a key source of exclusion in the home.

This belonging and exclusion is patterned, and these patterns reflect broader social structures that filter in from the public space 'out there' to the private space of the home. The home, therefore, is not a silo immune from the influence of broader society but rather tends to reflect elements of broader social structures even when individuals in a home might use their control to attempt to construct it as otherwise.

2.3 Public/Private Nexus

Echoing Lefebvre's (1991[1974]) conceptualisation of space as inextricably entangled in, and reflective of broader social processes, Butler (2016) writes:

> the home has long been a place where the personal collides with the public. The home is not a safe haven from the realities of the outside world; instead, our very constructions of that so-called outside world are an integral part of the home experience'(p.102)

The expressions of identity, and experiences of belonging and exclusion outlined above are shaped by structural forces such as class, gender, disability and neoliberalism, and this structural influence challenges the idea of home as a private space, completely separated from public space.

The previous two sections have shown that while traditionally empowered human occupant(s) generally expect a level of freedom and control (Darke 1994), security (Dovey 1985) and space for creativity (Mallett 2004) within the home, their actions and experiences tend to reflect these outside forces. On a macro level, neoliberalism has brought about shifts that directly impact on where people live (and under what conditions), the welfare and state provisions that support them to do so, and the culture surrounding everyday lives in which increasing focus is placed on individual consumers (Anderson et al 2016). In Australia the increasingly competitive rental market is particularly challenging for multispecies families, as pet owners struggling to find pet-friendly accommodation face the prospect of homelessness or relinquishing their companions (Power 2017). Structural forces also shape 'doings' within the home. Aesthetic choices in the home reflect structured identities, shaped by class and gender norms (Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen 2004). The physical layout of homes tends to reflect assumptions about the kinds of bodies that are expected to inhabit them (Imrie 2010), and these structures often overlap. For instance, Imrie (2010) found that many participants lived in homes clearly designed with the assumption of a walking inhabitant which meant that not all aspects of the house were accessible. As a result, privacy and control was compromised as respondents relied on others to cook or bathe them due to the inaccessibility of the house facilities (Imrie 2010). Those participants who were financially able to alter their own homes had more access and therefore more agency within their own homes compared to those who lived in rental accommodations and/or were reliant on council interventions to make the home liveable — which could take several years to organise (Imrie 2010). This then reflects the link between class and access to life chances, with those in a better financial position more able to effect their living situation quickly.

The most prominent example of the public/private nexus is the perpetuation of gender roles in the home. As second wave feminists importantly highlighted, the everyday doings in private space are explicitly tied to broader gender norms. Gendered norms position men as 'breadwinners' and encourage them out of the house and into paid employment and the public sphere (Broomhill & Sharp 2004; Hillier 2018). Women are then expected to fulfil a complementary position in the private space, keeping house, raising children and performing the caring roles that support their husbands in their more explicitly value roles in the private sphere (Broomhill & Sharp 2004; Hillier 2018). Gender roles in the home support, and are supported by, binary understandings of masculinity and femininity that encourage (and expect) men to be rational, logical leaders while women are emotional, caring and submissive (Connell 1987). This not only justifies why women are relegated to the private sphere but frames them as essentially better suited to domestic labour due to their superior capacity for 'caring'. While these ideas might seem outdated (and a deviation from the central point of this project) I raise them because they are a clear example of how structural forces have shaped and continue to shape the material experience of beings in the home. Despite broader societal shifts that have seen women

now heavily represented in the paid work force and public sphere, the home remains a gendered site. Women are still performing more domestic labour than their male counterparts — even when working equal or more hours outside of the home (Chesters 2012). Further to this, chores remain gendered with 'manly' domestic labour such as physically intense yard work seen as men's responsibility while caring labour (cooking, cleaning, childcare) is expected to fall to women (Chesters 2012). Women are far more likely to experience domestic violence than men, and men are far more likely to perpetrate domestic violence than women (McDowell 2013). So what relevance does this discussion hold for companion animals? Not only are nonhuman animals subject to all of the patterns outlined above which shape where they live, under what conditions and who cares for them, but in terms of embedded oppressive structures in society, species is arguably one of the most entrenched. Taking the time to unpack these sociological understandings of the construction of home, and the embeddedness of social structures in this space, provides important context for my findings on the socio-spatial navigation of human-pet relationships outlined later in this chapter.

However, the privacy and control of the homespace also enables resistance, as inhabitants can create very different norms and relations within the home than those effected in public space. bell hooks describes home as a place where racial and sexual oppression could be resisted:

> Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprication, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world. hooks 2001 [1990], p.384.

Home is a site constantly being shaped by the relationship between inside and outside forces, so 'the most intimate of homemaking practices is shaped by the most macro of socio-economic forces, and that the political ecology of home is rebuilt through mundane microlevel experience' (Anderson, Moore & Suski 2016, p. 10). Human-companion animal relationships largely occur in the homespace, messily entangled in these (human) experiences of identity construction, belonging and outside influences. Nonhuman experiences or performance in the home often conflicts with human preferences, so to fully understand this negotiation next I consider what 'home' might mean for nonhuman inhabitants.

3. What could home mean for/to nonhuman animals?

For the companion animals in this study, home is the place where they spend most, if not all of their time. In this sense, the home for companion animals can be a more totalising experience than it is for humans who have a greater freedom to come and go. But before exploring how nonhuman animal experiences of home might differ, it is worth discussing the use and potential problems of an anthropomorphic approach, and whether it is possible, in fact, to theorise about what home could mean for/to nonhuman animals.

An anthropomorphic lens involves examining 'other' animals from a human perspective, transposing human emotions, thoughts, and expressions onto them (Horowitz 2010). In her 2010 text *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know,* Alexandra Horowitz problematises the anthropomorphism through which many humans interpret their nonhuman companions. Citing the example of raincoats, Horowitz unpacks the assumptions underpinning the existence of raincoats for dogs:

> Many dog owners who dress their dogs in coats have the best intentions: they have noticed, perhaps, that their dog resists going outside when it rains. It seems reasonable to extrapolate from that observation to the conclusions that he dislikes the rain.
>
> <u>He dislikes the rain</u>. What is meant by that? It is that he must dislike <u>getting the rain on his body,</u> the way many of us do. But is that a sound leap? In this case, there is plenty of seeming evidence from the dog himself. Is he excited and wagging when you get the raincoat out? That seems to support the leap… or, instead, the conclusion that he realises that the appearance of the coat predicts a long-awaited walk. Does he flee from the coat? Curl his tail under his body and duck his head? Undermines the leap—though does not discredit it outright. Does he look bedraggled when wet? Does he shake the water off excitedly? Neither confirmatory nor disconfirming. The dog is being a little opaque. (Horowitz 2010, p.18).

She further argues that when considered from the perspective of dog and wolf natural behaviour, vastly different explanations for the above behaviour become apparent. In addition to an external garment, which is unnecessary to creatures already endowed with a thick coat, the raincoat also represents 'a close, even pressing, covering of the back, chest, and sometimes the head' (Horowitz 2010, p.18). This is reminiscent of domination or reprimand between wolves which also involves muzzle biting and 'standing over', all of which ensures the subordinated nonhuman animal 'would feel the pressure of the dominant animal on his body' (p.19). This is supported by electric shock experiments with dogs, in which it was found that after being subject to electric shocks with no visible escape route, even when an escape route was provided the dogs would display a sort of 'learned helplessness', resigned to their fate (Horowitz 2010). So your dog might not 'like' wearing a raincoat, but has resigned him or herself to it. However, although some

anthropomorphisms are clearly problematic, anthropomorphism as a practice is perhaps not as readily dismissed.

Erica Fudge (2008) argues that although it is impossible to fully understand what it is to be nonhuman animal, doing away with educated guesses would mean the nonhuman animals 'disappear from view'. Thus, '[i]f the best we can do is make educated guesses about animals' inner lives then educated guesses are what we should make, even as we recognize that these guesses (which are educated, are based on evidence) are just guesses' (Fudge 2008, p.60). This does not mean simply imposing a human perspective on nonhuman animals and theorising accordingly, but rather taking what we know (insofar as we can 'know') about the lifeworld of those nonhuman animals and thinking about how that might shape experience (Coren 2005; Fudge 2008; Horowitz 2010; Uexküll 1992[1934]). Such theorising is evident in Stanley Coren's development of 'doggish' — a language taught to dog owners that enables communication beyond the near useless 'doggerel' (human dialect) many speak to their pets in (Coren 2005). Coren's approach, like Horowitz's exploration of a dog's olfactory navigation of the world, requires an acknowledgement that other animals do have a rich inner world, and are 'active, communicating beings engaged in world-making alongside humans' (Fudge 2008, p.56). Furthermore, a lack of the above understanding negates any possibility of positive human-companion animal relationships, for to create an inclusive relationship requires incorporating companion animal wants and needs, and 'know(ing) how to translate his answer' (Horowitz 2010, p.19).

Julie Ann Smith (2003) uses this notion of shared understandings as the basis for creating a post-human home with her companion rabbits. Reflecting on the differences between human and rabbit conceptualisation and use of space she observed that:

> After many years of living with rabbits, I noticed that they liked free corridors along perimeters. Before this, I would dutifully place litterboxes and toys along the walls of the playroom after I had cleaned each day. By night, the room was a "mess." Eventually I noticed that it was a particular kind of mess: Everything moveable in the room was in the middle of the floor (Figure 2). This observation changed forever the way I live in my house, as did my understanding of other rabbit preferences: spaces along borders and boundaries, enclosed spaces with more than one exit, spaces that allow them to see out but not be seen. Rabbit ideas of space management often conflicted with my own aesthetics, but I came to value them as indicators that rabbits were making themselves at home (Smith 2003, p.188).

Alger & Alger note similar preferences for use of space in their ethnography of a cat shelter (2003) in which they observed the cats using space in a particular way that reflected their social roles, relationships, and status in the group. For instance, two cats who had formed

a friendship, Bibbi and Lisa, had claimed an empty litter pan as their 'home base'. Other cats were able to exist nearby, but never enter the litter pan and one cat generally remained in the pan at all times. The symbolic importance of the empty pan was clear, particularly when it was removed and their 'spot' was no longer available:

> Upon arriving at the shelter we notice that Bibbi and Lisa are missing and that their empty litter pan is not in its usual place. One of the copresidents happens to be there and Janet tells her about their attachment to the empty litter pan. The president asks one of the volunteers to bring over a clean litter pan and as soon as it is in place, Bibbi and Lisa materialize and sit in it (Alger & Alger 2003, p.101).

Although we cannot fully understand what the litter pan, or rabbit constructed space *feels* like for the nonhuman animals, we can understand by observing their behaviour that these things are of importance. And because we are aware that 'other' animals have the capacity to shape their living space and engage in enrichment activities, we can hypothesise that they are also able to feel constraint when these behaviours are stifled.

From this we can hypothesise that 1) nonhuman animals may experience and interpret the world in ways that are vastly different from human experiences and interpretations; and 2) by looking at the way nonhuman animals use the home and by contemplating nonhuman animal umwelten we can imagine an interpretation of home that radically differs from the portrait of home garnered from human-centric research. In the remainder of this chapter I present data that speaks to this differing use of space and demonstrates the ways in which human and nonhuman participants navigated their shared lives through place and space. Keeping in mind that interpretations of nonhuman animals' experiences are 'educated guesses', I have illustrated findings with excerpts from field notes where appropriate, so that the basis of these conclusions can be 'seen'.

4. When worlds collide: the everyday negotiation of relationships through space

This section will explore the everyday negotiation of human-companion animal relationships both in the home and in public space. I contemplate whether and how the relationships observed were shaped by broader social structures and the impact this had on nonhuman animal agency. Based on my findings I argue that although the privacy and control afforded many humans in the home allows them to create relationships with pets that are *less* anthropocentric than societal norms encourage, the socio-spatial 'doing' of these relationships is inextricably steeped in anthroparchal structures. But although I would say it is not possible to create human-pet relationships that are not oppressive, what my findings do demonstrate is that there is scope to work towards *less* oppressive entanglements when nonhuman animal-centric practices are embraced. Furthermore, the

discussion highlights that centring nonhuman animals in research that concerns them is key to gaining a better understanding of the complexity of shared multispecies life.

4.1 The Socio-spatial facilitation of "love"

In chapter 4: making pets I discussed the interactive performance of love through which companion animals transcended their commodity status to become valued, minded kin. In this section I will build on this discussion, drawing on observations to demonstrate that these interactions have a spatial element — they must be enabled and negotiated through the construction and use of space.

Take the following observation for instance:

> Eric (human) is sitting on the couch. Mischief (cat) approaches and stops about a foot from where he sits, gazing intently at him. He offers his glasses to her, holding them out towards her. She leaps at them, aggressively wrestling with them, and him, while chewing on one of the arms. Eric drops the glasses and Mischief ceases her wrestling immediately, not resuming the game until Eric picks them up again — it is a mutually devised game that requires two players.

I interpreted the above interaction to be mutually enacted and, at least partly, initiated by Mischief, and this was facilitated by the negotiation of space in the home. For context, Mischief had free reign inside the house, and had been wandering in and out of the interview zone (the loungeroom) for the duration of the interview. She was not restricted in her access to furniture and had frequented most of it by this stage of the interview. So there was something significant about her approach to the lounge and pointed stop just in front of Eric's feet. To understand the initiation of this game, Goffman's concepts of keying and play behaviour are helpful.

Keying refers to a set of conventions through which something that already has meaning in a primary framework is transformed to mean something else. For a key to be successful, it requires cues that signal a start and end to the altered event (e.g. Eric offering and putting down the glasses to begin/end the game), and participants in the event must know that the transition is taking place (Goffman 1974). Keying is integral to play, and Goffman states that there are rules that interaction must follow in order to transform 'real action into something playful' (1974, p.41). Although play is modelled on 'real' everyday interactions, the sequence of activity is not followed faithfully and acts are exaggerated and performed in ways that inhibit ordinary function (e.g., bigger dogs tend to handicap themselves in play fights with smaller dogs [Horowitz 2010]). Importantly, 'When more than one participant is to be involved, all must be freely wiling to play, and anyone has the power to refuse an invitation to play or (if he is a participant) to terminate the play once it has begun' (Goffman 1974, p.42). This then introduces the significance of space. For this action to have meaning, Mischief had to have enough freedom in the home to make the

choice to interact in this specific way (or to refuse). Further to this, because she did have free reign in the house and, as I said, the action of stopping in front of Eric's feet and gazing intently at him seemed significant, I would say that this action too was a cue that she intended some sort of mutual interaction to begin.

As will be seen in the sections that follow, the organisation of space in the home (by humans) can either enable or constrain nonhuman animal behaviours, and the relationships we can have with our companions. The development of the glasses game relies on both Eric and Mischief having enough agency to willingly interact and explore new ways of mutually engaging. Part of this is object placement — Mischief needs to be able and allowed to access shared areas, such as the couch, in order for them both to be physically near enough to engage in play. They have to have shared communication that allows them both to communicate that what they are doing is engaging in gameplay and not wrestling proper (Goffman 1974). The cues and 'rules' of the game — such as gentle teasing and wrestling without harming the glasses or other interactants, ceasing as soon as the glasses are set down — do not exist of their own accord, they have been developed and honed through interaction over the course of the relationship to arrive at this primary framework of 'the glasses game'. Another interaction between Eric and Mischief further highlighted the importance of space, particularly freedom within it, to negotiations of 'play' behaviour.

> This is going to look terrible but she really likes it,' Eric says to me as Mischief sits on the floor about a foot away with her back to him, looking back occasionally. He gently puts his hands on her back end and drags her backwards about an inch. Mischief gets up, as if to walk away, but stops again about a foot from Eric's feet, and again looks back at him, waiting. He repeats the action, again dragging her back (gently) towards him before releasing her. She walks forward to the same starting point and again looks back and this time he doesn't repeat the action. She bristles a little bit, readjusts her position and again looks back at him pointedly. 'Oh, alright' he says and drags her back once more.

Again, the same rules must apply — for the above to be considered play both parties have to know it is a game and have the ability to opt out, and both should be able to recognise the start and end cues. In this instance the pause, when Eric does not repeat the dragging after Mischief takes her position, acts as a sort of verification in providing time and space for Mischief to signal she does not want to engage by either vocalising or moving away ('yeow's and growls were common verbal signals to indicate displease from feline participants, and served to immediately halt interactions much like an 'ow' or 'no' from a human participants did).

When asked about how they communicate with their animal companions, and how their companion communicated with them, participants mentioned both visual/behavioural and verbal cues:

> You know when you look at dogs and they say how they love you they stare at you and they jump on you and all that but yeah.. sort of through looking at each other and using certain facial expressions and voices and things like that (Eve).

Some participants took steps to educate themselves regarding nonhuman animal body language to try to accurately understand what their nonhuman animals were communicating:

> I've kind of learned animals' interactions through that because we had cats and dogs and then I guess by watching a lot of cat videos on youtube and just like things from uni and just general looking on the internet you kind of learn the cues from their body language and how they're reacting and how they feel a little bit (Lily).

These understandings were also fostered through engagement with behavioural training for dog owners. Cat owners, who did not engage in formal training and were not aware of any training for cats that existed, had to pursue this knowledge through alternate means like Lily above. But for the most part, communication and negotiated patterns of relations were generated and understood through everyday cohabitating. This also meant that human-companion animal interactions often had meaning for human and nonhuman participants that I was unaware of, and thus had to infer what might be going on by observing — though human participants usually explained these scenarios to me after the fact. Consider the following exchange:

> Mara (cat) approaches the lounge [sofa], sitting on the floor just out of Dawn's (human) reach.
>
> Mara: Meow
>
> Dawn: Yeah I know, yes
>
> Mara gazes unblinking, meows and turns head to stare pointedly at the closed screen door.
>
> Dawn: What's wrong? Oh yeah you want to get.. I'll take you outside for a treat later if I've got time.
>
> Mara blinks deliberately and saunters off to lie in a patch of sun, seemingly satisfied with the interaction. Dawn confirms that this is her usual approach to communication 'she doesn't like getting patted but she'll come up and tell you what she wants'.

Communications like the above were integral to companion animals' negotiation of their lived environment, as all nonhuman participants were restricted in some way in the home

space, whether this be in access to particular places (inside/outside/particular rooms), or resources (e.g., food) and thus had to 'ask' their owners for what they wanted. In Mara's case, she had to negotiate access to the backyard, and this bargaining required an adequate level of communication between nonhuman and human companions. But these examples also demonstrate that the intimate "loving" relationships between humans and their companion animals are generated and negotiated in these micro-interactions, and these interactions require certain spatial conditions to exist. In the next section, I unpack these spatial relations to examine the challenge to, and perpetuation of asymmetrical power relations between species in the home to highlight that the negotiation of space is a key factor in the negotiation of human-companion animal relationships.

4.2 Agency in action?

Companion animal agency is difficult to study. While many owners in my study swore that their nonhuman animals "rule the roost", Jessica Pierce (2015) argues that companion animals are likely the least empowered beings in the home. This does not mean that the owners did not make space for companion animal agency in the home, but rather that the extent of, and conditions around, this accommodation was constrained by broader structural forces which hold nonhuman animal agency in little regard. This necessitates an examination of companion animals' engagement with others and their environment, and the ways this this may be directly or indirectly influenced by their owners. Owner influence becomes especially noticeable when considering the different allowances granted to different species in the same household, in some instances exposing a hierarchy among pet species which then results in a different level of constraint for marginalised nonhuman animals. This discussion shows that not only do companion animals exercise agency, but that often this is constrained, more than we recognise, by human owners. Further to this, what is often perceived as a lack of agency may in fact be indicative of human restraint.

4.2.1. Negotiating multi-species space sharing

Physical inclusion of pets in domestic quarters has been cited by Franklin (2006) and Gabb (2007) as indicative of pets' increasing importance in the family. However, a closer examination of the negotiation of space in the home gives valuable insight into the complex dynamics of agency and power between species. As highlighted in the discussion above, human and nonhuman animals often have different (and conflicting) conceptualisations and uses of space (Fudge 2008; Philo & Wilbert 2011; Smith 2003). I found that the owners in my study either accommodated nonhuman animal agency in the home, making physical changes to the use of space, or actively tried to dissuade it.

