

**THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF ANIMAL SHELTERING AND PROTECTION IN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

by

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## **Abstract**

Animal protection organizations commonly provide care for animals in shelters, enforce animal protection laws, and take initiatives to keep people and animals together. Ensuring animal welfare in this work is not straightforward as animals are categorized according to their property, health, and adoptability status and evaluated using legal criteria and other measures based on their welfare and living situations with their owners. This study, rooted in institutional ethnography, involved observing these work processes and reviewing the documents, policies and laws that organize what happens to animals in British Columbia, Canada. Institutional ethnography (chapter 2) is an approach to inquiry that explores everyday work and how it is organized by institutional processes. The research literature about animal sheltering and protection (chapter 3) focuses on certain well-established themes including reasons for relinquishing animals, how long animals stay in shelters, and euthanasia-related stress in staff. In focus groups, however, animal protection staff identified problems that arise in their work that are not captured in the research literature. Animals with behavioural problems (chapter 4) face complicated pathways to adoption in shelters as work is directed toward monitoring populations of animals and prompt adoption of the majority. Prioritization of this work results in less time for staff to focus on animals needing behavioural modification. For animals living in deprived situations (chapter 5), members of the public often report problems, but the actions of call centre operators and officers are constrained by the legal definition of “distress” together with privacy and property laws; hence, beneficial intervention is often delayed or

prevented. Following institutional goals, officers provide “alternative measures” to keep people and animals together (chapter 6), for instance with people in supportive housing, but this work does not always resolve problems and sometimes requires complex and poorly understood forms of collaboration with human social services staff. Recommendations arising from the research include: expanding behavioural modification as a recognized part of shelter work, amending the legal definition of “distress” to better fit animals’ needs, observing how animal and human social services staff coordinate their work activities, and expanding the application of ethnographic methods to animal protection services.

## **Lay Summary**

This thesis is about the everyday work that frontline animal shelter staff, call centre operators and animal protection officers do with animals. I used a research approach called institutional ethnography to observe the work these people do with animals, talk with them about their work, and analyze how that work is being organized by institutional processes. I focused on how frontline staff work with animals with behavioural problems that have extended shelter stays, how the legal term “distress” enters into officer and operator work and what this means for animals living in deprived situations, and how officers engage with human social services staff while doing work that involves “keeping people and animals together”. Recommendations include continued observations of everyday shelter work especially on behavioural modification, amending the definition of “distress” to better meet the needs of animals and analyzing the collaborative yet complex work being done with human social services.

## **Preface**

KE Koralesky and D Fraser designed the study. KE Koralesky collected and analyzed the data and wrote the thesis. D Fraser supervised the research. D Fraser and JM Rankin provided advice on the research and feedback on the thesis. MAG von Keyserlingk served as committee member and provided feedback on the thesis.

A version of Chapter 3 is in preparation for publication: Koralesky KE, Rankin JM and Fraser D. Animal sheltering - a scoping literature review grounded in institutional ethnography. KE Koralesky conducted the literature review and focus groups. D Fraser acted in the typical role of supervisor, providing input in the review process and focus group design, and feedback on the manuscript. JM Rankin provided guidance on the review process and feedback on the manuscript. The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (#H19-00009) approved the study.

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The everyday work of providing alternative measures to keep people and animals together. KE Koralesky collected and analyzed data and wrote the manuscript. D Fraser supervised. D Fraser and JM Rankin provided advice on the research and feedback on the manuscript. The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (#H19-00009) approved the study.

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## **Dedication**

For the frontline shelter staff and animal protection officers.

## **Chapter 1: The social organization of animal sheltering and protection in British Columbia, Canada**

This thesis explores how the institution of animal sheltering and protection in British Columbia (BC), Canada, organizes what happens to animals. A large body of literature exists about Western (ie Western European, Australian, North American) animal sheltering and protection and broadly focuses on the organizations, people and animals involved. This thesis takes a different approach and begins where animals are located in the institutional practices of animal sheltering. It explores how what happens to animals (both good and bad) is socially organized – how animals come to be involved with institutionalized sheltering, and how laws, policies and processes organize problems that are “latent” (Smith 1987 p 91) in current knowledge about animal sheltering and protection. In this introductory chapter I provide a brief overview of the history of animal sheltering and protection in North America including the legal instruments that govern these activities, and then provide contextual details about animal sheltering and protection in BC. I then briefly introduce the research approach, institutional ethnography (IE), taken in this thesis. I conclude with an outline of thesis chapters.

### **1.1 Brief history of animal sheltering and protection**

In Western countries the sheltering and protection of animals has evolved greatly since it began almost 200 years ago. The first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) was founded in 1824 in London, United Kingdom (UK). A few decades later, SPCAs were

founded in various parts of North America including New York in 1865, Montreal in 1869, Ottawa in 1871 and BC in 1895 (Preece & Chamberlain 1993; Attard *et al* 2013; Irvine 2015).

In the early 1800s, advocates of animal cruelty law in the UK were primarily concerned with improving human virtue and the morality of society; the elimination of acts of cruelty, as well as the blood-sports of cock fighting, bull baiting and dog fighting, was considered one way to do this (Fraser 2008 p 21-22). Early SPCAs were also concerned about the treatment of work horses such as cart horses used to transport people and materials (Irvine 2015). Soon after the formation SPCAs, also referred to as humane societies, many of these organizations expanded their work to protect other vulnerable populations such as children (Preece & Chamberlain 1993; Zilney & Zilney 2005; Hoy-Gerlach *et al* 2019).

Physical animal shelters were constructed after the founding of SPCAs to house stray (ie homeless), free-roaming and unwanted animals. In Canada the first shelter opened in 1914 in Montreal (Attard *et al* 2013; Montreal SPCA 2021) and in 1955 in BC (BCSPCA 2021a). In the 1970's and 80's, with large numbers of stray and unwanted animals being taken to shelters, programs were developed to prevent pet "overpopulation" (ie when the number of stray or unwanted animals, mostly dogs and cats, exceeds the number of people wishing to adopt them). With many unsterilized cats and dogs, plus a lack of space in shelter facilities, millions were euthanized annually in the United States of America (USA), with estimates ranging from 7-16 million animals per year (Rowan & Wilson 1985; Bartlett *et al* 2005). In Canada, although national data are not available for this time period, Homes (1985) reported that from 1974-1979 in the BCSPCA, the number of dog impoundments doubled, and cat population growth led



to several hundred cats being euthanized in a single day. This led the BCSPCA and municipal animal control departments to implement differential licensing fees for sterilized and unsterilized animals, begin the practice of tattooing the inside of animal's ears to allow identification of lost pets, and create low-cost sterilization clinics which were reported to decrease the number of animals euthanized in the Vancouver Regional Branch shelter from 80,000 in 1976 to 8,986 in 1983 (Homes 1985).

Recent years have seen several further developments. First, the number of dogs and cats euthanized in North American shelters has decreased substantially. The American SPCA (ASPCA) estimates that the number of animals euthanized per year has fallen to approximately 920,000 (ASPCA 2021a), and Humane Canada reported that the percentage of shelter animals euthanized declined from 30 to 10 percent of dogs and from 60 to 15 percent of cats between 1993 and 2019 (Humane Canada 2021). Second, legal protection of animals has broadened in many Canadian jurisdictions, for example by creating a “duty of care” which includes specifications for people who own or are responsible for animals and broadening the definition of when an animal is considered to be in “distress” (Fraser *et al* 2018). Third, researchers have turned their attention to the reasons why animals are relinquished to shelters by their owners, with animal behaviour problems (eg aggression) as common reasons (Coe *et al* 2014; Powell *et al* 2021). This has led animal protection organizations to develop behavioural modification resources (ASPCA 2021b). Finally, many North American sheltering organizations now promote programs that aim to “keep people and animals together”. Such programs provide different

forms of support to help people better care for their animals so animals can stay in homes instead of being removed and taken to shelters.

## **1.2 Animal protection law in Canada**

A critical element of animal protection is animal protection law. In Canada such laws exist at three different levels of jurisdiction: federal, provincial and municipal.

At the federal level, the *Criminal Code* prohibits wilful (including reckless) acts against animals that cause unnecessary pain, suffering or injury as well as animal baiting and fighting (Fraser *et al* 2018). Apart from criminal law, however, the *Constitution Act* of 1867 gave provinces jurisdiction over property. As animals are considered property under the law, each province is responsible for laws on animal-related matters that do not involve criminal acts, transport or slaughter at federally inspected facilities (Fraser *et al* 2018).

Most provinces and territories provide animals with some legal protection, in most cases by requiring that animals not be in “distress” which is typically defined to include a lack of adequate shelter, food and water, plus other specifics that vary across jurisdictions. Enforcement also varies among provinces. For example, SPCAs (charitable organizations) are responsible for enforcing animal protection law in BC, Quebec and Nova Scotia, whereas the government takes this responsibility in Ontario and Manitoba, and enforcement is shared between charities and government in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Municipal animal control laws also differ across jurisdictions but broadly regulate matters relating to animals in the public interest (eg dog licensing, dog bite control, control over

the ownership of certain types of animals). Few municipal laws exist for cats and most allow cats to roam freely. In BC, the provincial *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act* allows the BCSPCA to enter into contracts with municipalities to enforce local by-laws.