One of the clearest examples of the restriction of companion animals' use of the home space lies in access to toileting facilities. Canine companions whose homes did not include

a doggy door were reliant on their owners being present and attentive to their need to relieve themselves. For one participant, who found living in rental accommodation with a housemate a barrier to leaving the back door open for their companion, this meant that their dog would have to toilet in the house if no one was home:

> She needs someone to let her out like because we don't have a dog door and I don't think the owner would let us put one in. If we had a dog door I don't think the toilet thing would be a problem at all (Olivia).

During our interview, Olivia gets up several times to open and close the back door, granting her dog access inside or outside the house. Her dog otherwise had freedom of movement within the house and backyard, and the back door issue seems to be a restriction placed on both owner and pet by a housemate and rental system that preferred an anthropocentric home. Another participant restricted access to outside toileting to avoid unwanted barking outside and maintain the fly-free home they desired:

> We can't exactly leave the door open all the time because then we get flies in the house …and like similarly because sometimes she goes around that side of the house and starts barking at random people and we're just like well we don't want you to do that (Edward).

The pressures expressed by Olivia and reasons given by Edward for keeping the back door shut and therefore constraining their pets' ability to freely toilet outside both reflect anthropocentric ideas of the home as a secure place under human control. Anthropologist Mary Douglas explains that home is, by necessity, a place under (human) control (1991). Given this, the very presence of pets within the home becomes a 'marker of insecurity' (Fudge 2008, p.19), challenging both symbolic (public/private; inside/outside) boundaries and physical ones:

> If the door of the home is meant to be a boundary between outside and inside then placing a hole in that door that can be constantly penetrated reveals instead the lack of security that is created by the pet. The inside and the outside cannot be separated as there is a being within the home who is of both worlds (is a "man-animal") and so contaminates (for want of a better word) one with the other. Clarity is gone. (Fudge 2008, p.19).

A simple action like leaving the back door open is tied up in broader ideas of security, control and boundary maintenance that support the constraint of nonhuman animal agency. Further to this, such restriction places the nonhuman animals in an increasingly vulnerable and disempowered position, as they are unable to freely perform a basic necessary task (toileting) without assistance (Imrie 2010).

Nonhuman animals whose toileting facilities were inside the home introduced new (and often unwelcome) smells and mess that owners had to manage. This, then, forced humans

to rethink how they constructed the home to create the unwanted situation, and how they might then recreate the space in ways that suited nonhuman animals uses of space and as well as human preferences for smell minimisation. For instance, Eric described his experience of trying to accommodate the habits and preferences of a particularly timid cat whilst still suiting their (human) preferred toileting arrangement:

> I bought a cat house the other day, like a cat toilet, because the smell was starting to get to me. So I bought one with a door that's got a charcoal filter and all this fancy sort of stuff, and this is such a boring story, I had to tape — coz of Angie (cat) — I had to tape the door open for a week and I think they're both using it…That's what I mean by I let them tell me [what they need] (Eric).

Eric's approach demonstrates a choreographed human-nonhuman animal interaction, in which the space is still being designed in ways that suit human preferences, however this is negotiated with nonhuman animal needs and experiences (Angie's timidness and need to toilet). It is this everyday negotiation of spatial construction and use that is a highly important site of analysis, as it is here that asymmetrical power relations and structural forces are challenged or reinforced (or both) on a micro level. And the different ways human participants navigated this negotiation -- between taking significant steps to accomodate their nonhuman animals' preferences or merely asserting human power — indicates the extent to which they attempted to embrace a more nonhuman animal-centric relationship.

The "problem" of Edward's dog's barking also introduces the idea of legitimate and illegitimate uses of the home space, with barking clearly defined as inappropriate behaviour in the backyard. Environmental restriction was a prominent occurrence, with most of the observed households including rooms or areas the companion animals could not access. One participant utilised baby gates to restrict their dog's movements within the house remarking, "He can go anywhere he likes. Oh except up to the front of the house…" (Nora). Another enforced an evening restriction on their cat's access to children's bedrooms:

> We don't let him in the girls' bedrooms at night time. But that's what we've done since we got him so he, touch wood, he doesn't sort of try to get in or sit there and meow until they let him in or anything like that (Sarah).

Similar bedtime restrictions were enforced by other participants who restricted their companions to a specific area of the house (such as the laundry) or outside, in contrast to the freedom of movement they were afforded within the house at other times.

Some participants restricted their companion animals' movements sporadically to accommodate temporary preferences or uses of space, with one owner explaining, "we restrict access to a few of the rooms when we don't want it a) covered in fur or b) them

chewing plastic bags if we've got things packed up or put away" (Dawn). Temporary space restrictions were also utilised as a 'timeout' when nonhuman animals misbehaved or weren't getting along with others in the house. Owners also tailored how nonhuman animals could use the home space by altering the resources available to them. For instance, James altered the treats provided to his dog to avoid defilement of the backyard:

> Occasionally if I think he deserves a treat or something I'll get him a bone. He hasn't had one for a while because he buries them in the garden, that's the problem. Find the loveliest plant you can dig it up and put a bone under it [laughter] so I sort of moved to buying him hearts or livers something like that that he can eat more quickly and not bury them (James).

In this instance while the dog has shown a preference for burying bones (which conflicts with the owner's view of legitimate use of space), the owner restricts their ability to "choose" this through changing to a treat less likely to be buried. This restriction of nonhuman animals' movements in space is interesting in light of the earlier discussion about belonging in the home. For humans, restricted movements (Imrie 2010) and/or inability to customise the home space (Mackenzie et al 2018) is linked to feelings of exclusion. While I'm unable to say based on data that nonhuman animals who are constrained in the ways described harbour the same feelings of exclusion and frustration, restrictions that do not allow nonhuman animals to use space as they choose miss opportunities to mutually construct multispecies spaces, and thus perpetuate anthropocentric ideas.

However, as seen with Eric above, there were some examples of owners taking conscious steps to shape their home environment in accordance with companion animals' preferences. For instance, Dawn reported making several adjustments to her home to accommodate the two cats she had adopted:

> Yeah um we had to put um we had to get yeah the doors changed over with the stronger mesh coz they like to climb to the top of that and um what else was there.. Oh [laughter] my daughter started um came out and started her eyes were watering and she'd be sneezing and she,we, discovered she was allergic to the cats. And we've gone 'oh great what're we gonna do? … I had to go get a brand new vacuum cleaner with the pet filters and everything to try and vacuum everything up and thankfully she's sort of used to them now. But um have to give her a hay fever tablet before you put her in the car with them and she's just not allowed to bury her face in their fur like she used to like to do (Dawn).

This participant opted to limit the humans in the house — cleaning more rigorously, restricting their daughter's interactions with the cats and administering antihistamines — rather than limiting the cats' movements. Likewise, opting to alter the screen doors so that they could be climbed by the cats without damage embraces the cats' agency (in letting them climb the doors as they wish) rather than seeking to suppress companion animal agency by attempting to curb the behaviour. These (human) choices are reminiscent of the owners in Cudworth's (2011) walk and talk interviews, in which "good" owners are shown to alter (sometimes radically) their own lives to accommodate the needs and 'wildness' of their canine companions. As seen in the previous section, Dawn's cats were limited in their access to outside among other things, however concerted attempts were made to create as much space for nonhuman animal agency as possible within these constraints (e.g. supervised outside time). The result, then, is a home that is (at least partially) co-constructed by human and nonhuman inhabitants, despite existing in a structural context that devalues nonhuman animal agency.

The presence of nonhuman animal "stuff" is also indicative of the extent to which nonhuman animals are allowed to freely use the space. In many of the houses I observed the presence of "stuff"— toys scattered, beds where you would expect to find walkways and random objects that owners explained were there to suit the nonhuman animals' preferences:

> There is an empty box next to the wall. Milo (cat) strolls towards it
> and climbs in, hunkers down and closes his eyes. I am told it is Milo's
> box, left there especially for that purpose.

The houses in which "nonhuman animal stuff" was present were otherwise tidy, indicating that the house was not 'out of control', but rather a negotiation of legitimate use of space (Smith 2003). Companion animal "stuff" is not out of place, but rather indicates that they too can place items in the home. This stands in contrast to other homes in which no "stuff" was observed in the home and it was explained that the toys were confined to specific areas, mostly the backyard, creating a clear environment in which "inside" was for human enjoyment (inside pets therefore have to conform to human preferences) and "outside" was for "other" animals.

The examples in this section speak to the spatial negotiation of agency, in which the material environment dictates the freedoms and access to resources available to social actors (Carter & Charles 2018), and I would add that these environments reflect broader anthroparchal structures that privilege cultures of exclusive humanism by overwhelmingly deferring to human preferences (Cudworth 2011a; Lefebvre 1991). While some companion animals did enjoy greater freedom within the home (and as I will later discuss, these greater freedoms enable a portrayal of human-companion animal relationships generally as unproblematic), these freedoms had to be granted and actively facilitated by their human owners, further perpetuating the asymmetrical power dynamic between human

and nonhuman inhabitants. This human-led negotiation of space didn't just shape what companion animals could do in the homespace, but also impacted on the kinds of relationships they could have with other pets. As will be seen in the following section, human owners could (and did) use their power over the home space to either actively facilitate or restrict inter-pet relations.

4.2.2. Facilitating relations between 'other' species

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that relationships (Butler 2016) and the physical layout of the home (Imrie 2010) impacted on whether human inhabitants felt included and empowered to participate in the home. While communication barriers prevented me from asking nonhuman participants how they felt in the home, through observation it is possible to make some inferences about how the organisation of space shapes, and is shaped by, (human facilitated) inter-pet relationships.

The impact of space on inter-pet relationships was most apparent in homes where the organisation of space clearly excluded one or more pet-species. In one home there was little evidence of pets other than a boisterous dog who moved freely about the place. There were toys around and blankets on the couches so he could go where he pleased without damaging the fabric and for the most part the dog seemed very much included in the household. It wasn't until later in the interview that is became apparent there was also a cat in the household, who was never seen outside of a small cat bowl up on a high surface. Audrey explained that the cats absence was largely due to the overzealous dog:

> Yeah with cats he sort of um with our cat, we have a cat, she's like 15 and she doesn't really like dogs and he [dog] sort of like doesn't give her personal space and sort of winds her up and chases her round and barks and doesn't really understand not everyone wants to be his friend …He just wants to sniff her and give her a bit of a lick but she'll like go hissss and arc up and he thinks it's a game and he'll run. Like we've got a tree in the backyard, the cat climbs the tree and the dog runs around the tree like circling and barking and so yeah he's very energetic and also he's smart too (Audrey)

The cat in this household, though not actively rejected from the home, was still prevented from interacting freely inside the house due to the lack of movement pathways outside of the dog's reach. Whilst the cat's food bowl was kept on a higher shelf to avoid being eaten by the dog, no other higher-level spaces were provided, making it difficult for the cat to move around without encountering the dog. This then passively granted the dog privileges over the home space and made it unlikely that the two animal companions would develop a positive relationship, particularly as little attention was paid to encouraging more harmonious relations in the home. As discussed earlier, a key aspect of developing positive relations is play, and for play behaviour to develop both parties must be able to willingly enter or refuse the interaction (Goffman 1974). Restricted movement in the

house, then, impacts on the cats ability to "choose" to interact (as this was simply forced upon her) and thus relationship building opportunities are limited.

In contrast, some participants strove to actively foster harmonious relationships between pets through inclusive construction of space. I observed a multi-(companion) species house that used multi-levelled space to inclusively accommodate the companion animal's ability to choose whether or not to interact:

> Bradley (cat) sits calmly at the top of a high climbing apparatus as Carly (dog) sits on a mat nearby with a dog toy between her paws. She glances occasionally up to Bradley as if she is not quite sure of him. It is apparent that the living space is a combination of high, cat accessible areas and low, dog friendly areas that are strewn with toys and beds. This allows the living space to be used by all species regardless of their relationships as it is explained that Bradley is a new addition and not all of the family pets have adjusted to his presence.

The use of multi-levelled space was part of a gradual process in the household, in which the (human) participant had been slowly introducing Bradley through environment management (restricting all pets to separate areas of the house) to create separate "safe" spaces for each of the nonhuman animals and building up to this shared space. This was an intentional plan to foster positive relationships between all beings in the house, a plan developed by the owner through independent research on introducing new pets to the existing family unit. The intention was to provide a shared space in which all species could move freely and choose to interact if they wished but could also avoid each other without being excluded from the main living areas.

This acknowledgment of social relationships did not differ along species lines, but rather depended on whether the owner thought about their companion animal as a whole, independent being or just to the extent that their lives were entangled. Those that did try to foster inter-pet relationships tended to place a higher value on the importance of nonhuman communication as offering something to animal companions that human contact could not:

> I don't think I can provide that for her I think it does come from other dogs so. I think coz they interact in a whole different way and they communicate in a whole different way, dogs do, I have no idea how they communicate but they they've got their own little world and it's not like I can talk to you— I can talk to the dog but the dog doesn't necessarily understand what I'm saying. It can understand commands but it doesn't necessarily, it might not know what the rest of what I'm doing is. But they can sense moods and stuff and I think yeah if they're that sensitive they obviously need that companionship too.
> (Olivia)

One participant who owned several birds (as well as a dog) was careful to facilitate social interaction for all pets—including cage placement to allow communication between birds whilst maintaining their own private spaces:

> Cages are placed in an 'L' shape in the loungeroom, in a deliberate order which places the birds next to those who have similar communication techniques. The budgies are the only birds currently sharing a cage. Though the birds are often out of the cages—the doors left open to encourage free flying and interaction, this cage placement encourages them to communicate when in the cages. The birds appear to have constructed a hybrid language—made up of the human words they know, natural bird vocalisation and learned sounds such as imitating human coughing and the sound of the fridge door opening. When we are not in the room you can hear one bird 'cough' which is then answered by another bird 'coughing' back. This goes on for several minutes.

This arrangement was not necessarily making life easier for the owner, who explained that living in a rental property meant they worried about the noise from the birds, but this worry did not change their commitment to facilitating the social relationships. This, then, serves as an example of the reimagining of inter-species relationships that can be possible given the privacy and control afforded in the homespace (Mallett 2004). The influence of anthroparchal structures is also evident, as even though the participant was defying anthropocentric norms that prefer nonhuman animals to behave in accordance with human preferences (i.e. exist quietly), they still worried about potential consequences of this. This reimagining was entirely dependent on the willingness of the human owner to subvert some of their privilege in the home and make an intentional effort to facilitate more symmetrical relationships, and as will be seen below, this was not always the case.

4.2.3. Hierarchy in the home: all pets aren't constructed equally

So far in this chapter I have demonstrated that human relations with companion animals are enabled and performed through spatial practices which determine the interactions, agency, and relationships nonhuman animals may experience in the home. My research also uncovered a species hierarchy, as some nonhuman animals were included in the household more than others. Building on the discussion in Chapter 4 around categorisation of "pets" and "non-pets", this section will focus on the spatial manifestation of hierarchical relationships, and their intersection with owners' connections with nonhuman animals in the household. This was not a rare phenomenon: 20% of households featured a marginalised nonhuman animal. Marginalised pets were absent from the interview zone in all but one instance, and thus did not feature in my field notes except to note their absence when their existence became apparent. This section then

draws on these noted absences, and responses by participants when asked about the missing nonhuman animals, to theorise these hierarchies.

The unequal value of certain species of pet in society has been highlighted by Jessica Pierce (2016), with smaller 'starter' pets often faring the worst. My findings largely confirmed this— marginalised pets included birds, cats, rats, guinea pigs, fishes and a horse; never dogs. In two instances, marginalised nonhuman animals had previously occupied a more privileged position in the home, however this changed upon the introduction of a canine member of the household (as Shir-Vertesh [2012] noted, relationships with companion animals tend to change over time). One of these households recounted physically moving three rats from the main living area to the garage:

> When we had all three [rats] we had this little cage and we had to
> have them just in that little room there and [the dog] would always be
> in that room there staring at them the whole time so we had to
> eventually block them all off. (Edward)

This example demonstrates how space can be used to enforce an intra-pet hierarchy, as a privileged pet (in this instance the dog) is given free reign in the home while marginalised pets are physically removed from the living quarters. Pets who were overtly excluded were placed in out-of-the-way areas such as the garage or outside, and these nonhuman animals tended to be enclosed — confined to cages, paddocks or ponds and thus could do little to resist their marginalisation.

Other marginalised pets were implicitly excluded from the home, as a lack of available surfaces or infrastructure to accommodate multiple pet species resulted in the marginalised pet having to fend for themselves with the privileged pet who has free reign (usually a dog). In the previous section I described a scenario in which a cat was essentially excluded from the home as they were unable to navigate the living space without encountering a boisterous dog. This is an example of implicit exclusion — while the cat was not physically removed from the living area like the rats mentioned above, she was prevented from interacting in the home nonetheless by a lack of inclusive space organisation. This situation also highlights the link between owner relationships with pets, and the nonhuman animals' experiences in the home. Canine privileging was not just observable in the home but was also evident in the language associated with each of the nonhuman animals— the dog is smart, energetic, just wants to be friends; the cat arcs up, hisses, doesn't like dogs. This negativity almost implies that the cat is at fault for not adjusting to, and welcoming the dogs' presence, ignoring any human responsibility for creating a home environment that has effectively placed the cat in a vulnerable position.

The explanations for the marginalisation of some pet animals speak to the link between owners' connection (or lack thereof) with companions, recognition of nonhuman animal mindedness and disposability, and suggest that the spatial navigation of these relationships both inform and are informed by these factors. Exclusion was often accompanied by a lesser attachment to marginalised nonhuman animals, which was

reported as either being the cause for, or caused by the physical exclusion. The owner of the cat mentioned above described a lack of bonding with their feline companion, who was owned by their partner prior to cohabitation:

> She is very different with me than she is with my husband like she hardly ever sits on my lap and I think it took her years to just.. I remember the first time she sat on my lap I swear it was like two or three years after um moving in and I was like oh it's the best thing ever but even now if my husband is here it's.. yeah there's just not a chance that she's gonna sit on my lap and it's like yeah.. and again if she comes on the bed it'll be yeah his side of the bed or near his pillow or like I don't know I think she's sort of like yeah you're here and maybe if i'm desperate for affection maybe maybe I'll snuggle next to you or take some pats but in the main sort of.. yeah. Coz I don't think I ever really like.. when I was younger I never really hankered for like a cat and I was never like oh I must have a cat, I never asked my dad for a cat at Christmas I was always like I wanted a dog so yeah. (Audrey)

Another participant similarly justified the exclusion of a horse on the basis that they considered them to have an abhorrent personality:

> You know when you've got a clash of personalities? I could not come to this horse just not at all it was rotten, like I love horses but there's some bad ones too, you know. I don't love all people do I? (Bridget)

These explanations highlight the importance of companion animals fulfilling their 'function' of providing affection and entertainment and, implicitly, possessing a pleasing personality (Franklin 2006; Tague 2008), lest they be pushed out of the home for failure to deliver.

Other participants did not necessarily dislike their marginalised nonhuman animals, but did not recognise them as individual, minded beings, which then formed the basis of their exclusion. In some instances, nonhuman animals were loved as an amorphous group, despite being disposable on an individual level. For an example of this, I refer you back to the participant mentioned in chapter 4 (Frank) who would happily trade in their birds for 'fresh ones' because he wanted to 'have a variety of colours'. For the participant this exchange did not indicate a lack of affection for the birds as a group, despite their disposability at an individual level. This was facilitated by their perceived lack of "personality'—whilst one particular bird who would eat out of the participant's hand was seen to have some personality 'the others don't' and thus were interchangeable.

Owners of the smaller 'starter' nonhuman animals were more likely to minimise the interactive capabilities of their marginalised companions, instead focussing on them as a resource for teaching responsibility and care to children. For these 'starter' nonhuman

animals, it is unclear whether their placement outside of the living quarters determined their marginalisation, or the other way around. Likely both — as Tipper (2014) argues, pets that are separated in enclosures (such as fishes in tanks, birds in cages etc.) are perceived as less minded because their living conditions prevent rich interactions that are more easily achieved with a free roaming pet. However, preconceived ideas and continued practices which fail to challenge these ideas about "lesser" pet species are also highly likely to shape expectations and interpretations of the value of companion animals — particularly as other households that included the same species as excluded pets organised their relationships in radically different ways. This marginalisation is the product of a cyclical relationship between space organisation and owner valuing of animal companions.

In the above instances, participants absolve themselves from the responsibility of actively constructing and enforcing a pet hierarchy, rather painting intra-pet species hierarchy as something that 'just happens' and was outside of their control. This then means that such a hierarchy can exist comfortably alongside a condemnation of other owners who displace or mistreat their nonhuman animals, as a hierarchy is not actively created and privileged nonhuman animals are well treated and visibly present so as to reaffirm the preferred owner identity.

Despite this portrayal, it is clear that these hierarchies are socially constructed and human-enabled: if the distinction was a naturally occurring or purely biological one then it would likely appear consistently across all households with those species. The fact that such a distinction and different valuation of nonhuman animals exists within the one household negates a simplistic view of pet-keeping as being dependent on "good" or "bad" owners, but rather indicates that human relations with companion species are highly malleable and dependent on a range of factors (Blouin 2012) —and largely dictated by the privileged human. However, these oppressive patterns of relating are not solely the result of individual owners' attitudes and practices — despite the home being a private space, perceived to be completely under human control, the relations occurring within them reflect and are shaped by outside forces, reflecting broader discourse and structures of an anthroparchal society. As such, I now turn to the 'outside' and consider its place in shaping human-companion animal relationships.

5. Influence of the anthropocentric "outside"

The complexity of freedom and constraint in human-companion animal relationships is increasingly highlighted when we consider the role of "outside" — that is the broader imaginaries that surround these relationships and the public locales in which they manifest. The social production of these relationships occurs both outside and inside the home, even if the physical performance of the relationship is strictly tied to the home space. This section, then, considers participants experiences outside of the home as well as the public/private nexus which sees these "outside" anthroparchal ideas of nonhuman

animals as devalued commodities and cultures of exclusive humanism filtering into the home space and into these "private" relationships.

5.1 Relationships in public: identities, excuses and performance

In public all humans with companion animals are heavily encouraged to enforce an anthropocentric worldview as nonhuman animals are asked to suppress natural reactions or desires and submit to human dominance (Wadiwel 2017). The organisation of public space enables some owner identities while constraining others, and influences behaviour through the communication of behavioural norms between human-dog pairs. This in turn shapes human-companion animal relationships even in the private space of the home, as public shame or affirmation has the potential to damage or bolster the relationship.

With the exception of the vet, public space for domesticated nonhuman animals is almost exclusively canine-specific. While the vast majority of dogs are taken for walks (84%) and/ or visit parks and other public space (52%), cats are overwhelmingly more likely to remain at home (85%) with only 5% being taken on walks in the community (AMA 2016). The only companion relations expected to be viewed in public are human-dog pairs, reinforcing the kind of canine privileging evident in the examples above. It is a condition in many public spaces that dogs be under 'effective control' at all times, which, coupled with signs about picking up nonhuman animal excrement and "code of conduct" signs start to outline a "responsible dog owner" identity that is required in public. The public dog could never be allowed the same level of freedom possible in the home, the owner must, ultimately, be in control (Power 2008). This control is established both explicitly and implicitly through interactions with (and between) owners, not the nonhuman animals themselves (Sanders, 1990). One owner reported an incident in which they were chastised for not controlling their dog to the extent deemed acceptable by the other party:

> I get really really angry coz like I said 8 o'clock is off lead time and the number of families that have had the whole day to themselves on the beach and it's 8 o'clock so it's the dogs turn now and um you know piss off if you don't like dogs get the hell off the beach. It's dark, your children should be in bed anyway, go away. But the number of children that go 'aaaargh' at him. At this dog, and I just look at the parents and go oh yeah coz he's a killer and the first words out of my mouth are always to the children 'he's friendly and if you put your hand out like that and let him sniff you he might lick you' but they just go 'arghhh' and I could just absolutely just slap the parents. And I actually had an all out (gestures thumping fist into palm) with a mother a few weeks back when she said 'he should be on a lead' and I said he is under effective control, and I said your children should not be so scared of dogs. (Laura)

This anger highlights a familiar frustration among participants with dogs — as much as they may respect and create space for nonhuman agency at home, in public space an anthropocentric worldview reigns supreme. Any sign of unsanctioned nonhuman animal agency may result in a negative reaction from those (humans) who are entitled to this privilege. This does not mean that owners cannot give their pets freedom in public, but rather that they may face consequences for doing so—social ostracism or monetary fines for instance. Many participants expressed that they would prefer to take their companion with them to most outside places but were restricted to very few locations that would allow, and were suitable for, their nonhuman animals. Several participants voiced an aversion even to places that seemed on the surface to be dog-friendly, such as the dog park, which they considered to be sites shaped in accordance with the way dog *owners* wanted to use space:

> I've seen people on their laptops, I can't believe that! One doing their work and um not really paying much attention to the dogs and what do you hear? 'Oh they can sort it out, let them sort it out' and you're going no, no way jose, you know sometimes you do need to intervene and you do need to watch. (Molly)

In particular, owners of non-typical dogs (such as those with anxiety or reactivity issues) were acutely aware that public space, where it does allow for companion animal participation, is shaped around the idea of compliant and predictable nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities, rather than allowing for differences of personality, interaction preferences and needs. Much like the marginalised cat discussed above, non-typical canines were edged out of public spaces by other owners who did not leash their companions in on-leash areas or exercise effective control, instead operating under the assumption that they knew their companion to be "friendly" and expected all other companions to be receptive to any advances. This then highlights the intersection of speciesism and disability, with both human and nonhuman animals devalued and excluded by a broader society that privileges neurotypical beings (Taylor 2017). This exclusion was something that had to be actively managed by owners, sometimes resulting in significantly decreased, or ceased, public outings with their companion animal, and this affected owners' mental health as well.

Some owners reported engaging in what Clinton Sanders (1990) refers to as 'excusing tactics', in order to explain their pets behaviour or distance themselves from the nonhuman animal so as to not be shamed by extension for their pet's "bad" behaviour. One owner referenced their dog's age and breed as factors in her propensity for mischief and mindedness in public:

> She went and into a pond full of stinking seweragy water and ducks and she chased the dogs for the next three hours while we're standing. We tried everything, we even brought her best friend down to the side

of the lake and called her and she went 'oh look Frankie' and she ran out sniffed him quickly, by the time I'd jumped on the leash she was back in the water um. And it was all slush so I couldn't like race in after her um we tried treats, we tried other dogs, we tried calling her, we tried toys. Eventually had to call the fire brigade to come down and get the big rescue pole, hook her collar and drag her out …So yeah unfortunately it's just a case of learn to live with it and deal with the embarrassment when I am unsuccessful in getting her to do something. I'm hoping as she gets older she'll settle down coz kelpies take a long time to settle.

None of the participants reported that these incidences impacted on their level of affection, or treatment of, their companion animals. However, they mentioned these embarrassments as likely to impact on *other* owner's decision to rehome their companions. This could perhaps indicate that these were trying factors that threatened relationships, but they had managed to move past them without lasting damage or that the participant was simply trying to distance themselves from feelings they don't believe to be acceptable.

However, while "outside" spaces were constrictive for nonhuman beings, relations in public can be a source of positive affirmation for owner identities when they successfully perform their "good owner" role. One owner took great pleasure in the positive reception of their dog in public:

> Basically he loves everyone and everyone seems to love him and that makes me proud and somehow it's sort of a reflection on me. (Laura)

Thus although 'outside' is undeniably a place that constrains companion animals, when owners and dogs successfully interact according to social rules this is seen as positive. Owners are then encouraged to maintain a joint public identity that is considered acceptable to others in public (Sanders 1990), reproducing anthroparchal relations of human dominance over other animals as a result of this social interaction.

5.1.1 "Outside" and the looming threat of the "superior" human

While not all participants considered the 'outside' to be dangerous and anti-pet, all reflected on spaces outside the home as considerably less pet-friendly than the home space. "Outside" is a human place—somewhere companion animals need to be protected from and/or escorted through. Several factors, such as injury, human interference (for example, theft) and conflict influenced human decisions to control or restrict their companions' access to "outside". This often resulted in humans employing strategies to control their nonhuman animals to a greater extent than they felt comfortable with:

> I know it's better to keep them as indoor cats but this one especially she's so much happier when she can get a bit of a stroll outside and

get a bit more territory under her belt yeah.... I don't want them to get in a fight and hurt another cat or be hurt themselves um and also just for ... um ...friendliness with neighbours I don't want them to dig up a neighbours yard and take a big poop in their veggie garden as cats are great at doing. Um and I guess also just my worry and stress about them being hit by a car. (Tara)

Fox (2006) explains that this pressure to restrict feline companions' freedoms is particularly challenging, as it goes against understandings of cats as inherently more "wild" than dogs. For cat owners in particular, the vilification of "feral" cats meant that it was necessary to take steps to ensure that their companion's "pet" status was identifiable 'I'd have to put collars on them and I don't like them in collars' said one participant (Eric). Even then, it was clear that "owned" cats were not thought to be welcome in outside spaces, in part due to their tendency to transgress private boundaries and violate human-acceptable behaviours in space (by, for example, defecating in vegetable gardens). When discussing their companions and outside spaces, most cat owners discussed the negative associations between cats and wildlife deaths as a motivating factor in keeping their cats indoors. This outcome was cat specific — although participants also reported their dogs killing local wildlife, their movements were not restricted because of it. This is perhaps partly explained by the killing of wildlife by cats being a current moral panic in Australia (see for example Probyn-Rapsey 2016) resulting in very different attitudes towards cat roaming than those reported in a UK context (Fox 2018).

In this context, "control" techniques such as training were viewed as a safety necessity, rather than a means of exerting human superiority within the home. One participant talked about training as a sort of "communal language" (in line with Coren 2005) that meant that if their companion escaped, another human would be able to interact with her and thus hopefully have a higher chance of keeping her safe in the unsafe outside. Another reported her worry that the environment of safety and respect she had created for her companion within the home would render him ill-equipped to navigate the outside world, in which he occupied a marginalised position:

He'd run out to the front and he had no fear and coz he's totally safe around me I guess he thinks he's totally safe around the world. And one day a lady was driving along here and she saw him and she saw me racing along to get him and she opened her car door to help and he just jumped straight into her car and that just freaked me right out. Coz I thought gee if that had happened and I hadn't seen it and the person had driven away— he's microchipped and you know, but if they pull his collar off that has his name and address and phone number.. I don't know if it has his address but it's got his phone number on it then chances of me finding him are diminished especially if it's someone passing through...And that's what it's about like the training really is about the safety of the animal. So now we

> have rules if I'm bringing in groceries and stuff he will stay at the
> window... So yeah it was more I think the main thing is the safety
> issues around the dog when they don't know when they're top dog
> they think they're in control but they're not really because the world
> out there is not safe: Cars, people, yeah. (Penny)

The construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities is emphasised in the outside context, with many owners echoing Penny's fears that their companions will be stolen and sold. Multiple owners, particular those with feline companions, reported a fear of nonhuman animal theft as one of their most pressing reasons for restricting their companions' movements to the home space. This was particularly prevalent amongst owners of purebred cats who recognised the commodity value of their companion, and considered that their nonhuman animal's worth would be reduced to this monetary potential outside of the home (where they were respected as individuals):

> Someone would probably try and steal her, which is the way of a lot of
> Burmese, a lot of Siamese cats um that's another reason I don't want
> to let them out I'm just scared someone's going to...(Eric)

For these owners, fears of "outside" threats provided a confronting reminder of the juxtaposition between their own loving, affectionate relationships and the commodification of the nonhuman animals that facilitated this relationship to begin with (Fudge 2008; Tuan 1984). One owner negated their guilt around this denial of access by taking their cats on regular trips to a vacation house in which they were able to roam freely away from human-centric suburbia and its many restrictions. Others took their (canine) companions with them wherever possible, however as discussed earlier the species exclusive nature of public spaces impedes one's ability to do so. This, then, introduces the relationship between "outside" and "inside" navigations of human-companion animal relationships, and influence of the public/private nexus on relationships in the home. It is to this nexus that I now turn.

5.2 Anthroparchal structures and the public/private nexus

As stated earlier in the chapter, Home is a site constantly being shaped by the interplay of macro social forces "outside" and the micro interactions that occur within (Butler 2016; Lefebvre 1991[1974]). Thus, while home for some inhabitants provides an opportunity to create a space where marginalised groups can resist oppressive constructions of them (hooks 2001[1990]), these ideas inevitably filter into the private sphere in some form or other.

Overtly, some participants reported experiencing pressures to subscribe to more anthropocentric navigations of the home space when humans outside of their household visited, and brought these ideas with them:

> One of our friends said that she doesn't like that our dog gets up on
> the lounge, and it's like it's our couch, our house, our dog— don't like

> it don't come over. Like you know that's not my problem that's your
> problem. (Clare)

Although some participants were comfortable enforcing their companion animal's "right to space" in the home, this becomes much trickier when those opposing such an inclusion are important social ties or actually live in the household. Often this means a severing of the relationship or having to find alternate living arrangements— one participant reported attempting to do the latter, however broader issues around renting with nonhuman animals was making this quite difficult (Power 2017).

The canine-centrism perpetuated by exclusionary "outside" space also made it more difficult for owners to value non-canine (and to a lesser extent non-feline) pets. Owners of 'other' species whose bodies are not as identifiable and relatable to human bodies as dog and cat forms are faced with the particular challenge of 'educating' outsiders on how to interact with their pets. I discovered this firsthand when a participant instructed me on how to interact with one of their avian companions:

> Willow has Milly on her shoulder and brings her over to meet me.
> Milly transfers over to my shoulder and heads straight for my hair
> settling somewhere beneath my earlobe. I ask whether she likes to be
> touched, or just left to her own devices. Willow explains that Milly
> likes a good scratch, but not below a certain point or my "scratch" will
> be interpreted as a sexual advance and she will probably try to mate
> with my neck.

Given the lack of visible human-bird relationships in public space, this behaviour, without explanation is baffling and concerning to the unsuspecting human recipient, and not guided by any explanatory framework in public discourse as a humping dog would be. This unawareness meant visitors were more likely to have a problem with non-traditional (i.e., non dog or cat) pets, and humans in these circumstances must then choose whether to uphold the rights they have granted their nonhuman animals within the home (and risk the social consequences of potentially offending their human visitors), or allow the anthropocentric outside to restrict their companion animal's agency. This can be considerably more difficult given that many humans are unaware or uncritical about their privilege, and thus having it challenged or taken away within a private space can be baffling and quite confronting.

"Outside" norms are unlikely to encourage the valuing of marginalised pet species, with owners lamenting the plethora of misinformation and inappropriate goods for sale. Examples of this include aesthetically pleasing vertical cages ('birds don't levitate!' [Willow]), toxic treats and toys, and even a lack of understanding of how large nonhuman animals would grow— one Oskar fish required a much, much larger enclosure than the pet store had recommended. Obtaining veterinary care was also more challenging for owners of these pets — as discussed in Chapter 4, some owners were given incorrect dosages for small birds and resorted to self-education and social media to obtain adequate

information for their pets. Other owners were told their pet simply couldn't be treated at a regular vet and must instead find a specialist. Their willingness to do so (or not) was influenced by the inclusion or exclusion of animals, indicating the significance of socio-spatial construction of relationships for connection and quality of care. These examples also highlight the impossibility of creating relationships which are free of anthroparchal influence, with outside norms and attitudes having material impacts on the nonhuman animals that share our homes. Whilst the privacy of the homespace allows owners to construct relationships that value nonhuman animals more, and differently, than social norms might dictate, these relationships inevitably come into contact with these norms regardless and are shaped by this interaction. "Outside" social norms control the broader context in which these relationships exist and reinforce the human-as-superior and nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities. If anything, the juxtaposition of these two realms highlights that while the homespace might make pet ownership *seem* unproblematic as positive relationships are able to be fostered (if owners are willing), they occur in a broader context that constantly reinforces the asymmetrical power relation between humans and "other" animals. As reflected in the fears voiced by participants, companion animals only have the value that "we" bestow on them, and the unowned or unaccompanied companion loses any privileges and protections associated with this "pet" label as soon as they exit the home.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the socio-spatial navigation of human-companion animal relationships in order to demonstrate the complexity of multi-species life, and the inevitably unequal power relations on which they rest. The home is a contested site for human and nonhuman animals, serving as a haven (Butler 2016; Lasch 1977), a site of identity construction (Goffman 1956; Scott 2009; Veblen 1994), abuse (Taylor & Fraser 2019) and a site of belonging or exclusion (Butler 2016) among other things. The importance of home for humans provides a context for the challenges of shared multispecies life, which often relied on humans accepting (or not) nonhuman animals' differing preferences and uses of space to create 'beastly places' (Philo & Wilbert 2011).

The interplay between "inside" and "outside" or public/private realms offers further insight into the perpetuation of the dual contradictory narratives around pet-keeping (Fudge 2008), in demonstrating how positive relations within the home create an illusion of unproblematic relationships until these are brought into contact with the anthropocentric "outside". Owners can, and do, seek to challenge anthropocentrism in their relationships with companion animals, and as discussed above many participants actively created space for nonhuman animal agency within their homes through amending both their physical space, and their expectations within it. This is enabled by the privacy, power and control (some) individuals enjoy in the home (Darke 1994; Dovey 1985; Mallett

2004). However, these endeavours were not undertaken by all participants, and we should not underestimate the sacrifices required to truly open up the home to nonhuman animals' preferences and ideas of space. Smith (2003) talks about owners of free-living rabbits finding it 'easier to change ourselves than the premises' (p.104), and as her descriptions of rabbit space demonstrate, nonhuman animal space can be radically different to human ideals, and a direct challenge to the notion of a home 'under control' (Fudge 2008). This is not to say owners should not be seeking to decentre the human in their relationships and homes, I believe they should. But we should not make such demands flippantly, for they have very real and extensive consequences for humans for whom the home is an invaluable source of ontological security (Fudge 2008; Giddens 1991).

Human-companion animal relationships as they currently stand are heavily shaped by space, with the organisation of the home serving to either enable or constrain nonhuman animal behaviour, access to resources and ability to build relationships. As was discussed in relation to hierarchies of pet species, some households valued different pets very differently, and marginalised pets were physically removed or implicitly prevented from interacting in the living space. This impacted on (and was shaped by) participants' relationships with, and attitudes towards particular nonhuman animals, and marginalised pets were more likely to be considered disposable and less valued than privileged nonhuman animals in the house. Marginalisation was reinforced by the anthropocentric "outside" which served to reinforce human dominance, and canine-centrism in pet relationships, something which was quite confronting for a number of participants who strove to create their companions as minded beings with agency and value. The public/ private nexus, then, is a site where the dual contradictory narratives around pet keeping become apparent, as owners who otherwise would have no reason to question the unproblematic nature of pet ownership must contend with the devaluation of their beloved companion outside the house and potential consequences of this. Given this anthropocentric context, it is fair to say that these relationships are much more complex and unavoidably swept up in broader systemic oppressions, whether this is the intent of owners or not.

Finally, what this chapter demonstrates is the value of including companion animals in research that concerns them. Key insights around human and nonhuman use and negotiation of space only came about through the observation component, and it was as a result of these observations that the nuances of power negotiation in the home came to light. The unknowable nature of another being's umwelt makes it particularly difficult to delve into what it is to be a pet, in a companionate relationship with a human (Horowitz 2010). However we can strive to understand how these relationships are socially constructed—primarily by humans—whilst incorporating companion animals to the greatest extent possible. In this chapter, then, I have provided a more comprehensive picture of the "mess" of shared multi-species life, that better encapsulates the 'grey area' of pet ownerships that are quite complex (Blouin 2012).

While I have argued that it is impossible to create human-companion animal relationships that are not based on asymmetrical power relations, the examples in this chapter of owners actively trying to decentre their human privilege indicate that there is scope to create relationships that are *less* oppressive. Whether it is possible to directly challenge oppressive structures through positive human-companion animal relations will be explored in the next chapter.