### **1.3 The term “animal”**

In BC, animals are categorized in two main ways under provincial animal protection law: as wildlife (*BC and Canadian Wildlife Act*), or 2) or as "not wildlife". In the BC *PCA Act*, the term “animal” is not defined but it is specified that “*the Act does not apply to wildlife, as defined in the Wildlife Act, that is not in captivity*”. For this thesis, I focused on companion animals (eg dogs, cats and small animals that are commonly kept by people in their homes in Canada) covered under the *PCA Act*.

### **1.4 A place to begin inquiry**

The BCSPCA plays a large role in animal sheltering and protection in BC and as such the BCSPCA was a central research partner for this thesis. The BCSPCA is a large organization (close to 600 staff) with 36 shelters, five hospitals and clinics and a wildlife rehabilitation centre. The organization provides humane education to youth in schools and summer camps (BCSPCA 2021b). The BCSPCA is authorized by the BC government to enforce the *PCA Act* and officers respond to calls of concern about animals across the province received by operators at a Provincial Call Centre. Although this thesis describes, explores and explicates tensions that arise in the everyday work processes of animal sheltering and protection, it is not a critique or

criticism. My interest is in improving the lives of animals that come to be involved with this institution, an interest that aligns closely with that of the BCSPCA itself, whose mission is “to protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in BC” (BCSPCA 2021c).

My knowledge about and interest in animal sheltering and protection stem from my work as a volunteer in animal shelters in the USA and Canada for the past ten years. As a volunteer, I assist frontline animal shelter staff to complete their daily work: cleaning and sanitizing kennels, feeding and medicating animals, playing with cats, taking dogs for toilet breaks and walks, doing laundry and dishes. In the past ten years, I have walked hundreds of dogs along the same, worn paths outside shelters. I have checked boxes on forms clipped to kennels, recording when an animal urinates or defecates, how a dog behaves on a walk, whether a cat seems bright and alert or unresponsive. I have been happy when animals I grew attached to are adopted and sad when they are euthanized. I have talked to potential adopters about animals they want to adopt. I have seen people cry when they relinquish their animals. I have worked with volunteers, shelter staff and officers and listened to them talk about rules that frustrate them, volunteers they appreciate, clients that anger them, and animals they love and grow attached to.

Through these experiences, I became curious about how the animals I met came to be involved with sheltering and protection and what happened to them once they were involved. How was it that some animals were adopted quickly while others spent an extended time in the shelter before finding a home? How did officers decide whether to remove animals from

owners? How did staff make decisions about where to house animals within the shelter? What work processes did frontline shelter staff have to follow in their daily work with animals?

### **1.5 Using institutional ethnography**

As I pondered these questions I was drawn to IE as an ideal research approach. IE is an approach to inquiry developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith that aims to explore what people do in their everyday work and how this is organized by institutional processes (Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008). IE aims to discover “how things are actually put together” or “how things work” from where people are located within an institution (Smith 2006 p 1-3). With discovery and inquiry as central features, IE studies do not ground research in existing theories or conceptual frameworks (Smith 2005 p 2), nor do they move to theorizing or conceptualizing the data. Instead, IE uses ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interviews and document analysis to focus on what people actually do in their everyday work and is designed to materially track how those practices are being organized (Smith 2005).

For this thesis, I take the *standpoint* of animals that for various reasons come to be involved with animal sheltering and protection. Standpoint (a technical IE term further defined in chapter 2) establishes a subject position that is occupied by individuals within an institution; it is a “point of entry” into inquiry (Smith 1999 p 5; Smith 2005 p 10). I began inquiry from the standpoint of animals to understand how what happened to them was being organized. Thus,

although I could not speak to animals, the animals and what happened to them were the primary focus of the research.

With its focus on observing everyday life, IE has much in common with some early ethology, most notably the early work of Jane Goodall on chimpanzees (as recognized by Smith 2018; also see Kearney *et al* 2018). Goodall did not begin her research by trying to test existing theories about animal behaviour but rather by observing how chimpanzees conducted their everyday lives: how they ate, played, fought and cooperated, much as an IE researcher might study what is happening in an institution.

In contrast with free-living chimpanzees, however, animals that become involved with animal sheltering and protection are greatly affected by the everyday work of people whose actions are coordinated by institutional features such as protocols and policies, and are constrained by relevant laws. The work people are required to do may lead to tensions, concerns or problems, for instance, if the outcome of a situation (and the work of making the decisions that result in the outcome) is not in the interests of the animal nor desired by the staff and organization. To discover these tensions, I observed what animals did and wrote fieldnotes on their behaviour. I followed what happened to animals through the everyday work activities completed by frontline shelter staff, call centre operators and animal protection officers. I directed my attention and inquiry towards these tensions as I noticed them happening in the everyday world and attempted to explicate (ie to empirically describe and explain in detail) how the tensions were being organized by various institutional processes (Smith 2005 p 38-39). These tensions between what is happening in the everyday world and

how what goes on is understood and represented via official institutional processes, policies and procedures (Rankin 2017a) is what Smith refers to as the *problematic*, a technical IE term that will be defined further in chapter two.