Challenging Human-Companion Animal Relationships

In previous chapters I have outlined the social and physical construction of human-companion animal relationships to highlight the asymmetrical power dynamics that underpin them. Chapter 5 particularly focussed on how anthropocentric norms that devalue companion animals are perpetuated through everyday interactions and organisation of space. In so doing, I noted that some owners resist anthroparchal structures of human privilege by creating spaces where nonhuman animals were afforded some freedoms of movement and use of space despite pressure to assert human dominance in the home. In this chapter I further explore the possibility that human-companion animal relationships might be considered a site of resistance against the anthroparchal structures that objectify "pets" and consistently place human interests above all others. Resistance has been chosen as a lens for this chapter for two reasons: firstly, it allows for the study of how the micro-level entanglements I observed demonstrate a challenge to oppressive, speciesist structures; secondly, it connects the micro-resistance observed with broader discussions of resistance and liberation — facilitating a discussion of how everyday resistance in human-companion animal relationships might contribute to broader animal liberation. While my findings indicated that owners and companion animals interact in ways that challenge the anthroparchal construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities, these challenges occur on a micro level and are not necessarily intended as a resistant act. They therefore do not fit with traditional understandings of resistance as intentional actions linked to macro social movements. I therefore begin this chapter by arguing that we need a more nuanced understanding of resistance to make sense of these micro interactions. In exploring the interventions that shifted participants' thinking from normative to non-normative understandings of pet ownership, and their actions that intentionally or unintentionally resist anthroparchal structures, I map what this expanded conceptualisation of resistance might encompass. Finally, I argue that owners' re-imaginings of human-companion animal relationships, and nonhuman contributions to these, have more to offer broader narratives of nonhuman animal liberation than merely providing the 'best case scenario' of what *less* problematic human-nonhuman animal entanglements might look like. The discussion that follows must be accompanied by a cautionary statement. Petkeeping *is* an

exploitative practice, and any potential for resistance is severely limited by the complicity in nonhuman animal oppression impregnated in these entanglements. This will be explicitly discussed below, and warrants remembering as I argue that these relationships can and do importantly resist the objectification of other animals, but this potential does not justify their continued existence.

1. Rethinking resistance

Traditional conceptualisations of resistance tends to focus on macro social movements that result in observable structural changes, viewing micro acts of resistance as smaller scale manifestations of a similar kind (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Raby 2005). A more nuanced approach to resistance is needed when looking at human-companion animal relations, which occur in tangled webs of resistance and accommodation, where acts that challenge broader anthroparchal power structures are often unintentional, the result of the critical navigation of relationships explored in chapters 4 and 5. In this section I will explore Hollander & Einwohner's typology of resistance (2004), which offers an interactional conceptualisation of actions that challenge broader power structures. To expand this understanding of resistance and facilitate a better account for nonhuman animal contributions, I offer Maria Hynes' (2013) affective lens to argue for an approach to resistance study that is able to encompass both intentional and unwitting action, and the affective shifts that enable and constrain it. This complex framework of resistance provides a means of explaining the manifestation of both human and nonhuman animal resistance within companion animal relationships. This then facilitates a discussion of how these everyday manifestations of resistance might fit into broader narratives of challenging nonhuman animal exploitation and pursuing nonhuman animal liberation.

1.1 Anthroparchy and Nonhuman animals

Throughout this thesis I have argued that human relations with other species are socially constructed in a manner that consistently positions human interests as paramount (Cole & Stewart 2014; Cudworth 2011a). When exploring the notion of resistance in relation to human-companion animal relationships, it is necessary to first identify what they are said to be resisting against — in this instance, the anthroparchal system of domination (Cudworth 2011a). Cudworth's Anthroparchy, characterised by oppression, exploitation and marginalisation of nonhuman animals through five sub-systems: production, domestication, governance, violence, and cultures of exclusive humanism (Cudworth 2011a, p.70[17]) underpins all human relations with domesticated nonhuman animals. These structures are evident in the processes through which nonhuman animals become companions (outlined in chapter 4), and their legal status as property that essentially denies them personhood before the law (Francione 2000). The position that pet keeping,

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[17] for an expanded explanation of Anthroparchy as a system of dominance see Chapter One

fundamentally oppressive and problematic as it is, should ultimately be abandoned is put forth by the likes of Gary Francione (2000) and Bob Torres (2007). However, this is not widely argued amongst companion animal scholars, with a much longer list supporting the notion that there is more to the story than domination, and thus that different ways of relating are possible (Haraway 2008; Horowitz 2010; Irvine 2004; Sanders 1999).

I don't disagree with the likes of Haraway (2008), Horowitz (2010), Irvine (2004, 2013) and others, who argue that there are indeed many ways in which we can better approach our relations with companion species (or all species for that matter). However, ultimately I take the position that the very notion of "pet" cannot exist without problematic, asymmetrical power relations (Tuan 1984) and pet-keeping, therefore, needs to be abolished altogether. Perhaps where my viewpoint differs is that I don't see these ideas as necessarily in opposition. The empathy and respect encouraged in the process of 'minding animals' and decentring humans to make space for nonhuman animal agency is quite at odds with the physical and social "making" of pets outlined in chapter 4, which by necessity relies upon the devaluation and objectification of nonhuman animals for the creation of lively commodities (Collard 2014; Tuan 1984). The exploitation inherent in petkeeping, as in many human (ab)uses of other animals, is inescapable, It follows, then, that the potential for, and mechanisms of, resistance within these relationships can, and should, be included in conceptualisations of broader nonhuman animal liberation efforts. However, as will be discussed below, the very nature of the relationship between humans and their "lively" animal companions complicates the conceptualisation of resistance (and accommodation) both in recognition of nonhuman animal resistance, and in the negotiation of human resistance on behalf of an "other" whose marginalised position they are actively participating in, and simultaneously constructing.

1.2 Theorising resistance

Within sociology, the term "resistance" has been rather broadly employed, spanning from micro, everyday examples of resistance (see for instance: humour [Griffiths 1998]; hairstyles [Weitz 2001]) to macro political movements and revolutions (Goldstone 1991). To date, there has been little consensus on what exactly constitutes "resistance" (Hollander & Einwohner 2004), an ambiguity which allows 'some scholars to see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere' (Weitz 2001, p.669). In an effort to untangle conflicting conceptualisations of resistance, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner (2004) conducted a review of hundreds of works from the *Sociological Abstracts* database (and several other notable works) to identify recurrent issues in the sociological conceptualisation of resistance and develop a 'typology of resistance'. They surmised that in the literature reviewed there were two core elements to resistance: 1) resistance requires an active physical, cognitive or verbal behaviour, rather than a state of being or inherent quality, and 2) this action must be in opposition to some sort of power (Hollander & Einwohner 2004). However, scholars came into conflict around two central issues: recognition and intent.

James Scott (1985), for instance argued that everyday acts *could* be labelled as resistance if they 'deny or mitigate claims made by appropriating classes' (p.302), for others, external recognition of resistance was critical (Carr 1998; Rubin 1996). Similarly, Rubin's (1996) conceptualisation of resistance was reserved only for visible, collective action that resulted in social change, while Carr (1998) argued that actions could be classed as resistance only insofar as actors experienced opposition to them. In both instances, the recognition of a resistant act as such was integral to its classification. This also raises questions around who can recognise a resistant act, with resistance scholars listing targets of action, other observers, and the researcher as able to declare an action resistant (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Raby 2005).

Related to this is the question of intent — does the actor need to not only be aware that they are resisting forces of power, but intend to do so? While some theorists argue that an actor's intent to resist is key (Scott 1985), others recognise that not only is intent difficult (if not impossible) to ascertain, but many actors may not even be conscious of their resistant acts, thus considering this intent to be central to the classification of resistance would likely be unfruitful and exclusionary (Hollander & Einwohner 2004). Rather than settling for merely identifying the multitudinal ways in which "resistance" was utilised (a complexity which Brown [1996] argues 'undermines their analytical utility' [p.730]), Hollander & Einwohner developed a typology of resistance, allowing for the systematic categorisation of resistant acts in light of the above complexities. As can be seen in Table 1, the typology consists of 7 categories of resistance, differentiated by whether the act is intended as resistance by the actor, and/or interpreted as such by a target or overseer of the action:

Table 1: Types of resistance

	Act intended as resistance by actor	Act recognised as resistance by target	Act recognised as resistance by observer
Overt resistance	Yes	Yes	Yes
Covert resistance	Yes	No	Yes
Unwitting resistance	No	Yes	Yes
Target-defined resistance	No	Yes	No
Externally-defined resistance	No	No	Yes
Missed resistance	Yes	Yes	No
Attempted resistance	Yes	No	No
Not resistance	No	No	No
Note. Adapted from Conceptualizing Resistance by J. A. Hollander & R. L. Einwohner (2004) in *Sociological Forum,* 19(4) p.544.			

While Overt resistance fits within traditional understandings of the term, the other six "types" provide a framework for thinking about resistance that engages with murky issues around recognition and intent. This typology highlights the interactional nature of resistance and power, and thus provides a framework for thinking about resistance that can account for the complexity of simultaneous resistance and accommodation (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, pp.544, Table 1). This includes situations in which actors may challenge their positions within structures without challenging the structures themselves, and vice versa (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, pp.548-549). This conceptualisation is useful in determining whether and how actions within human-companion animal relationships can be seen to constitute a form of resistance against anthroparchal structures. However, it doesn't provide the means to consider the conditions that lead actors to engage in resistant acts. For this, an affective lens can inform our understanding of resistance and allow us to better explore the factors that might lead actors to resist — and thus how resistance to nonhuman animal exploitation might be facilitated.

Maria Hynes (2013) argues for the use of an affective lens to extend sociological theories of resistance to encompass not just the physical act of resisting, but the 'virtual forces that produce its emergence' as well (p.566). Affect, defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.xvi) as 'the capacity to affect and be affected' cannot be captured in an observable state, but rather is evident in transitions between states (these fixed states, once situated within an individual subject become what is generally termed "emotion") (Hynes, 2013). An affective lens focusses on the space between the spheres of the macro and micro, moving beyond an understanding of micro everyday struggles as necessarily less effective than large scale collective struggles that are more likely to be associated with visible structural change (Hynes 2013). Hynes argues that it is in these spaces that we can account for transitions in capacity for action, moving towards new understandings of change and contemporary power which operates not only at the level of identity, but at the level of our becoming (Hardt & Negri 2000; Hynes 2013; Massumi 2002). Thus, Hynes' approach allows us to further expand the interactional complexities identified by Hollander & Einwohner (2004), providing an avenue through which to grasp the 'operations of power and resistance at the more indeterminate level of sociality corresponding to bodies and their affective capacities' (Hynes 2013, p.572). Furthermore, the virtual reality occupied by affective transitions are relevant as a site of analysis, given that there is 'an openness and an excessiveness which both power and resistance may exploit' (Hynes 2013, p.573). This then allows us to consider not only the sites at which resistance might manifest in human-companion animal relationships, but also take seriously the propensity for micro-scale actions to contribute to a broader emancipatory framework.

In the discussion below, I utilise both affective and action-centric understandings of resistance to analyse the extent to which research participants can be seen to resist anthroparchal structures that reinscribe nonhuman animals as mere commodified goods under human control, as well as identifying key interventions that shifted their ideas about companion animals.

1.3 Resistance by/for whom?

It must be noted that the above conceptualisation of resistance is, by default, completely human centric. However notable works have considered the potential for, and examples of nonhuman animal agency, which can and should be factored into a conceptualisation of resistance in human-companion animal relationships (e.g., Hribal 2011; Wadiwel 2016). Furthermore, the mere presence of companion animals in the resistance equation changes the situation dramatically from most other conceptualisations of resistance, in that resistance in this setting occurs on behalf of, and influenced by, nonhuman actors who are limited in their ability to advocate for themselves in a human-centric world. As discussed in chapter 2: literature review, nonhuman animal agency (and, by extension, resistance) is difficult to theorise given the language and methodological barriers. Given this, we must critically consider how we "know" what nonhuman animals might want, and whether our actions reflect these wants or our own.

In his 2011 book *Fear of the Animal Planet,* Jason Hribal produces numerous examples of large mammals "fighting back" against the human dominance that largely governs their lives in a move to demonstrate both the potential capacity and consequences of nonhuman animal resistance:

> ...Tatiana managed to scale the twelve-foot high wall of her enclosure and escape. There had been these teenagers. They were yelling obscenities, waving their arms, and possibly throwing stuff at her... Tatiana went directly after the men who had been taunting her and ripped one of them to pieces. The other two ran. For twenty minutes, Tatiana roamed the zoo grounds. She was presented with many opportunities to attack park employees and emergency responders. She could easily have gone after other visitors. But Tatiana was singular in her purpose. She wanted to find those two remaining teenagers, and she would do just that at the Terrace Cafe. With a dismembering taking place, police encircled the spot and shined their lights onto the tiger. Tatiana turned and approached. They shot her dead. (Hribal 2011, p.21)

Here, while Tatiana's actions may be accurately reported, it is in the reporting that the narrative constructed for the nonhuman animals in question must be highlighted. For unlike much human-centric resistance, nonhuman animals are highly dependent on their human advocates to accurately interpret their experiences with little common verbal language through which to offer corrections. And as Fudge (2008) points out, human portrayals and interpretations of nonhuman animals often reinforce what "we" think. So, Tatiana's actions, though portrayed as overt resistance, can really only be characterised as unwitting or target-defined resistance without knowing her intentions (Hollander & Einwohner 2004).

As discussed in chapter 2: Literature Review, Cudworth takes a more conservative approach to what can (or rather cannot) feasibly be considered nonhuman animal resistance against anthroparchal structures:

> For example, the 'pet' dog put into an uncomfortable situation by its owner, may bite out of fear. This is an individual response to a structural situation in which the dog finds herself, not an exercise of collective agency against social conditions. The individual dog that bites its owner reacts, but she does not engage in the remaking of species relations. (Cudworth 2011a, p.69)

She goes on to highlight the likely consequences for a dog who bites — death. Cudworth's conceptualisation of nonhuman animal resistance then centres on whether or not the act is intentional and effective in challenging structural oppression— in this given example, it is not likely to challenge anthroparchal dominance and is thus merely a reactive action with potentially deadly consequences. This point is taken up by Bob Carter and Nickie Charles (2011; 2013) who argue that although nonhuman animals can exercise 'primary agency' as individuals in society, 'they are unable to develop this into collective agency such that they can resist and transform human-animal relations' (2011, p.238). I am not inclined to dismiss outright the above example, though I can see Cudworth's point in that the situation is orchestrated in such a way as to make a bite almost inevitable (a point similarly made by Palmer [2001]). But in keeping with Hollander & Einwohner's typology, the bite only needs to be recognised as a resistant act by either the dog, target or another observer, thus while it might be a heavily structured event it can also be framed as a resistant one if taken as such by others[18]. Practically speaking, this interpretation of nonhuman animal resistance is unavoidably anthropocentric in that it depends on human interpretations of nonhuman animals' intentions and actions — whether accurate or not. It is also limited to an individual, interpersonal focus, and as a result does not provide an avenue to link nonhuman resistance to challenging anthroparchal structures more broadly.

A more systematic option is offered by Wadiwel (2016) who argues that if we shift our focus to the instruments of oppression, 'extreme forms of domination that appear to lack any movement or resistance are in fact the product of active forms of creative resistance by those who are subordinated' (p.211). Considering the experiences of fishes killed for their meat, Wadiwel argues that looking at the technologies that facilitate this death gives insight into how fishes resist their fate. The fish hook, for instance, has developed in ways that make clear fishes do not passively allow themselves to be harvested:

> The fish hook is an ingenious capture and kill device. It is a sharp point with a bend in it, which can be affixed to a line, allowing its

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[18] Note this is not unproblematic — the conceptualisation of such acts as resistant needs to be framed carefully, in light of an anthropocentric social context in which nonhuman animals often bear full responsibility for harming humans, regardless of the situation.

operator to work at a distance. The bend is crucial, in so far as the hook aims to not merely impale its recipient, but to snag the body of the fish to the hook, allowing it to be drawn in by a line. The hook frequently works with a lure or bait. In these cases, the hook is a stealth device, it aims to deceive an animal who would evade capture by other means. The hook was thus fundamentally conceived to work against fish resistance to capture (Wadiwel 2016, p.214).

This process is cyclical, and this creative resistance is 'subsequently coopted in the process of domination' as technologies develop to better defeat creatures fighting for their survival (Wadiwel 2016, p.211). The instruments used to dominate and restrain nonhuman animals are both products and evidence of active forms of (nonhuman animal) resistance (Wadiwel 2016[19]). Finally, Wadiwel contemplates the potentiality of embracing, rather than actively constraining, the creative resistance of fish, asking, "What would our world look like if we worked with and supported the creativity of fish, rather than simply working against it?" (Wadiwel 2016 p.223). Wadiwel's conceptualisation of resistance also offers a lens through which to gain insight into companion animals' potential resistance. The myriad of cages, tethers and behavioural controls such as citronella, prong and choker collars, electric shock fences and coercive behavioural training indicate that companion animals don't necessarily comply with their owned status passively. Considering the actions that necessitated the creation of these controls: escape, defiance, loud vocalisations, one might surmise that companion animals *do* protest the conditions of their confinement, we humans just don't listen.

These are just a few examples of the conceptualisation of nonhuman animal resistance in scholarly works, which demonstrate not only the capacity of nonhuman animals to resist, but that resistance is just as (if not more so) complex a concept within nonhuman animal studies. These examples serve to challenge an anthropocentric discourse in which nonhuman animals are painted as mindless automatons, or willing participants in their own exploitation. This is particularly poignant with reference to lively commodities — those who live through their commodity lives alongside humans and thus are actively (re)created as goods on a daily basis (Collard 2014). In the discussion to follow, companion animal instances of, and effect on resistance will be considered in conjunction with those of the human participants. Companion animals, due to the intimate relations we share with them, are well placed to influence affective transitions in a manner that encourages their human owners to recognise nonhuman animal mindedness and construct them as valuable as a result. Through these virtual spaces companion animals can be seen to contribute to (human) resistance against the fundamentally oppressive power relations that underpin their very existence.

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[19] See also Coppin (2003) and Novek (2005) for discussion of the tools and mechanisms of oppression in industrial farming of pigs.

2. Identifying norms and rupture moments

As the previous chapters have shown, human-companion animal relationships are entangled in a complex web of social relations, patterned by normative understandings reflecting broader anthroparchal structures (Cudworth 2011a). But there remains within this, at least for some humans and some nonhuman animals, space for agency and resistance to push back against constraints and develop ideas and practices that are other. In examining the ways in which human participants come to identify and, in some instances, distance themselves from anthroparchal norms, we can start to unpack the potentiality of considering pet owners' resistance against oppressive power relations. Of particular interest are the significant moments — which I have called rupture moments — in which human participants' conceptualisations of companion animal relationships were abruptly called into question. It is in these moments that the potential for considering affective shifts as resistance becomes pronounced for these moments represent a virtual space in which anthropocentric views were irreversibly challenged. The human owners interviewed were not unanimous in their approach to, or beliefs around, pet ownership yet all reflected on some sort of journey in which their current attitudes and relationship with companion animals had shifted from those experienced previously. These transitions offer a rich area of investigation in demonstrating where and how affective shifts have been influenced in such a way as to encourage human participants to explore new ways of relating to companion animals, and thus potential sites at which such an intervention might be useful to encourage these shifts in future (Hynes 2013). These shifts occurred in three main situations: (1) in exposure to confronting practices of pet keeping deemed socially acceptable; (2) through meaningful interactions with companion animals, and (3) in response to external interventions.