## **1.6 Chapter overview**

Below, I provide a brief overview of each chapter and present the tensions I discovered that led the direction of inquiry and further investigation presented in chapters four to six.

Chapter two (Using institutional ethnography as an approach to inquiry) provides an overview of IE including its development, ontology and the core principles that guide IE studies. I describe each principle and discuss how I applied it in this thesis. I elaborate on what it means to take the standpoint of animals in an IE study and discuss how Western researchers and animal ethicists have used different approaches to understand what animals know, experience, and do. I conclude with a description of study procedures, methods and data analysis.

Chapter three (Animal sheltering - a scoping literature review grounded in institutional ethnography) is a scoping review of the research literature on three topics that arose during data collection. These are: research about shelter staff and officers; research about the relinquishment of animals to shelters; and research into animals' length of stay in shelters. I review this literature through an IE lens; specifically, instead of simply summarizing the research findings and limitations, I focus on the methods and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks researchers have used to approach topics. I also conducted four virtual focus groups with shelter personnel during which I presented the main findings of the review and

asked the focus group participants to discuss how the problems they encounter in their work may or may not be represented in the research.

Chapter four (Working with “orange” animals: The social organization of animal shelter work) begins with an ethnographic account of a dog named Henry that, after being removed by officers from a property because he and the six other dogs at the property were determined to be in “distress” according to the *PCA Act*, had an extended stay in the shelter and was eventually euthanized because of behavioural problems. How was it that Henry’s life in the shelter unfolded in this way? To investigate, I present a series of tensions that arose for Henry, and for the frontline shelter staff that cared for Henry, during his time in the shelter. I present additional data (eg interviews, focus groups, texts) to explicate this problematic. Through tracking these tensions into the institutional practices that governed them, I attempt to understand how Henry’s pathway to adoption was complicated and led to an outcome not in the interests of Henry’s well-being and not desired by frontline shelter staff or the organization.

Chapter five (Animals in “distress”: The social organization of animal protection work) begins with an ethnographic account and two maps that describe Henry’s early life. When Henry was a puppy, he and the other dogs in the same home were investigated by animal protection officers but were not removed from the property until years later. How was it that officers were unable to intervene and remove Henry from a deprived environment that likely influenced the development of his behavioural problems? To investigate, I explore work processes and texts that call centre operators and animal protection officers use and complete in their everyday work. I attempt to explicate the regulatory texts and work processes that



operators and officers follow when they respond to calls of concern about animals, and explore the consequences this has for animals, operators and officers.

Chapter six (The everyday work of providing “alternative measures” to keep people and animals together) investigates the work officers do to “keep people and animals together”, a goal promoted by many North American sheltering organizations. The chapter begins with an ethnographic account about an animal protection officer who visits a cat and owner living in a single-room-occupancy supportive housing building. The officer provided support to help the owner address a problem and improve the health of the cat but the problem was not resolved. How are officers organized to do such work that aims to keep people and animals together, and how does this work organize what happens to animals living in these situations? I use this account and additional data to describe how officers do the work of keeping people and animals together and identify work processes that could be used as entry points into further analysis of the organization of this work.

Finally, chapter seven (General discussion and conclusion) summarizes thesis findings, presents thesis limitations, and suggests future research directions. It also analyzes how this IE connects with previous IE studies.

## **Chapter 2: Using institutional ethnography as an approach to inquiry**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Institutional ethnography is an approach to inquiry that aims to discover what people are actually doing in the everyday world and to explicate how these actions are being organized by institutional processes. The aim is to empirically describe and explain in detail (ie explicate) how what they are doing is being coordinated and organized by activities being conducted elsewhere, work that is pulled into the everyday, but is not fully observable there (Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008). IE's emphasis on discovery means that inquiry begins and stays in the actual, material world (through data collection and analysis) rather than relying on or expanding theories or hypotheses about the world (Smith 2005 p 2). In this chapter, I introduce IE as an approach to inquiry, present the core principles of IE and explain how I applied the principles in this study. I conclude with an overview of the study including research procedures, data collection and analysis.

### **2.2 IE ontology**

As the founder of IE, Dorothy Smith's core focus is on social ontology and the foundational idea that: "an ontology is a theory of reality" (Smith 2005 p 52). IE's ontology is grounded in examining the "social": people's "actual, ongoing social processes" coordinated with others (Smith 2005 p 52, 227). Smith drew from Marxist materialism and ethnomethodology to develop IE's ontological focus on the everyday world and everyday

activities (Smith 2005 p 2). Drawing on *The German Ideology* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (dating to 1846 but published only in 1932), Smith writes that Marx and Engels' view is "grounded in the work and activity of actual individuals producing their existence under definite material conditions" (Smith 1987 p 80). Material conditions are the actual, observable practices, activities and social relations happening in the lives of real individuals (Smith 1987 p 123, 1990a p 6). Smith also draws some of her thinking about how to describe and investigate the organization of everyday activities from the field of ethnomethodology which focuses on analyzing the "organized activities of everyday life" (Smith 1987 p 126). Ethnomethodology aims to understand how people make sense of those activities and the role of language and conversation in the organization of these activities. Smith's observations about language and conversation extend to "texts" – the written materials that people produce and read (Smith 1990a p 209-211). She identified that texts, such as documents, photos, forms, or computer screens (Smith & Turner 2014 p 5), are indeed the material features of institutions that organize the work that people do. Thus, IE's ontology focuses on the actual activities that people engage in during daily life, with a particular interest in how texts enter into and organize people's work (Smith 1987 p 98).

Smith's proposal that inquiry begin in the actual activities of people contrasts with the traditional sociological approach in which she was schooled. In conventional sociology the inquiry begins in and returns to ideas in the sociological discourse (Smith 1990b). Such approaches may, for instance, slot people into preformulated categories (Campbell & Gregor 2002 p 17) or interpret what individuals do or say as "norms" or "values" to translate and to

explain what is actually happening (Smith 1987 p 74-77). For instance, the majority of research about animal shelter personnel begins in a particular discourse (ie a way of understanding and knowing) about “euthanasia-related stress” (a conceptualized form of stress proposed in early research literature) and researchers categorize personnel based on the “coping strategies” they use to manage this stress and their “feelings and concerns” about euthanasia (eg Frommer & Arluke 1999; Reeve *et al* 2005; Baran *et al* 2009). Broadly, the term “discourse” can be thought of as a way of thinking about and looking at the world that has certain ideological practices, that is, frameworks, concepts, theories, language, questions and solutions (Smith 1987 p 18). Smith’s thinking about the concept of discourse aligns with the ideas of Michel Foucault (1926-1984) who saw discourse as a broad conversation regulated by people in positions of power and authority, for example in academia. In a circular process, people’s thinking *begins* in predetermined frameworks which guide and structure data collection and analysis, thus producing knowledge that fits into accepted ways of thinking about the world (Smith 1990b p 93; Rankin 2017a) – such practices contribute to the social organization of knowledge – which is a core interest in IE.

Discourse (or what in IE is more accurately referred to as “discursive practices”) not only structures and regulates knowledge (Smith 1987 p 72) but organizes how knowledge is taken up (activated) by people in their everyday work activities, relations and practices within institutions (Smith 1987 p 214, 1990a p 160-162). Across institutions (such as the institutions of the family, of schools, of urban planning and so on), discourse plays a role in organizing what people do. Discourse can be specialized and specific, or can circulate more broadly as shared

professional, managerial or authoritative ways of knowing that are acted upon by people for purposes of accountability across institutions and disciplines (McCoy 2006 p 118). In this way, individuals are participating in and reproducing discourse through their everyday activities. For instance, frontline shelter staff and animal protection officers talked about the importance of monitoring the “welfare” of animals in the shelter and were required to track animal welfare by ticking boxes on a “behavioural indicators of welfare” form, marking whether an animal was hiding, grooming, unresponsive, eating, sleeping, barking, circling, panting, etc. The “behavioural indicators of welfare” form was developed by UBC (as indicated by a UBC logo on the form – Appendix A) and is based on research assessing animal welfare in shelters. This is one way in which the discourse about animal welfare in shelters enters into the discursive practices of monitoring animal behaviour that frontline shelter staff do in their everyday work.

For this thesis, my own capacity to make the necessary “ontological shift” that IE requires was an ongoing process. I had completed qualitative research studies in the past that aimed to *interpret* what people said or to *categorize* “perceptions” and behaviours into *themes* or existing theories. I had to make a continual effort to retrain my thinking, to shift my focus to what was actually happening in a setting by orienting to what people were doing, in order to remain congruent with my aim, which was to discover and describe how what was happening (in particular those events that arose as troubling and contradictory) was being organized. This was very different from focusing on how I could interpret what I was seeing into an existing discourse on the topic, or reverting to well-established, taken-for-granted concepts in animal sheltering. For instance, when I read literature or heard people talk about concepts like “animal

welfare” and “animal pathways and flow through,” I had to remind myself to query these abstract terms to discover what was actually happening, and whether and how the abstracted approach to knowledge entered into and coordinated the work activities and processes people were actually doing. How is work represented when it is broadly categorized as “animal flow through”? What practices or knowledge are lost when it is represented abstractly?