2.1 Bearing witness to "acceptable" practices

The property status of companion animals in the law affords them little in the way of enforceable rights (Francione 2000; Torres 2007). However, given that our norms and practices are learned primarily through social interactions (Goffman 1963), ideas about acceptable treatment of animal companions can differ widely from the legally enforceable standard. For many participants, it was through encountering problematic ways of relating to companion animals that they reported first developing or solidifying a differing worldview. For those who solidified their views through bearing witness, it was often the case that they had been raised to think differently but had not realised this to be the case until confronted with 'normal' practices. For instance, one participant recalled the experience of discovering a family friend had given away their dog:

> I just really was raised to um to like be committed to a pet once you
> had it, like whether or not it worked out the way that you wanted it to.
> Like you were responsible for it, you don't get rid of it and I do
> remember someone in primary school, they got a dog um I think it
> was a rescue dog and it was a border collie. And um they took this dog

home and they didn't have it for too long, I think like a few months and um then they decided they didn't want it anymore and they got rid of it. And my mum was like "What the fuck??" Like I remember her coming home and being like "they got rid of the dog" and like she said like the mum had been telling her like someone had come to pick up the dog in like a car and the dog like watched them out the back window as the car drove away and my mum was just like who does that? Like who could? And I couldn't like even if ..D'you know what I mean like it was a border collie so it was probably pretty hypo or whatever, but it wouldn't matter my dog when I was a kid was part border collie and it was hypo and we just dealt with it like coz it's like ok we got a dog and it's like a hypo dog and it's fine, we've just got a hypo dog. It's the same with Tyler like oh shit I've got another one like got another hypo dog. But you just deal with it, coz it's just how they are like you don't give them away. (Cara)

Instances such as the above, in which the disposability of companion animals in society were made visible, were by far the most cited as influential rupture moments. Other participants mentioned discovering a close friend had relinquished a nonhuman animal, or euthanised an animal companion on non-medical grounds as both highly confronting and influential on their own formation of ideas around acceptable practices. In these cases, the participant may not have had set thoughts about these practices before — in fact many stated such acts had never crossed their minds — but upon hearing that the events had occurred they abruptly arrived at oppositional positions. In each instance, participants overwhelmingly reported that their relationship with the offending human would be severed or, at the very least, severely tarnished. It is also important to note the significance of the witnessed reaction — as Hynes (2013) highlights, transitional moments are influenced by both power and resistance, which can change the resulting fixed state of the individual. In this case, her mother's reaction — 'who does that?' — reinforces Cara's interpretation of the relinquishment as an unacceptable act.

This was similarly echoed by a participant whose mother and grandfather were outspoken nonhuman animal advocates who regularly took to task those who engaged in socially acceptable, but to them decidedly unacceptable, treatment of nonhuman animals:

If Granddad saw anyone hurt, especially a horse but any animal...if anyone had belted an animal with poly[20], especially the dairy farmers, oh he would tell them what he thought of them and what low-lifes they were and how they didn't deserve to have animals, didn't deserve to have their properties. And coz there was no-one you could go to then, the police weren't interested, there was no RSPCA there was no vets, there was no-one. He was a voice in the dark, in the wilderness

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[20] Polyethylene pipes, commonly used for irrigation (among other things) in farming

at that stage. And mum was the same, and she wouldn't hold back she
wouldn't care if we were in the supermarket or wherever, she would
just go for gold. (Penny)

In both of these instances, it is not just the confrontation of socially acceptable ill-
treatment of nonhuman animals that shaped the participants' thinking, but the witnessed
reaction which in itself constitutes an act of resistance in both explicitly challenging
problematic behaviours and intervening in a transitional moment for the observer who
might think differently as a result. This is particularly important given the power of the
social construction of nonhuman animals, which renders the status-quo unquestionable,
and alternate conceptualisations of categorised nonhuman animals as utterly non-sensible
(Cole & Stewart 2014).

When external reactions did not support a non-normative conceptualisation of events,
participants' experiences of these disruptive shifts were less clear cut. In these we see the
influence of power in shaping participant attitudes through 'feeling rules' (Hochschild
1983) and discouraging resistant worldviews. Participants who reported being confronted
with these situations struggled to reconcile their own views on the inherent value and
acceptable treatment with the opposing views that surrounded them, with one participant
likening their experience to 'living in a parallel paradigm':

> I feel like my reality is not everybody else's reality. I'm at the point
> now, it's kind of hard to fathom how much more there is to learn
> when I am so far from the average person now... I know where these
> things, these ideas come from. I'm just so frustrated that they are not
> changed yet. Dogs living in backyards with no exercise, no
> stimulation and no physical contact..it's totally ok in Australia as long
> as you've given them a dog kennel, a water bowl and food to leave
> them in a yard in complete isolation for their life. That's not ok. It's
> not ok. I understand where that comes from because we don't know
> any better. But don't buy a dog for a garden ornament, they're not an
> object, they're a sentient being. And they deserve to be cared for and
> catered for, for what they actually need and not for what the law says
> they need. (Hayley)

For Hayley, witnessing abusive, ill-informed training through a rural dog school and
relinquishment and mistreatment through working at an nonhuman animal shelter had
solidified their assessment that the treatment of dogs in society was 'not ok'. More than
this, it highlighted the chasm between her perceptions and those of broader society,
demonstrating the crucial role of witnessing resistance to problematic practices in
supporting humans to challenge anthropocentric ideas. In the next section, I will discuss
how these non-normative beliefs about nonhuman animals might be encouraged through
the lived experience of multi-species relations and other external interventions that offer
different ways of thinking around human companion animal relationships.

2.2 Re-shaping ideas through 'becoming with' companion animals

In chapters four and five I argued that participants negotiate their owner identities and home spaces with their nonhuman companions. Through these lived entanglements, human participants came to understandings about their animal companions that challenged pre-existing expectations of mindedness, acceptable ways of relating and their capacity to love and be loved. I suspect when scholars talk about there being more to human-companion animal relationships than just domination, it is to this that they refer — these relationships can be quite transformative, at least for the humans participating in them (Haraway 2008; Horowitz 2010; Irvine 2004). Haraway's concept of 'becoming with' (2008), for example, in which both human and nonhuman parties in the relationship are co-constructed as companion (and in the process transcend their prior existing identities) relies on largely non-linguistic embodied communication, which facilitates 'communication about relationship, the relationship itself, and the means of reshaping relationship and so its enactors' (p.26). This 'co-constitutive naturalcultural dancing' invokes a respect between those who 'look back reciprocally' (p.27) in which 'honest' relationships can be forged and re-forged over time. For Julie Ann Smith (2003) this 'dancing' led to a deeper understanding of 'rabbit space' that emerges when human notions of space are de-centred. This opens up onto broader questions of rabbit perspective, for instance, which part of a human is thought to be truly "them" (Smith 2005)? To answer this question, among others, Smith used her body, laying on the ground to see which aspects of "her" the rabbits paid more attention to (hands) (2005). For the participants in the current study, this was more likely to be discovered by chance, rather than purposive enquiry — with ideas about nonhuman animal perspectives garnered through the negotiation of everyday life. My interactions with Asha and Tara detailed in Chapter 3 provide an example of this acquired knowledge: as Asha enthusiastically wrestled with my foot, chewing on my shoe and clawing at my (clothed) ankle, her owner explained that Asha loved 'getting involved with your smells' and tended to go 'a bit wild' particularly over the feet of people with nonhuman animals at home. This explanation indicates a perceived understanding of Asha's experience of everyday life (in this case, encounters with feet) that Tara learned through past experiences in their relationship.

In this context, companion animal contributions to affective shifts can be taken into account. In previous chapters, I discussed how participants reported instances of their nonhuman animals "just knowing" what to do — they lick tears and snuggle up for a cuddle at exactly the moment their owners really need love, generally seeming to "know" when their company is needed. They also demonstrate creativity and mindedness through determined actions — communicating their preferences to play with excrement, use spaces according to their own preferences and interact on their own terms for example. These interactions offer opportunities for owners to engage with their animal companions as minded beings, who clearly demonstrate their own ways of doing things, and through which owners can gain an appreciation of nonhuman animal creativity. Given this, it is

reasonable to consider companion nonhuman animal gaze, touch, and other interactions as contributing to resistance insofar as they both bring about and influence affective transitions in their owners (Hynes 2013).

Particularly for owners of non-canine companion species, understandings of what nonhuman animals did and didn't like, and the level of interaction they were capable of were similarly shaped through close proximity, often challenging their previously held ideas:

> My mum gave me an image of what cats were like and I believed it for ages, and then it's only when I left home and had other cats and I went … Like I sort of challenged that belief … So you can tell by the way she (cat) moves her body whether she wants to [play] and whether she's going to enjoy it or not. (Eric)

In this instance, the intimate relationship between owner and companion animal encourages the appreciation of the nonhuman animal as an individual, with unique needs and wants, rather than a representation of a homogenous category ("cat"). By focussing on developing their relationship through interaction, rather than previously held ideas about cats, Eric arrived at new ways of relating — the glasses game and other forms of play discussed in chapter 4 — that may not have been considered typical "Cat" games but were seemingly appreciated by Mischief. Thus in 'becoming with' Mischief, both Eric and his animal companion were able to move beyond a traditional hierarchical form of multi-species relationship (to an extent) and arrive at a less human-directed entanglement, one based on mutual respect.

Some participants reflected on how their attitudes towards nonhuman animals had changed significantly over time, particularly those who were older (70+) and could reflect on several social shifts in this respect. A particularly significant change was reported by a participant who noted the transition in attitude from having to shoot "untrainable" family dogs as a child, to inherently valuing and caring for their companions:

> On a few occasions I've done away with dogs for the reason myself, where my uncle just said "hopeless, sort it out" and handed me a rifle and the rest you did. Um but the transition from kind of necessary working animals to what to the relationship we now had, I think I probably would have been surprised if you'd asked if you'd suggested that to me when I was 18, but certainly not now… I guess I was surprised at how much we bonded with the dobermans. (Phillip)

This participant traced this change in attitudes through a slow transformation in the way he related to particular dogs over his lifetime. In particular, his partner's attachment to their dogs, even those procured as "guard dogs" meant their welfare was increasingly important. Following their adoption of a "special needs" dog, who Phillip believed to be psychologically damaged by their abusive prior owner, their approach to dog ownership

shifted from caring for the dogs while keeping them at a distance, to fully integrating them into the house. As Phillip's contact and emotional involvement with his canine companion increased, so too did his appreciation of their mindedness and individuality. This example again emphasises the significance of 'becoming with' companion animals for shifting prior understandings about them from conceptualisations of disposable beings to minded, individualised companions. Participants also referred to external interventions that abruptly shifted their ways of thinking about companion animals, and it is to these that I now turn.

2.3 External interventions

The final significant site of challenge to participant attitudes came in the form of external interventions, including canine training schools, critical ethical frameworks and the interview process itself. These sites were often encountered unintentionally, or if participants chose to go engage with a particular training school or activist movement they reported being surprised to find that their existing views on pets were challenged through this engagement. Nevertheless, the influence of these external interventions had a transformative effect on participants' views, encouraging human accountability for dog behaviour and highlighting the structural oppressions underpinning pet keeping.

Positive reinforcement (dog) training was the most commonly cited source of attitudinal change. Differing from traditional punitive or "balanced" training philosophies, positive reinforcement trainers emphasise training the human in the relationship, and refrain from negative sanctions for the dogs involved (Miller 2008). For the human participants in the current study, this focus on human accountability for the relationship posed a challenge to previously held anthropocentric views of the relationship, in which unwanted behaviour was seen to be the fault of the companion animal:

> I do distinctly remember the lady at the puppy school saying 'be under no illusion you are not here to train your dog' and of course you have all these people there going 'huh? But we're at puppy training school, what do you mean I'm not here to train the dog?' and she'd go 'you are here to train yourselves. If there is a problem with your dog there's a problem with what you're doing'. So I was like ok ok so I've always seen that link with if there is an issue with him there's something that I'm doing and that I can actually change myself. I can't change him, but I can change myself so and so yeah I never saw the dog as the problem and I think that's where a lot of people make a big mistake. (Laura)

Another participant echoed this endorsement, crediting positive reinforcement training with changing their understanding of both problematic owner behaviour and how dogs learn:

> I thought it was fantastic. First off I was like 'what don't bring Quincy along a session and go on my own?' But by jeepers it made sense coz you realise that a lot of what we do is confusing, and then we expect them to obey and they haven't got a clue what we're talking about. (Penny)

These rupture moments were so marked for the participants that reported them that four participants went on to pursue further self-education in companion animal training, with three gaining positive reinforcement training credentials and three pursuing a university level nonhuman animal behaviour degree.

Several participants also cited engagement with critical ethical frameworks, such as through veganism, activism or anti-breeding campaigns, as posing a challenge to normative views of pet keeping. While only a small minority of participants shared that they were currently vegan or vegetarian[21] (n=4) a greater number had either been vegan or vegetarian in the past or had been otherwise brought into contact with these frameworks. For the participants who did engage with them, these sources highlighted the structural oppressions inherent in our relations with nonhuman animals, encouraging them to see connections between pet keeping and other problematic human-nonhuman animal relations (for vegan diets as a contributor to challenging disconnect between individual experience and broader social processes see Sylvestre [2009]). This in turn shaped how these participants felt about, and approached, their human-companion animal relationships:

> I went vegan and that was sort of when I .. like I was I'd been vegetarian for a while and you know I sort of when I went vegan I sort of started seeing a lot of criticism for [petkeeping] and I sort of.. I'd always been a bit on the fence I'd always been a bit like I don't like that they're not allowed to fly around in the wild and that sort of thing but then once I sort of started making more of the connection I was like hmm it's not really right to be doing this and I don't really believe in humans having control over other animals and they're not ours to own so I was like no I don't want to support pet breeders at all anymore no matter who they are I just want to have rescue pets because I don't want to pay money to somebody who's just going to use it to breed again but then at the same time the parrots that do exist in the world and the dogs as well do need somewhere to live so thats why I've only rescued. (Willow)

Another participant, upon seeing these connections, arrived at a condemning indictment of both the destruction caused by, and ineptness of the human species, finally reasoning that pet ownership ultimately needed to be abolished:

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[21] This was not explicitly asked but was often discussed as participants explained where they got their ideas about animals from.

I think like probably less people would think about the impact of like owning pets um as like a wider thing and I guess like for me I think that like I'm a pretty good owner but that doesn't really do much to change like the like pet ownership as a whole and the idea that like as humans we have um like we're elevated above all other animals. Like we have control over them, like it is sort of a form of a control and I think that the way it is now that that is just not gonna change anytime soon. And I would definitely encourage people to especially with, like, rescue and stuff to adopt animal especially because it is just the way it is at the moment and it's fine but when I think about it in general terms I'm like humans really don't deserve to have pets like it's just so.. It's like we're not like, I don't know, like humans are like pretty shit like, as a species, and I think like we exercise a lot of control and a lot of like domination over pretty much anything that we possibly can but then we just like abuse that. Like I don't think we're capable as a species, I think some of us as individuals are capable but I think as a species it's just not.. If I had a choice like to sort of yeah if I had a choice and I could change like the whole thing I would say forget about it, like, no pets for anyone ever. Coz it's, it's better that way. Like I just don't think that um I mean there would be such a huge number of animals just living in really horrible situations and um yeah like a lot of people aren't too fussed on that so like I think it is like, there are like there are ethical issues with it but that being said I cannot see that changing like anytime soon coz it's so ingrained and it's so common and we have like I guess we've bred animals now to the point that they need to be looked after I guess and like in the world that we live in like I can't just go set my dog and cat free on the highway and be like 'have fun' like 'have a good life' like they need to live in a house with someone to care for them. (Cara)

When asked what sparked this shift in attitudes, the participant credited conversations with a vegan friend:

I probably did start talking to [vegan friend] a little bit and it made me think about it more um in terms of that. Like I yeah coz I hadn't really thought about it too much, like pet ownership as a whole, like I had always or almost always like had a bit of disdain for humanity in general, and I do think that a lot of the things that humans create or take on.. like we're not capable of so it's more like an extension I guess of that. Like once I started thinking of it in those terms I'm like yeah actually... I guess just coz it's so like pet ownership is so common and like and so ingrained like in society I hadn't thought too much

about like the idea of it not existing but like yeah I think like, I don't know, it just makes sense to me. (Cara)

Other participants reported engaging with mainstream critical ideas (such as welfarist RSPCA campaigns) and spoke of the emotional toll of even contemplating them, which limited their ability to fully explore the possibilities or consequences of taking a critical stance on pet keeping. This then resulted in them supporting initiatives that advocated for nonhuman animals, but still allowed them to maintain some distance from upsetting information and critical ideas:

> I do donate um a monthly donation to the RSPCA and I just I.. all I can do is just support the good guys and um if anyone thinks of getting a dog from a pet shop then I give them a right royal lecture um and just oh.. try not to think about it because it just makes me too upset. Like I could never be some kind of campaigner because I'd just be in tears the entire time and I wouldn't be able to speak I'd be so angry and so tearful that I'd just be a complete fruit loop. (Laura)

For Laura, while this limited engagement with public campaigns such as anti-puppy farming and 'a dog is not for Christmas' shaped her understanding of those particular issues, this is where her critique ended:

> ...and thats why for us going to a sensible breeder was really important um and she was really clear, really honest about it she said she was doing this she had um quite bad arthritis and this was a way for her to stay at home, look after her child, earn some money live her passion but also she wanted to do the right thing by the dogs and it all.. you kind of went to her house and sussed out the situation and went yes this is, this feels ok um and you talk to people and um oh she's up in mount barker and like well they're showing like 6 or 7 dogs which means they've either got 6 or 7 dogs on the go and breeding them and sort of go ok... where where's the love? where's the heart? (Laura)

This then suggests that exposure to critical ideas — specifically critical vegan ideas — is important to fostering opposition to pet-keeping as a whole, however the delivery of this (often) challenging material in ways that are palatable for mainstream audience is crucial to fostering engagement. The feasibility of delivering such a message "palatably" is outside the scope of this thesis, but certainly a question for future efforts. At the very least, critical ideas that provide an alternate pathway are more likely to effectively shift normative attitude than just providing 'good reasons' (Lumsden 2017). Therefore the effectiveness of the critical ideas mentioned above may lie in the fact that they have tangible actions attached to them — adopting rather than buying nonhuman animals from breeders or donating money gives people something to 'do' in light of the new information they have received.

2.4 The Interview Process

For some participants, the interview process itself served as a form of external intervention that challenged or, at the very least, highlighted previously unconsidered aspects of their companion animal relationship. Existing literature has focussed on how different ways of approaching the interview process can change how participants interact and experience the interview (e.g. Oakley 1981). In the interviews I conducted, the questions asked reflected my intention to shift the focus of companion animal research onto a critical examination of the nonhuman animals' lives. Thus, I employed nonhuman animal centric questions that asked participants to contemplate their companion's communication efforts, social relations, and questions around the ethics of pet keeping, and several owners reported that their responses rather surprised them. One participant, after talking about their companion's social relations with other dogs had an abrupt realisation regarding the familial relations experienced prior to their adoption:

> Does she miss her mum? Coz, like, she's never ever, like she sees her mum for like 6 weeks and then it's finished, but some animals don't, are not like that.. But I don't know that for sure like I don't know if she misses her mum a lot, or if she wishes that she could see her sisters and brothers again… I think she wants to, she always wants to be loved. (April)

Prior to this, the participant's conceptualisation of their (nonhuman animal) companion's experience was limited to that which occurred after she was adopted, thus this 'lifting of the veil' to enable a consideration of her life before was significant.