An IE researcher’s tendency to revert to taken-for-granted concepts is what Smith refers to as being “institutionally captured”, that is, falling into and using the same language and concepts circulating in the institution. To avoid institutional capture during my fieldwork I focused on material work activities. I structured data collection around “shadowing” frontline staff, including shelter staff (animal care and customer service), animal protection officers and Provincial Call Centre operators at the BCSPCA. My fieldnotes focused on recording what people were doing. My conversations that augmented the fieldnotes were directed towards people’s knowledgeable practices – how they knew to do this (and not that). My ontological aim was to gain a solid understanding of the different steps involved with various work processes and activities, to understand the work coordination among people and to examine when and how people brought texts into these processes.

### **2.3 Standpoint and problematic**

One of the strategies of IE to help the researcher make the ontological shift – to reorient their gaze to what people are actually doing and what is actually happening – is to be specific about for whom the inquiry is being conducted. Smith uses the term *standpoint* to denote a

“place to begin inquiry” (Smith 1999 p 5). In IE, the term standpoint refers to a (material) location within the institutional relations that is occupied by a group of “workers” (people engaged in purposeful activity, for example frontline staff, patients, administrators – Smith 1999 p 5, 2005 p 9-11). People located at different standpoints are being organized *there*, at that location, and different locations generate different understandings of the institution and how it works (Smith 1987 p 107). The goal of an IE study is to discover and explore how the world is being organized from a particular standpoint (Smith 1987 p 106-107). The aim is not to generalize experiences from one group of individuals to a larger population but rather to investigate how experiences of *these* individuals are being organized by (generalized) institutional processes (Smith 1987 p 187).

Although IE emphasizes that it is people and their activities that are the grounding standpoint, for this thesis I take the standpoint of animals that, for various reasons, become involved with animal sheltering in BC, Canada. Foremost, this study is conducted in the interests of the embodied, non-human animals whose activities (eating, sleeping, sniffing, playing, stretching, meowing, barking and growling) are assessed, monitored and responded to by people. For animals that are brought to shelters, their activities arise in a new environment, with new smells, people, food, beds, lighting, noises, animals and routines. Of course, *people* are critically important informants, but the standpoint of animals is the grounds for the relevance of this research.

Around the time when Smith was developing IE as an alternative sociology, two of the main ethical theories about animals in the Western world were utilitarianism and animal rights

theory. Peter Singer's utilitarian approach to ethics is based on taking animals' capacity to suffer into consideration when making decisions about and considering the consequences of animal use (Singer 1975). Tom Regan's animal rights approach argues that animals have inherent value and therefore humans have a moral duty to respect their rights. Such a view argues for the abolition of the use of animals, for example in research, agriculture, sport and hunting (Regan 1983).

Also, during this time and in response to utilitarianism and animal rights theory, feminist thinkers in the Western tradition were developing alternative theories about animals. In contrast to utilitarian and rights-based theories derived by applying logic and ethical theory, scholar Josephine Donovan wrote that feminist animal ethicists take an approach focused on relational, emotional connections with animals (Donovan 1990). This relational understanding is also argued by philosopher Mary Midgley who provides examples of how humans have, over time and through domestication, tamed, formed individual bonds with animals and developed an understanding of animals' social signals (Midgley 1983 p 112). Midgley wrote:

*"The degree of mutual understanding which we have, both with our species and with others, is only made possible by attributing moods, motives and so forth to them on the rough model of our own, and constantly correcting the resulting misunderstandings" (1983 p 142-143).*

Thus, as human beings have involved animals in their communities over time, they have also successfully developed mutual understandings as evidenced by communities across the world developing forms of understanding with animals (Donovan 2006).



To elaborate (and to support) my decision to take the standpoint of animals, I argue that over time, Western philosophers and researchers interested in animals have used a variety of approaches to (in a broad sense of the phrase) “take the standpoint” of animals – to understand what animals do, experience and know. Well-known ways of understanding animals include, for example, determining the cause, evolution, development and function of animal behaviours (Tinbergen 1963), theorizing about animal consciousness (Nagel 1974), studying affective states of animals (Fraser 2009) and measuring human-animal relationships qualitatively (eg Arluke & Sanders 1996) or quantitatively (eg Hemsworth & Coleman 2011). Donovan (2006) applied feminist standpoint theory to animals by arguing that human advocates should listen to and try to understand animals’ subjective viewpoints from their marginalized or objectified positions. More recently, disciplines like “human-animal studies” are examining the symbolic and material conditions of human-animal relationships in depth (eg Shapiro & DeMello 2010; Taylor *et al* 2018) and others have proposed that animal welfare scientists listen to and build on “everyday” knowledge that people such as farmers acquire through their sustained interactions with animals (Fraser *et al* 2017).