Other participants worked through their responses out loud, allowing me to capture this navigation of the consideration of complex issues. Take, for instance, this response to a question about whether the respondent thought there were any ethical considerations around pet keeping:

> …that's [ethics] probably why the owner thing doesn't quite sit all that well. Having said that, I suppose we are responsible because of the way we've domesticated animals, we have a very, we have a responsibility to them. I suppose you don't own your kids do you? And I mean you know I know they're not humans, I get that, I know they're different species and they have different needs and the view the world differently. But I suppose as a person who has taken on the responsibility of the animal who isn't allowed to wander at large in the city and if they're in the country is just turfed out to starve or it'll kill other people's animals, you don't necessarily want that either. So it's kind of a very, it's a very interesting dilemma in a way I suppose, yes. And I love having access to an animal, and the only way I can see

for me to do that is to own a dog or a cat coz they don't have a choice.
Ari had no choice where she ended up, and they don't have choices.
And I think that's unfortunate but I don't actually know how you
facilitate a dog to have a choice, I don't know. (Megan)

Although the long-term attitudinal shifts (if any) of these exchanges is unknown, in including nonhuman animal centric questions that ask participants to think critically about their relationships, and pet keeping more broadly, the research process itself becomes a resistant intervention (Strega 2005). In challenging the silencing of companion animals by directly asking questions about them and encouraging owners to think through them, the construction of human centric narratives (particularly recounts of human-companion animal relationships that solely reflect human identity performances) is challenged, with many participants remarking that they had not thought about what the relationship looked like from their companion's perspective but would now. Physically including companion animals by having them present also contributes to this challenge, as it immediately indicates that nonhuman animal inclusion is important to the research situation. As discussed in Chapter 3: Methods, although the interview process itself still privileges the human participants' voices, this critical slant seeks to encourage critical thinking that is otherwise not encouraged in broader anthroparchal societies that practice cultures of exclusive humanism, thus engaging in research that is *for* companion animals to the greatest extent possible (Birke 2011; Cudworth 2016; Hamilton & Taylor 2017). Thus far I have discussed how individual owner's attitudes towards companion animals might be shifted by interventions that challenge or highlight anthroparchal norms. I now turn to consider how owners themselves might use their actions to contribute to social change.

3. Pet owners as instigators of change

This section explores manifestations of, and potential for, companion animal owners to act as agents of social change by challenging the normative attitudes and practices of pet ownership that occur both inside and outside of their own human-companion animal relationship. Through intentional acts of resistance, participants challenged attitudes they viewed as problematic on behalf of their own companions, other owned companions, and companion animals more broadly, outwardly objecting to constructions of companion animals as mere goods or as unimportant and addressing perceived failure to provide adequate care. However, I argue that unwitting resistance, those actions that are not intended as a challenge to anthroparchal structures but act as such regardless, also provides a rich site of exploration of resistance within human-companion animal relationships. These actions provide insight into the "resistant doings" that actively and markedly improve the material conditions within which these nonhuman animals live, demonstrating the importance of not just supporting them, but meaningfully including them within our conceptualisations of resistance. As flagged earlier the potential of this resistance must be tempered given the complicity of owners in companion animals'

oppression, and is unlikely to bring on wholesale change. However, in embracing a complex view of resistance that is more able to capture the everyday challenges against dominant anthroparchal structures, a meaningful (but critical) inclusion of human-companion animal relationships within broader emancipatory projects becomes possible (Francione; Torres 2007).

3.1 Intentional Acts of Resistance

3.1.1 Resistance in public

As I have argued in previous chapters, regardless of how decentred the human may be within a private home setting, public space is indisputably anthropocentric space. This is reflected in both explicit and implicit social rules and props, the demarcation and segregation of space which may be accessed by "owned" nonhuman animals (primarily dogs, given the current Australian discourse vilifying cats in public [Probyn-Rapsey 2016]), and the extent to which nonhuman ideas of space use are tolerated and accommodated (see Chapter 5 for further discussion). Even places designated as "dog places" such as dog parks are governed by human expectations of behaviours, often out of line with canine natural or preferred behaviours (Horowitz 2010; Sanders 1999). Given this, public space provides owners who are so inclined ample opportunity to resist (albeit with consequences) anthropocentric norms which position their companion animals as less valued, and therefore having a less legitimate claim on public space than human inhabitants.

For some owners this resistance was explicit — actively calling out behaviours that imply a derogatory attitude towards their companion animal. In Chapter 5, Laura described her anger towards parents and children who said reacted negatively to her dog Benji's presence in public ("oh yeah coz he's a killer"). Her response on this occasion was an all-out war of words with the mother who implied Benji was not welcome, and these altercations were not uncommon in shared public spaces. The dog park was a common site of conflict for participants, who objected to inattentive owners failing to keep tabs on their dog(s):

> We've had a few incidences but not um ones that ... well no I guess there was one um woman on the phone not paying attention, not effective control. Um dog basically overshadowing Elle and I've just um I just tried to break it up but the dog just wouldn't and I was going this is not good you know, when they overshadow like that um, so I had a little screaming match. (Molly)

Perceived inadequate supervision was the most commonly cited concern at the dog park, interpreted by participants as an unacceptable lack of understanding of dog behaviour and a demonstration of anthropocentrism as the park was used as a place of respite for the owner, rather than placing focus on their dog.

However, owners' capacity to act was limited by their fear of social consequences and perceived ability to effect change. In the dog park, for instance, many owners who perceived negative reactions or the potential for problematic situations would simply leave the park, often avoiding it in future:

> one day I was feeling very guilty about not having walked her, so I thought I'll go up there and just see and it was interesting, it was at.. and I've seen it happen at the same time when I ride my bike past it was two dogs and one was, I don't know some sort of weimeraner type thing and there was a beagle which I thought was a bit unusual because I didn't think beagles were like that. And they were both, as soon as we walked up to the fence they both sort of arced up and were running up and down and carrying on like pork chops and I thought mm I don't know that I really want to go in there. And there was other dogs in there and they were playing and they were just ignoring them and eventually they went away and they went up one end and started playing amongst themselves and so I thought well alright I'll go in here. And I did, I went in the gate and immediately these two dogs and a couple of others came running up and sort of gang bullying tactics on this one, they weren't you know ripping her apart or anything but they were just being dog bullies and the owners didn't do anything. And I just thought nup, this is not right, so I just grabbed Ari and took her out and went for a walk somewhere else. (Megan)

Although the act of swiftly removing the dog from a perceived dangerous situation is in effect a resistant act that recreates the dog as valuable in prizing her wellbeing over social ostracism, this interaction also indicates that human arrogance — the owners who were taking no notice of their bullying dogs — was seen as an unchallengeable force. This was similarly noted by owners of stigmatised breeds, who talked about refraining from addressing micro aggressions directed at their companions in public for fear of negative recourse. This negotiation of human privilege whilst advocating for companion animals is pronounced in the intentional acts of everyday resistance, in which owners must learn to navigate an anthroparchal world to be able to act effectively for companion animals.

3.1.2 Intentional Interventions

Other intentional acts of everyday resistance tended be overt, either intervening in nonhuman animal welfare directly or through education of owners. Direct interventions in nonhuman animal welfare sought to improve the lived conditions of specific companion animals through either physical removal or appealing to an authoritative body with the power to execute a removal. One participant described how they had incorporated welfare

checks into their daily job as a parole officer, alerting authorities if the conditions were not considered to be suitable for the companion animal:

> The first thing I'll look at is does a dog have adequate water, adequate shelter um my boss is an animal person so she understands so I always evaluate the house and... I don't know how many cases of cruelty I've rung in over the years I've been working in this job, but I must have a red flag beside my name. (Penny)

Echoing the dissatisfaction with both the low standard of welfare mandated by the law, as well as the limited power of the authorities to act on cruelty reports, this participant resorted to calling multiple times in an attempt to have claims investigated, though this was often unfruitful. Other participants, after suffering similar frustrations with failure to successfully have nonhuman animals taken away, took matters into their own hands and removed nonhuman animals directly:

> There was this pup and their people they were sort of on drugs and everything but they had this little black pup. But they had this huge chain on him and he was chained up and [son] used to go past time and time again and go 'look after your dog, take him off the chain' because the chain was heavier than what the dog was. And in the end [son] took the dog, took it down to the vet, and it was undernourished it was underfed um so the RSPCA took the dog away from him because they were not capable of looking after a dog. (Nora)

While the above instances were focussed on getting nonhuman animals out of undesirable situations, another group of participants took on companion animals with uncertain futures to ensure they didn't end up in them. Not to be confused with owners who deliberately procured nonhuman animals through rescue situations, these participants "ended up" with nonhuman animals, usually following the death of the original owner:

> One of my friends passed away and um she didn't have, she had a cat who wasn't living with her at the time, was living with a friend of hers but they ended up having to get rid of it and so they came to me and they said 'we're going to have to take this cat to a shelter, we can't find anyone for it um like it was [friend]'s cat we would really like it to go to someone who was friends with her like do you want it?' ... I think that it would have been pretty bad for him if he had gone to a shelter coz he's like brain damaged and I don't know like what they would've done with him. (Cara)

Participants in this situation weren't necessarily anticipating or prepared for sharing their life with another animal, but attempted to create the best living situation for the nonhuman animal nonetheless. The above participant managed a fairly severe cat allergy for several months until they were used to the cat, refusing to displace their new companion despite their own health issues. Another participant expressed sympathy for

their adopted companion, 'he lost his mum, or the woman who kind of brought him up from a kitten and then he was kind of lumped somewhere with people that he didn't know'. Both instances demonstrate a determined valuing of the nonhuman animal as non-disposable individual, defying the construction of nonhuman animals as dispensable goods.

Other approaches sought to address problematic practices through owner education. Some participants embraced confrontation, explicitly challenging actions they objected to. As one participant stated, 'if anyone thinks of getting a dog from a pet shop then I give them a right royal lecture' (Laura). While puppy farms were overwhelmingly the most cited 'lecture' topic, others included behaviour training, pet food standards and appropriate toys.

However, other participants sought to negotiate the line between effective advocacy and social ostracism, linking a more aggressive approach with a higher likelihood of being dismissed or shunned. One participant reported adjusting their intervention strategy in light of past experiences:

> Once I did go crazy at, there was a dog loose at, you know where [..] the motel is? There was a dog that was almost a little dog, that was about to go onto the road. You know how big that intersection is? So I tried to call the dog back into the motel and then I went hunting for someone that I could talk to and I said 'this is not on, whose dog is it?' 'oh that's mine' and she was doing you know the dry cleaning. I said 'dog was on the road' 'no it's not' so I said 'well'.. I went ballistic but I looked like the idiot. So next time around the corner when the dog had the thing embedded, choker chain embedded into its fur I went ok, I have to think of a different approach so I sort of said 'oh I see our dogs they like each other through the fence, could they have a little play? So you know would you like to have a little doggy play?' and um I said 'oh I can take your dog for a day and bring it back' and they said yes like that (snaps fingers) so in that time [friend] and I cleaned the dog up and then returned it…so I have to be in that sense a little bit more proactive, a little bit more educational. (Molly)

This was echoed by another participant who refused to compromise on their advocacy efforts but feared facing the same ostracism as their activist family, 'I don't really want humans to dislike me the way they disliked my parents' (Penny). Another participant, whose job involved close work with nonhuman animals, refrained from voicing their strong views around breeding to avoid tainting their work relations:

> I see people in pet stores all the time looking at like cute puppies in the shops, and I just want to sit there and scream 'do you actually know what their parents look like? Have you seen where they live?' Like um but it kind of is in a way and it's difficult because being in

grooming I'm also kind of friends with a lot of like registered breeders. A lot of groomers are poodle breeders or they breed spaniels or something like that so it's, I sort of see both sides to it I guess um. And I find it mm it's hard.. It's something I can't openly converse with a lot of people about because if they knew I was against breeding they would be like 'oh but I love my dog rarara' and I'd be like yeah but we don't need anymore fucking dogs in the world. (Willow)

Finally, some participants felt so constrained by social expectations, using common phrases such as 'each to their own' and 'every has a right to their own opinion', that they remained silent in problematic situations, despite also expressing discomfort with the practices in question:

I'm too nervous to, like coz everyone's entitled to their own opinion and just because my opinion is dogs are the best thing in the world and they need to be treated really well might not be someone else's idea. Like a couple of weeks I went to the beach with these two [dogs] and my friend with another two dogs, and we were down at [beach] and it's a non-dog beach. But anyway we were on the beach and there's another two dogs and they were yappy dogs, and she could not control her two big dogs — she's got a Labby and a Boxer. And um this they went over to these other two dogs, and I got these two close because they always listen and um she was she couldn't control them and these two dogs were like scared and everything with these two dogs coming over and my other friend was like 'well it's not my fault his dogs were like bad on the beach'. And I couldn't say anything but I really wanted to. But I think it's sort of like a bit of respect like if, coz she doesn't treat her dogs that nice sort of thing, but I think it's a bit of if I listen to my dogs then they're gonna listen to me like if I yell and scream at my dogs all the time and don't give them anything then they're not gonna listen to me.. mean (to dog) even you don't listen sometimes do you Marley? It's just coz you're stubborn. (Eve)

This non-resistance indicates the pervasiveness of anthroparchal structures, in which non-normative views of companion animals are suppressed as more human-dominant approaches appear to be unquestionable. Given the above discussion regarding interventions and, importantly, witnessing reactions to problematic pet keeping practices I argue that the proliferation of visible resistance and advocacy for companion animals would normalise these reactions, making it easier for those who wish to speak up to do so. However, the above quotes also highlight the power of social relations and the threat of isolation, with the potential jeopardising of a relationship proving extremely persuasive in regulating social interactions.

3.2 Unwitting Resistance

A much murkier question is whether unwitting everyday actions that challenge the marginalisation of companion animals can be considered resistant. While the literature consistently argues that mere "being" cannot constitute resistance (Hollander & Einwohner 2004), the active social construction of relationships in a way that challenges dominant discourses that position the nonhuman animal as insignificant certainly fulfil the criteria of physical, verbal or cognitive behaviour that challenge some sort of power. Leslie Irvine (2001 p.152) argues that everyday activities between humans and companion animals, specifically play, have the power to challenge 'and even dissolve the human-animal divide', creating '[t]iny points of resistance in the system' by honouring animals' subjectivity. In this sense, these resistant spaces in which nonhuman animals are valued become what Foucault (1986) refers to as a 'heterotopia' — a place 'outside of all places' (p.24) which may be quite utopian in their juxtaposition to broader society, yet they exist in real, rather than imagined, spaces. I argue that there is scope to consider the negotiation of human-companion animal relationships in ways that challenge a straightforward human/nonhuman animal dichotomy as resistant "doings" that have the potential to reimagine human relations with other animals — whether intended as such or not — by providing spaces where alternate possibilities can be created.

Throughout this thesis I have presented examples of humans negotiating their relationship with companion animals in ways that either enable companion animal agency (to an extent) or constrain it. Now I argue that in light of the above conceptualisation of resistance in both affective and action-based manifestations, the construction of spaces and relationships that seek to accommodate companion animals as minded beings constitute a form of resistance, instead acting on the understanding that companion animal needs and preferences are important (even if these diminish or challenge human preferences). Whether these be changing door screens to accommodate cats' climbing desires, providing species accommodating space in the home, or simply privileging companion animal wants over those of other humans (for instance privileging a dog's want to sit on the couch over the protests of a visitor who doesn't believe in nonhuman animals sitting on the furniture), each of these acts signifies a resistant "doing" of everyday life that challenges the idea that companion animal interests are not worthy of consideration. However, how far this goes in terms of emancipating nonhuman animals, and particularly non-companion species, is questionable and a point to which I return later.

Overwhelmingly participants reported supporting their companion animal's relationships with those of the same species by setting up playdates with favoured friends. Said one participant, 'her best friend, probably that would be Dudley the Jack Russell-Pug cross. They have a lovely time together' (Megan). Four participants had organised daycare arrangements for their dogs, ensuring that their companions went to a (canine) friend's house during the work day rather than being left home alone:

> ...when I'm a work, coz I work in the city so I'm usually gone for 12 hours out of the day so [partner] will drop him off at [partner's parents] house on his way to work and I'll pick him up on my way past, about 6:30... Then when [partner's parents] go to work, they'll drop Willow off here so I'll have Willow... it is a bit of a childcare arrangement. Sometimes we tell people and they're like 'oh that's weird,' but it just feels normal for us. And we figure we live so close, there's no point leaving Billy here all day by himself when he could be playing with another dog. (Lily)

This also extended beyond dogs, with cat and bird owners similarly reporting taking their companions to socialise with others. This support of social relations indicates not only an inherent valuing of companion animal social needs, but also a recognition that these nonhuman animals are capable of forging strong affective ties with other individual animals (rather than simply expecting them to interact with any animal of the same species).

Owners also used language to oppose the commodity status of companion animals in society, with many avoiding terms such as "owner" and "pet" which reinforced the ownership element of pet keeping, in favour of preferred terms such as "guardian" and "companion":

> We always prefer guardian um because I think that's how my relationship with my dog is... I think that guardian works well because we kind of help them through life and make sure they have a good time in the society that we've constructed um but ownership is just kind of unnecessary you know? (Bridget)

These linguistic shifts are significant in the construction of nonhuman animals as valued persons, as opposed to goods, with scholars linking naming and affective language to this positive construction that both indicates and has consequences for the material conditions in which these nonhuman animals live (Tague 2008; Taylor 2007). The use of language to devalue nonhuman animals, and the devastating effects this can have, further impress just how important positive linguistic construction can be (Stibbe 2001). It is important to note here that some scholars have conversely argued that guardian/companion terminology is *not* preferable as it merely serves to disguise the exploitative nature of the relationship (Cudworth 2016). I tend to agree with this argument, however in this instance the choice of terminology is significant as it indicates owners' desire to construct their companions as subjects, rather than goods, and this intention is important.

The co-construction of spaces by companion animals (however intended) also constitutes resistance against anthroparchal structures, as exercises of agency that emphasise mindedness serve to challenge the construction of pets as mere goods. Whether it be exercising one's right to roll in excrement, refusing undesirable food or toys or otherwise modifying the shared environment, the push to fashion more 'beastly places' serves to

challenge human-centric notions of the home, and the behaviours and use of space that go with it (Philo & Wilbert 2013).

Of course, the unintentional nature of these acts — which were not conducted as a deliberate resistant act, but rather were reported as an unremarkable element of everyday life — makes it likely their resistant nature would be overlooked. Further complicating this is the level of accommodation these relationships necessarily engage in — regardless of how radical the configuration of these relationships is, they were still founded on a fundamentally unequal power relation which sees one species forcibly bred and sold for the companionship of a privileged human, an asymmetry that is constantly reinforced by the anthropocentric social world. However, given the complex nature of social relations the co-existence of resistance and accommodation in any entanglement is likely unavoidable, and does not take away from the resistant act given, as Hollander and Einwohner (2004) argue, that resistance is rarely 'pure':

> The often-ignored complexity of resistance, the tension between resistance and accommodation, and the social and interactional nature of resistance are profoundly sociological issues, joining debates about power and control and the relationship between individuals and social context. Identifying the central elements of resistance, in other words, allows us to see the sociological importance of the concept (p.550).

 My discussion thus far has provided an overview of how actions within human-companion animal relationships might be considered resistant. In the section that follows, I will explore how these acts might be framed to clarify their role and contribution to the nonhuman animal liberation movement.

4. Framing Resistance

While the conceptualisation of resistance as any action that resists an overarching power structure is useful in capturing the complexity of human-companion animal resistance, it falls short of framing it within a broader context that makes such actions more meaningful (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Hynes 2013). It is necessary and important for researchers studying these acts of resistance — who play an integral role in labelling resistant acts as such — to also position these actions within a broader emancipatory framework, in which the ultimate goal is an end to nonhuman animal oppression (Torres 2007). This is particularly true of human-companion animal relationships, which run the risk of being conceptualised as a potential glimpse of what 'could be' in terms of our other, more explicitly exploitative human-nonhuman animal entanglements, without being adequately incorporated in an emancipatory schema themselves. This problematic framing is in itself a way of objectifying companion animals as tools in the emancipatory project, rather than as an oppressed group themselves in need of liberation. To forget that companion animals are inescapably tied up in the same anthroparchal structures that

bind nonhuman animals intended for food, testing, entertainment and many more oppressive human objectives, is a mistake indeed.

This does not mean that the micro-level acts of resistance described in this chapter are worthless if not performed with abolition in mind, far from it. As Torres (2007), quoting Hall (2006) argues, 'we must do the hard work of 'cultivating an alternative viewpoint', about how animals are treated in our society' (p.142). An emancipatory project *for* nonhuman animals must encompass both the material living conditions of nonhuman animals now, as well as those of nonhuman animals to come. It is not my intention to diminish the importance of the construction of, and advocacy for, relationships and spaces that better embrace nonhuman animal needs and wants, and destabilise the anthropocentrism from which these unequal power relations stem. As Bob Carter and Nickie Charles argue, the transformation of human-nonhuman animal relations 'is a potential of human animals', and an urgently needed one at that (2011, p.238). The examples cited throughout this thesis demonstrate concerted efforts to re-shape the human-companion animal dynamic, carving out space, albeit constrained, for the co-construction of a material existence that at least attempts to embrace nonhuman animals as stakeholders in their own lives and surrounds. Given the blatant disregard with which many nonhuman animals are treated in society, this is no small thing. Bearing in mind the grim picture Jessica Pierce (2014), Torres (2007) and Francione (2000) have painted of pet keeping, any efforts to create a reality that is markedly improved is cause for celebration. The explicit and unwitting resistance detailed in this chapter, which have the potential to influence the affective shifts to hopefully inspire more owners to adopt less anthropocentric practices in their companion animal relationships, have a great deal to offer in the way of markedly improving the lived conditions of companion animals. The challenge lies in how to visibilise these resistant acts and enacted alternative possibilities. Although Australia, like other westernised countries, is increasingly valuing pets as 'family' rather than 'mere goods', public discourse around these relationships remains human centric and silent on the everyday exploitation and dominance inherent in these entanglements. For instance, the seemingly positive national movement to 'keep Australia pet-friendly' focussed on the benefits of nonhuman animal ownership for humans, with recommendations clearly focussed on maximising human gains by allowing nonhuman animals to live in rental accomodation or be present in work environments (as "support" animals) because their presence benefited humans (Pet Positives n.d.). The lack of critique of human dominance in popular media (though unsurprising) indicates that much work need to be done to spread these resistant ideas to a broader public[22]. By situating these acts within a broader emancipatory framework, the development of better relationships on the micro and meso levels has both present and future potential, playing an important role in the broader societal shifts more traditionally recognised as resistance (Hynes 2013; Torres 2007).

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[22] The mechanism by which this spread might occur is beyond the scope of this thesis, but will be the subject of future enquiries.

The broader framework I suggest follows that put forth by Torres (2007) and Francione (2000), placing nonhuman animal liberation at its centre, and recognising oppressive human-nonhuman animal relationships as part of an intersectional web of domination. Declaring such a position in some ways allows for the proliferation of these smaller scale shifts but gives them a larger purpose in claiming them as part of a broader project. That is, positive relations with companion animals are not prized just because they demonstrate the potentiality of forging less oppressive relations with nonhuman animals, but rather the process of encouraging these positive relations, of valuing companion animals as minded beings with interests that are important, in turn highlights the hypocrisy of constructing nonhuman animals as beings whose lack of mindedness justifies their continued exploitation as pets (Fudge 2008). As Torres states, 'we cannot force people to make moral and ethical choices while they're staring down the barrel of a gun' (p.142), but rather we must grow and nurture an alternative viewpoint that becomes plausible enough to inspire broader structural change (Hall 2006; Torres 2007). This was reflected in the worldview of participants who had taken on elements of broader critical ethical frameworks mentioned in the above discussion.

Participants who had engaged with critical ethical frameworks tended to situate petkeeping as a practice within a broader system of human-nonhuman animal oppression. One participant likened the idea of "responsible" breeding to that of "free range" meat, both serving as examples of ethical labelling that relieves the purchaser of the responsibility of thinking about the broader ethical implications of nonhuman animal use:

> I guess it's like a lot of things, you know, you look at RSPCA approved chicken and it's a way of looking away from the abuse that actually occurs in chicken farming. No matter what kind of, you know, they put the free range label on it and a lot of people go 'oh thank goodness it's free range so I can still buy it and the chickens were happy'. And I think um that is a massive problem because the chickens are still being killed and a lot of people take too much comfort in the fact that they're buying that and stop questioning themselves, and stop going 'maybe I shouldn't be eating animals' like and I think yeah possibly the puppy farming thing is possibly a thing yeah. I think if people keep focussing on puppy farming and not breeding in general people are going to be like 'these breeders are great buy from these breeders just don't buy these guys' and it's like no, buy from the rescue shelter! Um but you know theres such a huge epidemic at the moment with the um doodle trend and it's a big thing that frustrates me at work because every second dog is a doodle (laughs). And look, I think they're beautiful dogs but I know for a fact that every single one of them has come from a farming facility of some sort, the people that do breed them are absolutely terrible. (Willow)

For this participant, the problematic objectification of "doodle' breeds[23]" extended beyond production, manifesting in the lived experience of those dogs who were sold as "easy care" pets resulting in painful neglect as their needs went unmet:

> [breeders] also advise crap advice. They say your dog should not be clipped before six months old, and they should only be clipped once a year, and they should never be brushed because it damages the coat. And you look at their website and you look at their stud dogs and they're these matted messes but people don't realise that that's matting — they look at that and go 'oh look at that cute big fuzzy dog'. And you're like no that dog's actually matted to the skin and that dog's in a lot of pain and if I shaved that dog off, it would be bruised on the skin um. People don't realise that, but this type of place portrays itself really well, and I've seen other puppy farms like advertising, and they post photos of their big runs and 'oh we're so fantastic and yada yada' and so people take comfort in that even though a) they're not registered breeders and b) they're still a puppy farm people take comfort in that and go ok they live up to these welfare standards blablabla but they still ignore the fact that these dogs are objects to these people and they are being used as machines and profit makers. They're not being seen as individuals, they are profit money making machines that are being abused you know, because they are just being used to make babies and that's so inappropriate. And yeah so I guess that does cause more issues because people go 'well this is a good puppy farm' and it's like do you not actually see a fucking problem with the statement 'puppy farm'? you shouldn't be farming puppies. (Willow)

Ultimately, the participant advocated for the abolition of breeding even with consideration of pets who might enjoy a happy existence with their human owners:

> It all came down to like my moral decisions on everything like I decided that animals aren't for human use or ownership or anything like that and I just went no its wrong even on this level of they're happy but they could be happier if they were in the wild so that was sort of my decision there yeah. (Willow)

The above quotes indicate the connections drawn between purposive breeding, marketing of nonhuman animals as products, everyday neglect of companions and similar exploitation of both pets and "meat" animals. This was limited to participants who had engaged with vegan (not vegetarian) messages, with vegetarian participants far more

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23 also known as designer breeds, generally referring to the popular trend of breeding a myriad of dog breeds with poodles with the intention of creating non-shedding pets

likely to see a bold distinction between the exploitation of "meat" animals and ethical questions around pet keeping ('this in a world of factory farming?' remarked one vegetarian as justification for a perceived lack of ethical concerns around pet keeping [James]). This is not surprising, given the broad distinctions between vegetarianism, which limits its focus to exploitation of "meat" animals, and vegan philosophy, which takes a more holistic approach to eliminating nonhuman animal suffering (Torres 2007).

Participants who had engaged with vegan philosophy (whether they had adopted a vegan lifestyle themselves or had merely been exposed to vegan ideas through social connections) talked about navigating utopian ideals and what they considered to be the best-case scenario for the present. One participant said:

> You can make the best of a situation that's not like that's not perfect, but you can also wish that the situation was different entirely. So, to me, rescuing pets to own pets is like making the best of a situation that's not great, and like sort of like contributing to it in a way that's positive. But like yeah in an ideal world like the whole thing just probably wouldn't exist like at all. (Cara)

As Willow and Cara demonstrate, connecting human-companion animal relationships to broader structural oppression ruptures the veil of affection and encourages owners to 'make the best' of companion animals' lived experiences now while hoping for a less oppressive future. This imperfect, but arguably necessary acceptance of complicity while pushing for social change is indicative of the "mess" that is resistance from within human-pet relationships. A useful conceptualisation of owner/pet resistance embraces this "messiness", and support the micro-shifts that can build towards broader structural challenges of nonhuman animal exploitation.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have given examples of human and nonhuman resistance pushing back against the anthroparchal structures underpinning petkeeping practices, to argue for a serious consideration of their, albeit limited, contribution to broader emancipatory projects. While existing works place the focus of the liberation movement on elements of nonhuman animal use that cause more immediately apparent harm (eg. Cudworth [2011a] and Torres [2007] both discuss pet ownership, but it is not explored to the same extent as those industries that profit from nonhuman animal deaths), I argue that human-companion animal relationships offer a rich site for exploring the mechanisms and potential for resistance and, importantly, one that is qualitatively different from other human-nonhuman animal entanglements and must be treated as such.

A complex view of resistance, which encompasses both affective and action-based resistance provides a broader lens through which to explore the resistant potential of

these relationships. Unlike other nonhuman animal commodities, companion animals remain alive through the duration of their commodity lives, resulting in a pattern of relating in which they are constantly made and remade as living goods (Collard 2014). While some scholars have focussed on the possibilities of positive relations between human owners and animal companions (eg. Haraway 2008; Horowitz 2010; Irvine 2004; 2008), a view of nonhuman animal resistance that includes the instruments of domination and restraint as indications of nonhuman animal pushback renders the leashes, cages and other restraints that are commonplace in pet keeping evidence that domination is inherent and constantly enforced (and resisted) in these relationships (Pierce 2014; Tuan 1984; Wadiwel 2016). These conflicting views are reflective of the contradictory narratives underpinning pet keeping itself (Fudge 2008) and must be incorporated into our understandings of resistance in this context   with both positive relations and emancipatory aims having something to offer the discussion at hand and the movement more broadly.

The exploration of influential 'rupture moments' demonstrates not only the potential for, but sources of attitudinal change, resulting in less problematic or more critical approaches to pet keeping. If, as Torres (2007) and Hall (2006) argue, the road to nonhuman animal liberation relies on "cultivating an alternative viewpoint, one that takes hold, gains energy, and becomes plausible to enough people to effect a paradigm shift" (Hall 2006, p.73), these intervening elements are crucial to challenging broader anthroparchal structures. From human participant responses we can garner that exposure to problematic aspects of pet ownership, such as abuse and relinquishment, and (importantly) witnessing reactions to these practices that identify them as unacceptable can be crucial to the development of pet keeping practices that seek to actively construct companion animals as valuable. Previously held beliefs can also be challenged through 'becoming with' nonhuman animals, as interactions with companion animals provide space for companion animals themselves to communicate their mindedness through reciprocal gaze and mutual negotiation of the lived experience (Haraway 2008). Engagement with training ideologies that shift the focus of unwanted behaviour from canine companions to human owners proved highly influential in promoting human responsibility for relationships with companion animals, encouraging those who engaged with them to think about their communication with their companions, and engage more actively in the construction and navigation of the relationship. Finally, those participants who had been exposed to Vegan philosophy reported a significant shift in their thinking around companion animals, notably making connections between pet ownership practices and broader structural oppressions. What we can gain from these findings, is a glimpse of 'what you need to know, or think you need to know, in order to do this, the type of knowledge that's needed for change' (Salih 2014, p.52). However, also troubling in these findings are participant reports that they were overwhelmingly likely to distance themselves from the offending humans behind the problematic practices that sparked 'rupture moments'. Moving

forward, consideration of how to pursue these attitudinal shifts without encouraging division will be needed if these are to inform broader liberation efforts.

In contemplating owners as agents of change it becomes apparent that owners are engaged in both accommodation and resistance throughout the navigation of their companion animal relationships. Through examples of resistance that occurred on a broad spectrum of overt to covert to unwitting, I have demonstrated the myriad of ways companion animal owners construct their nonhuman animals as valued, effectively engaging in a resistant 'doing' of the relationship (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Raby 2005). These resistant doings occurred on behalf of owned companions (owned by the participant), on behalf of other owned companion animals (those owned by others) or on behalf of companion animals generally (eg. voicing opposition to puppy farms), in each instance advocating for the nonhuman animals in question in opposition to their construction as disposable or unimportant. Participants also problematised the construction of companion animals as property, rejecting traditional "owner" "pet" labels and instead voicing a preference for other terms (such as guardian) that did not emphasise the commodity position of companion animals in broader society. As was discussed in chapter 4 (and elsewhere, eg. Stibbe 2001; Taylor 2007), the construction of companion animals as valued persons through naming, or conversely the devaluation or deconstruction of nonhuman animals through language has material consequences for human relations with them, thus advocacy for, and positive construction of companion animals has very real and important outcomes for the nonhuman animals implicated in these entanglements.

Of course, these relationships are inescapably riddled with accommodations of the anthroparchal structures of commodification and human dominance that enable them in the first place, and only a small minority of participants actively connected their actions to a broader emancipatory framework (veganism). These accommodations do not negate the resistant potential of human-companion animal relationships, they merely highlight its complexity (Hollander & Einwohner 2004). For one, social relations are always complex thus there is no such thing as 'pure' resistance in the mutually constructed social world (Hollander & Einwohner 2004). For another, resistant acts need not be intended as such by the actants performing them — they must be actions, yes, and oppose a broader power structure, but recognition of resistant acts can come from actants, targets of action and other observers (including those researching them) (Hollander & Einwohner 2004; Hynes 2013). I consider any action that challenges the anthroparchal structures constructing nonhuman animals as commodities and subordinate to humans to be resistant, especially those that result in improvements to the material conditions in which these nonhuman animals live. I also view these actions as necessary to the kind of broader structural change nonhuman animal liberationists are agitating for, given, as Torres (2007) argues, 'we cannot force people to make moral and ethical choices while they're staring down the barrel of a gun' (p.142). In exploring both the interventions reported as most influential in forming positive relations, and the resistant action taken as a result of these altered

worldviews, I argue that human-companion animal relationships have the potential to effect broader scale attitudinal shifts.

The power companion animals have to effect these broader scale shifts should not be overstated. While I think it is important to consider nonhuman animals' role in shifting attitudes towards them through 'becoming with' their owners, the control human owners and human society generally exercise over them limits their ability to "fight back" considerably. While companion animal contributions should be valued, the responsibility for enacting this resistance will inevitably fall on the shoulders of the oppressors (humans). While I certainly would not argue that these relations are more effective, or should detract focus from other nonhuman animal liberation efforts, in allowing them to be meaningfully included we open up another avenue through which to nurture the 'genuine vegan movement' Torres (2007) views as key to abolishing nonhuman animal exploitation. Resistance by/for companion animals then, is unlikely to be a fully-fledged rebellion in its own right, but can (and will) most definitely contribute to nonhuman animal emancipation.

7
Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the messiness of human-companion animal relationships, highlighting not just the joy, love and kinship but also the constraint, frustration and broader anthroparchal context that underpins these entanglements. I am not convinced by simplistic understandings of these relationships as either wholly "good" or "bad", and throughout this thesis have made the argument that works focussing solely on positive aspects of pet keeping often aren't meaningfully considering the nonhuman animals. I have also argued that this oversight is not benign (though I do think it is, at least partially, unintentional). When we consider our role, as a researching species, in bringing forth and legitimising particular knowledges and realities while silencing others (Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Law 2004), research endeavours that do not at least attempt to visibilise and include nonhuman animals are arguably adding more bricks to the wall that keeps nonhuman animals' realities hidden. In this concluding chapter, I reiterate three significant themes from this thesis that speak to the need for, and contribution of, a critical pet studies that brings together empirical and critical understandings of human-pet relationships:

1) Nonhuman animals need to be meaningfully included in research that concerns them;

2) Sociological research on/with companion animals should critically consider the material existence of the nonhuman animals at the centre of it, rather than keeping them hidden behind a 'veil of affection'; and

3) The unique contributions of companion animals (and their owners) should be meaningfully considered and included in broader emancipatory projects.

1. The case for species inclusive research

My methods are, admittedly, a modest attempt towards nonhuman animal inclusion and future endeavours might venture further into visual and creative methods[24] to further advance species inclusive research. That being said, in using observation to better account for nonhuman animal interactions in the interviews, I have demonstrated that this traditionally human-focussed method *can* be opened up in ways that better account for nonhuman participation. As highlighted in Chapter 2: Literature Review, there have been several academic endeavours that involved interviews with humans while their nonhuman animals were present. However, these nonhuman animals are rarely, if ever, meaningfully included in the research write up (See Cudworth [2018] and Irvine [2013] for exceptions).

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[24]Perhaps drawing on, for instance, Laurier et al's (2006]) use of video footage to study human-dog relations in public

What the findings of my research demonstrate is not only that nonhuman animals *can* be better included in research, but that they should be. Species-inclusive research leads to a more complete picture of social life and often illuminates aspects of the social world that otherwise remain hidden. This is particularly important in projects that aim to challenge the marginalisation of oppressed communities, as it is often their 'truths' and experiences that are silenced in discourses shaped by power/knowledge (Foucault 1980).

Through the field notes obtained by observing nonhuman animal interactions with human and nonhuman participants, the environment, and me, I was able to explore how companion animals navigate the interview situation and, to an extent, their home environment. This provided valuable insight into the negotiation of power in the home as I was able to see, and take account of, how nonhuman animals moved in the home space and where/if they were restricted in doing so. Several aspects of shared multispecies life, such as the presence and placement of nonhuman animal "stuff", the organisation of space to include/exclude some beings in the home, and accommodations of nonhuman animal agency and preferences (such as Milo's box which was discussed in Chapter 5) would not have come to light without this observation component. Given that the inclusion of these aspects enabled a more nuanced analysis of the power relations in these relationships, particularly how humans use their power to (re)create asymmetrical relations on a micro level, this finding is significant. It goes back to my initial starting point, that 'animals are nearly invisible to us precisely because they are so visible' (Grady and Mechling 2003, p.1). Like the canine subject of McArthur's (2018) "Stupid Dog Trick" photo, companion animals' lived realities are rendered invisible as humans focus on the narratives we weave for them rather than 'the animal that's at the centre of it all' (McArthur 2017). Including descriptions of companion animals' interactions *shows* this reality — at least a small portion of it — and in doing so highlights the many ways nonhuman animals contribute to shaping their own reality. This, then, expands our understanding of how these realities are also shaped by human action.

2. Thinking critically about companion animals

This brings me to my second point — that sociological research on companion animals *should* critically consider the material existence of the nonhuman animals at the centre of it. There have been notable calls for sociologists to advocate *for* nonhuman animals (e.g., Cudworth 2016; Peggs 2013), and for researchers to pursue less speciesist methods to facilitate nonhuman animal inclusion (e.g., Hamilton & Taylor 2017; Taylor 2012). Yet sociological research on companion animals is overwhelmingly anthropocentric and depoliticised (as problematised in Taylor & Sutton 2018). Given that human-companion animal entanglements are necessarily based on an asymmetrical power dynamic that often has frustrating, dangerous and/or deadly consequences for nonhuman animals (such as those who are abused, displaced and ultimately surrendered and euthanised in shelters by the hundreds of thousands each year [Chua et al 2017]), this perpetuation of depoliticised scholarship is not benign. If all research contributes to hinterlands and bodies of knowledge that render some things knowable whilst maintaining the invisibility of others

(Law 2004), then the kinds of hinterlands we nonhuman animal studies scholars should be striving for are those that render nonhuman animals' experiences more visible, rather than less. When we privilege human voices, we perpetuate the assumption that nonhuman animals and their experiences are as described by their human owners, and thus that we humans "know" all about them. As Erica Fudge (2008, p.52) states, 'this, of course, is fantasy'. We don't know what it is to be nonhuman animal as much as we might like to or might like to think we already do. But we owe it to nonhuman animals to at least make educated guesses, based on what we "know" insofar as we can know it. The alternative, as Fudge also points out, leaves nonhuman animals out of the conversation entirely.

In this thesis I have drawn connections between the relationships studied and broader theoretical understandings of the creation of, and relationships with, companion animals in society. Beginning with their construction as pets, which I (drawing on Collard 2014) argue is reliant on a process of deconstruction of nonhuman animals as minded beings and reconstruction as nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities, the lived reality of human-companion animal relationships are inescapably bound by the social construction of nonhuman animals. As discussed in chapter 4: Becoming Pet, "petness" is not necessarily tied to particular species, although certain species are more likely to be considered pet than others. Neither is it infallibly tied to the categories of petness discussed by other scholars (e.g., Tague 2008; Tester 1991) such as naming, sharing domestic quarters, inedibility, and provision of affection and entertainment. These areas remain an important part of constituting pets undoubtedly, however as the data showed named nonhuman animals weren't necessarily "pets" and unnamed nonhuman animals could certainly be considered pets. Shared domestic quarters really depended on the species of animal as to whether or not this would be an appropriate housing situation and cannot necessarily be taken as an indicator of value or "petness". In fact, the only factor common to all pets and to the exclusion of all non-pets was that their owners declared them as such. Right from the outset, companion animals are left to the devices of their human owners who may bestow, or revoke, pet status as it suits them. Further to this, the physical construction of pets which must obviously entail some sort of forced or facilitated breeding (whether intentional or "accidental") and sale of offspring is the ultimate display of human dominance. Humans quite literally have power over the lives and deaths of companion animals.