I specified “Western” views above to acknowledge that there are different ontologies, including Indigenous ontologies, for understanding the realities of non-human animals. These may emphasize, for instance, the formation of particular (as opposed to generalizable) relationships between humans and animals or other non-human entities (Rosiek *et al* 2020). For example, Marker (2018) shares a story told by a Coast Salish Nooksack Elder (Coast Salish territories are located along the Pacific Northwest coast of North America) about a deer that

knows when the Elder is hunting to provide food for a funeral and decides to give themselves up for the people. In this story, the deer can understand human consciousness. I share this brief example to acknowledge other ways of understanding animals but do not delve further because I do not have the knowledge to do so.

Taking the standpoint of animals in this IE study focuses on discovering how what happens to animals is organized within the institution of animal sheltering. In IE, researchers typically take the standpoint of a group of humans and through observations and *speaking* to them, develop descriptions of their experiences. Animals are non-verbal and so I had to take a different approach. I began by observing animals and what they were doing in their kennels, recording fieldnotes and relying on my experiential knowledge and training about how animals communicate behaviourally (eg barking, hiding, body postures). I also observed frontline staff, in particular shelter staff and animal protection officers, who had knowledge about animals, for example monitoring an animal's biological health (eg recording and reporting symptoms of illness like coughing, sneezing, irregular urination and defecation) and behaviours (eg observing and recording behavioural signs of fear, anxiety, frustration and depression like hiding, barking, lunging, jumping, whining, and also positive behavioural signs such as eating, grooming and playing). Staff and officers also had knowledge about animals and so I used my observations and discussions with them to enhance my understanding of the animals' standpoint.

I also observed and listened to frontline staff work with, talk about and consider decisions they had to make for animals. These observations and discussions involved institutional work activities and processes that organized what happened to animals from the

moment they became involved with animal sheltering. For example, when animals arrived at the shelter or became the subject of investigations they were categorized as “stray”, “owner surrender”, “cruelty case”, “emergency boarding”, etc. Simultaneously, I explored how these activities were organized, coordinated with other individuals, and activated through a series of connected texts. Workers’ activities involved several standardized protocols to monitor animals. For example, as described earlier, each animal in the shelter had observational and “behavioural indicators of welfare” forms attached to their kennel and sometimes medical treatment cards which frontline staff and volunteers used to report behavioural observations and confirm whether treatments had been given. These observed activities contribute to what Smith calls “the social”, or people’s ongoing activities in their everyday lives (Smith 2005 p 227). The practices developed to organize and coordinate the *social* are called *social relations*, which are the coordinated “sequences of action that hook people into what others have been also doing elsewhere” (Smith 2005 p 228).

For this IE, I identified concerns that arose from the standpoint of animals, and also concerns expressed by the people responding to the animals, to organize the direction of inquiry (Smith 2005 p 38). In IE such concerns, discovered through inquiry, are thought of as “disjunctures”. They arise as tensions in knowing, rifts that open up between what is known (described) from the standpoint and how such tensions are conceptualized and worked on in locations further afield in the institution. Disjunctures are made visible through the researcher’s examination of how the institutional concerns, accounts and “authorized/institutional” knowledge (usually constructed textually) do not quite match how things happen as described

in the researcher's data, gathered through interviews or observations – the chronical(s) of “being there” in the local setting (Smith 1987 p 49; Burch 2021) embedded in the standpoint location. These disjunctures and the mismatch between institutional understanding and everyday knowledge are what Smith refers to as the *problematic*.

The problematic is a technical IE term that refers to a field of investigation that begins in the everyday world (Smith 2005 p 38). Indeed, Smith's seminal text is titled: *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology* (1987). The problematic “direct(s) attention to a possible set of questions or puzzles that do not exist in the form of puzzles but are “latent” in the actualities of the experienced world” (Smith 1987 p 91). For this thesis, I directed my attention to the most pressing questions for the people I observed and the animals they cared for. The problematic is presented in its early formulation in chapter one, and each chapter examines a series of concerns that establish the puzzles being explicated that inform the arc of the analysis.