However, as other scholars (e.g., Irvine 2004) have noted, dominance and oppression are not able to completely explain what makes human-companion animal relationships work. The companion animal interactions captured by my field notes demonstrate the ways in which nonhuman animal agency also contributed to the relationships studied. As seen in examples like the 'glasses game' or the interaction between Mara and Dawn in chapter 5: choreographing companion animal relationships, companion animals communicate effectively and engage in mutual activities with their owners. In the interviews, I heard story after story about the comfort and company nonhuman animals provided through deliberate behaviours: licking tears, initiating cuddles seeming to do these things exactly

when their owners most needed emotional support. Indeed, the most common reason given for acquiring a companion animal was to have someone to love, and to be loved, and a rich body of research into these meaningful connections indicates that this love is not to be underestimated (e.g., Charles 2014; Cudworth 2011; Irvine 2008a, 2013).

But, these stories of love and kinship must be facilitated by the humans in the household. When participants talk about their nonhuman animals 'just seeming to know' when their owners need affection, or communicating 'in their own way', they refer to particular exercises of companion animal agency that are facilitated through socio-spatial negotiation. While we know that nonhuman animals are minded, agential beings who do engage in rich interactions, whether or not we 'see' this depends on how much freedom we allow them to express themselves. The freedom and control humans typically experience in the home space allows owners to create relationships that decentre humans to the greatest extent possible, and this creates space for those valued interactions described above. For those owners who do strive to decentre the human in their relationship, companion animals were given greater scope to express their agency — by, for instance, allowing cats to climb the mesh on screen doors and facilitating this by replacing screens with stronger mesh for climbing, or granting nonhuman animals free access to the home. For others, the home space was exclusionary, and nonhuman animals were limited in their ability to access shared domestic spaces — either physically removed in cages placed outside the living space, or through exclusionary space organisation such as the cat driven out by the overzealous dog (seen in Chapter 5). These negotiations directly affected the relationships that were formed, with excluded nonhuman animals perceived as less interactive, less minded and less likely to be considered "pets". These "non-pets" could then be traded in for other animals, were less likely to be mourned, and were interacted with less often than their included counterparts. This had less to do with species — the same species of animal could be a minded, emotional "pet" in one household, and non-interactive "non-pet" in another — and more to do with the extent to which the human owner facilitated a relationship with that nonhuman animal in the homespace.

Differing preferences and notions of "acceptable" behaviour play a major role here — companion animals' so-called 'beastly places' do not necessarily conform to human ideals in the home (Philo & Wilbert 2011). This, then, links back to those broader anthroparchal structures that place humans above nonhuman animals and the environment in the social world (Cudworth 2011a). Owners must choose between taking the (potentially) easier option and restating human dominance in the home or living with discomfort or situations that might not be their preference in order to facilitate multispecies relations. The effects of this discomfort should not be underestimated — as discussed in Chapter 5, the home for humans is strongly linked with identity, security and a sense of belonging and challenges to this can be quite damaging. Companion animals can, quite literally, breach the boundaries between inside and outside and challenge this security (Fudge 2008). This must be kept in mind when we think about the negotiation of human-companion animal relationships, and the complexities that lead to the reproduction of

asymmetrical power relations that constitute companion animals as lesser than their human owners. However, despite the fact that species inequality seems inevitable in human-companion animal entanglements, there are elements of these relationships that have the potential to contribute to the eventual emancipation of nonhuman animals. This then leads us to my final point.

3. (Companion) Animal Liberation

Though not expressly excluded, companion animals are rarely specifically included in academic works calling for total nonhuman animal liberation. As was discussed in chapter 6: challenging human-companion animal relationships, when companion animals are centred in conceptualisations of resistance it becomes apparent that they experience structural oppression, and challenges to this, in specific ways. Unlike nonhuman animals in other spheres of exploitation (e.g., farms, laboratories, circuses, sports), human-companion animal relationships are generally considered to be an example of positive human entanglements with other animals. For the participants in this study, acquiring and building a relationship with their companion animal(s) was largely motivated by a love for nonhuman animals. This, then, is in direct contradiction with the oppressive (re)construction of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities that is required as a precursor to building that relationship. These dual contradictory narratives are managed by placing a 'veil of affection' (Fudge 2008) between these positive, affectionate experiences of pet keeping, and the dominance that underpins them.

This then offers a way in for resistance in the context of human-companion animal relationships. Chapter 6 discussed several examples where the veil was lifted, a phenomenon I call 'rupture moments' that mark a distinct shift in participants' thinking about pets and pet keeping. Participants who held non-normative beliefs about pet keeping (such as rejecting the construction of humans as "superior" and/or condemning breeding and pet keeping as a practice) reported significant moments through which they came to understand the "reality" of pet keeping in a different way. These included being confronted with socially acceptable, but highly problematic pet keeping practices, such as pet relinquishment, engaging with Vegan ideas, and even the interview process itself which was deliberately constructed in a way that centred nonhuman animal experiences in the questions. However, unlike other human-nonhuman animal entanglements which are more likely to be resisted through abstinence (e.g., a refusal to eat nonhuman animal products), pet owners instead adopted the attitude that humans needed to be responsible for the nonhuman animals they had created and care for them, whilst working towards a future where these oppressive practices did not exist. Human-companion nonhuman animal relationships, then, occupy an uncomfortable position in the context of nonhuman animal liberation in the sense that they both challenge and are complicit with the (re)creation of nonhuman animals-as-pet-commodities.

Notable efforts by owners to challenge human-centric ideas around pet-keeping show that there is scope within these relationships to encourage the inherent valuing of nonhuman

animals and challenge their objectification. The most significant of these was simply creating space to enable companion animal agency. When nonhuman animals are given scope to express themselves, and to interact, they contribute to the affective shifts that inspire resistance against their objectification. In short, by allowing nonhuman animals to be seen and by engaging with them, we encourage more 'rupture moments' and challenge damaging narratives that paint them as mindless "goods" — nonhuman animals are quite obviously minded and emotional beings once meaningfully engaged with. Participants reported explicitly challenging anthropocentric attitudes in their homes and in public, by directly confronting humans who expressed anti-nonhuman animal views or who were seen to not be adequately caring for companion animals. Others directly intervened — taking abused nonhuman animals from front yards and rehoming them. Even polite refusals to defer to the preferences of human visitors to their home — for instance visiting humans who didn't want the dog on the couch — subtly challenge the privileging of human wants over nonhuman animal preferences that is endemic in broader society.

Building on these findings, the next step towards realising a companion animal inclusive nonhuman animal liberation agenda is harnessing this understanding of rupture moments and resistance and nurturing it. My findings demonstrate that all owners — even those who did not subscribe to vegan, emancipatory politics — found ways to challenge the anthroparchal structures underpinning human-companion animal relationships. Many of these practical challenges were in line with those outlined by Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka (2011) in their model of domesticated nonhuman animals as citizens, in which animal companions would be granted more freedom to co-construct society through enhanced opportunities for choice making and participation. While I take issue with their dismissal of abolitionist approaches to animal rights, practical examples of creating space for nonhuman animal choice-making provide potential steps towards a liberated society (I would not consider them an appropriate end as the authors seem to, but these are useful ideas nonetheless). For owners such as those in my study who are already challenging anthroparchal norms, a next step is to connect this motivation to a broader understanding of the oppression inherent in human-companion animal relationships, to lift the veil. Here, grassroots activists might fruitfully contribute by explicitly including companion animals in their vegan campaigns, clearly demonstrating that companion animal 'use' does not differ from any other form of domination in its exploitative underpinnings. Challenging validity of 'single issue' campaigns for companion animals (such as anti-puppy farm or breed specific legislation) and instead highlighting how these unfavourable practices are merely manifestations of the exploitative industry as a whole might also contribute to this, although such an approach would need to be handled with caution (after all, discouragement of people caring about any form of (ab)use is potentially ill-conceived). What is clear is that this needs to be a broad, concerted effort in order to visibilise the exploitation of pet ownership and mount a coordinated challenge to this and all forms of exploitation. This then brings together the major themes of my project. For lifting the veil requires highlighting the asymmetrical relations impregnated

in the everyday, and challenging simplistic arguments that see oppression only in the obviously cruel. It means recognising that centring nonhuman animals must occur at every level — in our relationships, our research methods, our writing and our policies. And, as one participant highlighted, it means keeping in mind that petkeeping as it stands is 'making the best of a situation that's not great ...[but] in an ideal world like the whole thing just probably wouldn't exist, like at all' (Cara), and continuing to work towards that ideal world.

4. Future Directions and Applications

This research has potential implications for a range of research areas and social issues around companion animals. Particularly, the exploration of the negotiation of space between species, and the use of objects in the home to facilitate or constrain relationships has much to offer our understandings of what a "successful" multispecies relationship looks like and how relations might be better supported. For those seeking to understand pet rejection and the "revolving door" of nonhuman animal shelters, this research offers a conceptualisation of power and disposability (or the influence of anthroparchy) as underpinning *all* human-companion animal relationships, and thus suggests that to understand, and tackle, this issue we need to expand our gaze outside of "bad" relationships. Finally, in highlighting the everyday manifestation of oppressive relations, this research challenges the unproblematic portrayal of human-companion animal relationships and encourages future scholars in the area to engage more critically with the material realities in which these nonhuman animals live.

There are certainly areas to build on — the notion of species inclusive research, though emerging in recent literature, has plenty of room to grow. And this leads me to the area I would most like to see develop in light of my thesis: the growth of a truly critical, Critical Pet Studies field. Contrary to Nast (2006a), I *do* think CPS scholars need to attend to the material realities of companion animals' existences through empirical scholarship that centres nonhuman animals. Because these entanglements *are* fundamentally oppressive — they are based on a premise of exploitation, commodification and denial of agency that means they can never truly be anything but. And while I think we certainly can (and should) talk about how to improve the material conditions of companion animals' lives, I would argue that we should always, always frame this as a stepping stone to nonhuman animal liberation. We need to treat nonhuman animals better now, to decentre ourselves in these relationships as much as possible (and this thesis has illustrated some of the ways owners try to do this). But essentially we need to move towards a future where we no longer "use" nonhuman animals as companions. To this end, future endeavours might investigate other ways to bring companion animals more meaningfully into research. The theoretical contributions of this thesis, which highlights the usefulness of Goffman's Frame Analysis to critical animal studies, might be further developed, with more attention paid to how micro-resistance might inform meso and macro resistance. In drawing on

sociological concepts of symbolic interaction, structure/agency and anthroparchy, this project has further demonstrated the potential for sociology as a discipline to critically untangle human-nonhuman animal relations, and there is plenty of scope to further develop the field in this direction. Resistance scholars might further investigate the potential for resistance in these entanglements, and consider how complicity might be managed, or whether it is so extensive as to render resistant efforts futile. Whatever the research direction, I would hope that any works that claim to be *for* companion animals draw on a CPS foundation that aims for eventual liberation, rather than eternal exploitation. In addition to increasingly critical research, structural changes are needed to facilitate the abolition of human-pet dependency. For instance, fostering inter-human kindness and compassion, promoting positive relationship to address the human loneliness and lovelessness would go some ways to reducing the need for companion animal 'use' (this is not to say that nonhuman animals are merely replacements for lacking human contact, but that more positive relations might lessen the experience of loss in their absence).

Of course, this push for critical companion animal research also poses new ethical challenges, particularly around how to respectfully engage with, and write about, human participants. I struggled with this throughout the data collection and writeup of my thesis, and the owners in my study were, by most if not all measures prized in wider society, "good" owners. They cared for their companions and challenged social norms that would construct nonhuman animals as mindless property. And, crucial to the success of this study, they opened up their homes to me — providing open responses to challenging questions and sharing intimate details of their lives. I am very appreciative of their participation, and the critical framing of this research should not be taken as a criticism of them as people. But they are privileged in these entanglements, by way of their species and the opportunities and power afforded them as a result of this. Where companion animals are concerned, human owners, breeders and caretakers are gatekeepers — parties who cannot be sidestepped in the pursuit of nonhuman animal-centric research. For this project, the nonhuman animals were involved only because human participants were excited to be a part of the research. I don't think I was entirely successful in centring nonhuman animals as much as I would have liked because, for me, this human involvement necessitated some centring of human voices and experiences. This might have been better challenged with a more extensive use of visual methods, such as photos taken during observation to accompany thick descriptions and better centre the nonhuman animals involved. The submitted photos and biographies might have been included as data for analysis to allow further critique of the anthroparchal norms evident in all representations of these entanglements. But again, I am left uneasy with the conflicted loyalties to nonhuman and human participants, and advocacy for both seems to be in conflict at times. I am not sure where this leaves us with truly critical research that openly challenges ownership, and how we can best conduct such research effectively, without breaching ethical duties of care with these human gatekeepers. I haven't solved

this issue, but rather am flagging it as a point that needs further attention in future endeavours.

What I have presented in this thesis is certainly not an all-encompassing manifesto of the creation and liberation of companion animals. However, I have provided a starting point for readers to begin thinking about how we really live with our companions, when we strip back our human narratives of them, and what it might mean to truly centre nonhuman animals.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Recruitment flyer

Do you love talking about your pets?

[image redacted due to copyright]

'why wouldn't you, we are fabulous..'

If so I want to talk to you! I am a Sociology PhD Candidate from Flinders University undertaking a research project on the companion animal relationship experience. I want to interview any individual currently living in South Australia (over 18 years of age) who has shared their life with a companion animal (this includes any non-human animals-not just dogs and cats) in the last 24 months. If this is you, please consider participating!

What will I have to do?
 Participation involves an individual interview of up to 90minutes during which you will be asked to talk about what you thought about pets before you met your companion and what your experiences have been since. I will ask you a few questions, but I also want to hear your anecdotes! You can also provide a photo of your pet and a short bio for them to be included in the final project if you like.

Participation is completely voluntary and you can opt out at any point- even during the interview. You also don't have to answer any questions or share any information you don't feel comfortable disclosing.

If you think you could help with this research or just want to know a bit more about it, please don't hesitate to **contact me at zoei.sutton@flinders.edu.au** and I will send you an information pack for your consideration.

Appendix 2: Information sheet

Miss Zoei Sutton
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CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

INFORMATION SHEET
for interview participants

Title: 'Choreographing human-animal companion relationships: structures, discourses and agency'

Researchers:
Miss Zoei Sutton
Sociology Department
Flinders University
Ph: 08 8201 2106

Supervisor(s):
Dr Nik Taylor
Sociology Department
Flinders University
Ph: 08 8201 2491

Supervisor(s):
Dr Heather Fraser
Social Work Department
Flinders University
Ph: 08 8201 5302

Description of the study:
This study is part of the project entitled 'Choreographing human-animal companion relationships: structures, discourses and agency'.

This project will investigate pet owner experiences with their animals, particularly in regards to how ideas about what having a pet is like have changed throughout the relationship. This project is supported by the Flinders University Sociology discipline.

Purpose of the study:
This project aims to find out

- How do people shape their relationships with their pets?
- What factors affect how people relate to their companions?
- What are the consequences of these factors for the animals?

What will I be asked to do?
You are invited to attend a one-on-one interview with a student researcher who will ask you a few questions about your experiences with your companion animal and pet-keeping in general. Home interviews are preferred so that your companion animal can be present, participants must reside in South Australia. The interviews will take around 90 minutes and will follow a semi-structured format (some set questions with room for discussion of any other topics which may arise during the meeting time). The meeting will be recorded using a digital voice recording device, with audio being transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcript can be sent to you via email on request. This is a voluntary study and as such no interview will be conducted without the express permission of the participant, which can be withdrawn at any time during the session.

In addition to the interview you are being asked to provide a photo of your pet and a short biography for them that will be published in the final thesis. This is optional (you don't have to provide a photo in order to participate in the interview) and the photo and bio will not be published without your express permission in the form of a signed photographic release form.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?
The sharing of your experiences will allow us to gain a greater understanding of human-companion animal relationships and the challenges and rewards that accompany them. This will also allow us to identify areas in which the current information stream is sufficient and others which are in need of improvement in order to ensure prospective pet owners are well-equipped to deal with the challenges of pet ownership.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?
Once the interview has been transcribed and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the transcription file stored on a password protected computer that only the researchers (Miss Zoei Sutton, Dr Nik Taylor and Dr Heather Fraser) will have access to. We will ensure that your comments will not be linked directly to you in any publications from this study.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?
No additional risks are likely to occur.

How do I agree to participate?

After reading this information sheet you will be presented with a permission to participate form, which will be treated as express permission once signed by you and the researcher. Participation is completely voluntary and permission can be withdrawn at **any time during the interview.**

How will I receive feedback?
If requested by you, you are able to see your transcript after it has been transcribed. To request a copy of your transcript, you may send a request to zoei.sutton@flinders.edu.au and it will be sent to you via email. You are able to review your transcript until data analysis begins (no longer than 2 months from the date of your interview).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved. For more information please contact Zoei Sutton at zoei.sutton@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 3: Interview consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH BY INTERVIEW

Choreographing human-animal companion relationships: structures, discourses and agency

I …...

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the ………………………………… for the research project on ……………………….

1. I have read the information provided.

2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.

4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.

5. I understand that:
    - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
    - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
    - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature……………………………………Date…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name……………………………………………………….................

Researcher's signature……………………………………..Date…………………….

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

Appendix 4: Photograph release form

PARTICIPANT PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE FORM

Choreographing human-animal companion relationships: structures, discourses and agency

I …..

agree to the photographs I have taken for the *research study 'Choreographing human-animal companion relationships: structures, discourses and agency'* (as requested in the Participant Information Sheet) to be used for:
[please circle whichever applies]

researcher's background analysis only / not for display	agree/don't agree
display in thesis materials	agree/don't agree
display in academic articles and presentations	agree/don't agree

1. I have read the information provided in the Participant Information Sheet.

2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Participant Photograph Release Form for future reference.

4. I understand that:

   • Any human individuals present in photographs will be de-identified using computer editing software

   • Photographs will be accompanied by the biography I have written. The researcher will remove identifying information (apart from my pet's name) to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's signature…………………………………… **Date**…………………...

I certify that I have explained how photographs will be used to the volunteer and consider that they understand what is involved and freely consent to participation.

Researcher's name…………………………….………

Researcher's signature…………………………………….. **Date**…………………….

Flinders UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA

Appendix 5: Interview questions

1. Do you identify as a pet owner?

    • Why/why not?

2. Can you tell me about your life with (pet's name)?

    • Potential prompts:

        • Where/how did you obtain (pet's name)?

        • Where did their name come from?

        • Can you describe their personality?

        • What were they like when you first brought them home?

        • What activities do you like to do together?

        • What are some of the things you love most about them?

        • Do you have any mischievous stories about them?

3. Before you got (pet's name), what did you think having a pet would be like?

    • Where do you think these ideas came from?

4. Were there any surprises, where you found yourself dealing with a situation you weren't quite prepared for or hadn't anticipated?

    • How did you deal with this?

    • How did this affect your relationship with (pet's name)?

5. Have you hadn't any experience (first hand or otherwise) with pet displacement — where a pet is rehomed, surrendered to a shelter or otherwise moved on?

    • If yes, can you tell me a bit about that?

    • If no, do you have any thoughts as to what factors might contribute to an owner deciding to displace their pet?

6. Do you think it is important for pets to have contact with other nonhumans?

    • Do you think the bonds experienced by companion animals *before* they are sold (i.e. with their biological family) are important?

    • Do you think enough emphasis is placed on the social development and relationships of companion animals, particularly with other nonhuman animals?

7. Is there any information you wish you had before getting (pet's name)?

8. Have you ever thought about whether people should be allowed to 'own' animals?

9. If you can try to imagine it from (pet's name)'s point of view, what kinds of constraints or limits do you think they face day to day?

10. What do you think needs to happen in order to make sure pets are well cared for?

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