## **2.4 Institutions, ruling relations and texts**

IE inquiry aims to move from specifically located everyday experiences to explore the relations that are organizing those experiences (Smith 1987 p 187). To explore an organization, IE researchers focus on the *work* that people do. Smith uses the term work broadly to refer to what people do on a day-to-day basis under actual situations and conditions (Smith 1987 p 166). These situations and conditions make up the *institution*. Institutions are not physical entities but rather *complexes* organized around a specific function (eg family, schools, urban planning, health care – Smith 2005 p 225). Institutional complexes can be studied empirically by

observing what people are doing and by discovering how their activities are being coordinated (Rankin & Campbell 2009). One can discover institutional practices, and how they coordinate knowledge and activity across various sites and across time, by focusing on the “coordinated and intersected work processes” that may take place across multiple sites (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 17).

*Ruling relations* is an IE term that is used to describe the ways in which work going on across institutional complexes connects into and organizes what people do. Ruling relations involve “bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media”, and include a “complex of discourses, scientific, technical, cultural, that intersect, interpenetrate, and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling” (Smith 1990a p 6). Smith’s thoughts about ruling relations align with those of Marx and Engels, as their work showed concern with ruling-class ideas that come to organize the everyday lives of other people (Smith 1987 p 57).

The material form of ruling relations within institutions are often vested in *texts*. Texts play a critical role in institutions, and therefore within IE research, because they are central features of how institutions organize what people do. Texts are “material forms mediating human communication” and can be documents with written words such as newsletters, forms, pamphlets, computer screens or also images, videos and music (Smith & Turner 2014 p 5). Texts are: (1) replicable – they can be reproduced and used by different people in different settings, and (2) activated by people when they use them in their daily work in coordination with others (Smith & Turner 2014 p 5). The verb “activated” is used to emphasize how texts organize and coordinate *only through people’s activity* with them (Smith 2005 p 102-104). Texts

would be inanimate without people developing, reading, filling in, and following the directions on texts. Smith (2005 p 105) refers to how people reading a text (ie a form or document) become involved in a “text-reader conversation”, that is, how people respond to and take up the form. It is only through people’s work with texts that the ruling relations embedded in the texts are activated. People’s work with texts “screen, prioritize, categorize and define” (Pence 2021). Textual activities play a large role in standardizing, coordinating and organizing social relations. It is possible to follow organized and coordinated activities performed by people using texts as sequences of action within an institution (Dobson 2001). Further, standardized texts used to organize work across many settings can be produced from texts of a higher order, what Smith calls regulatory texts (Smith 2006 p 79). Thus, texts and analysis of text-reader conversations are usually a central component of an IE analysis.

For my thesis, the primary institution under study is animal sheltering and protection. I neither predefined nor limited what animal sheltering and protection includes. Rather I observed and described the work processes and the people involved in doing animal protection, animal care, animal adoption work, people and animal support work, policy and legislative work and so forth to get a sense of what the institutional regime of animal sheltering involves. Although I began my observations inside an animal shelter, I observed work processes and coordination between individuals taking place in multiple places. This included not only coordination between frontline shelter staff, officers and call centre operators but also frontline shelter staff and members of the public who interacted for various reasons, for example adopting or relinquishing an animal or bringing a stray or injured animal to the shelter. This also

included work processes coordinated with veterinary clinics and other animal rescue organizations. Further, operators received and entered complaints from members of the public about animals, and officers interacted with people and sometimes other individuals working with those people (eg social workers or building managers) when responding to complaints. This network of work sites, people and processes are all part of the institution of animal sheltering and protection that came under my investigative scrutiny.

Texts were a ubiquitous feature of my fieldwork. They included physical paper documents about an individual animal's health, behaviour, medication and profile, shared notebooks and binders to track phone messages and meeting reminders, and notices given to people for violating the *PCA Act* (a regulatory text). Texts also existed as erasable white boards to track veterinary appointments and digital texts such as the shelter database. I observed how frontline shelter staff, operators and officers activated these texts in their everyday work and how these processes coordinated the decisions they made for animals in their care.

## **2.5 Study overview**

The following section provides information about research procedures, data collection methods and analysis.

### **2.5.1 Study procedures**

The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (#H19-00009) and The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Animal Welfare Committee approved this study.

In April 2019 I held an initial meeting with frontline shelter staff, officers and some administrators to introduce myself, share information about the study, explain the consent form (Appendix B) including issues of confidentiality, anonymity and the use of audio-recording, and I answered questions. After this meeting I received training from an administrator on the shelter database software so I could access information about animals and reports as needed. I then coordinated a time to begin observations in the shelter with a shelter administrator. Through my own volunteer work, I knew and had worked with some of the frontline shelter staff and officers in the previous four years in two different shelters. I was therefore familiar with some of the work and processes involved with caring for animals and recognized that the processes for managing animals in shelter were standardized across shelters. My volunteer experiences were helpful to reflect upon throughout the study.

Data collection primarily occurred from May to November 2019. Subsequently from December 2019 to February 2020 I began preliminary data analysis but continued working in the shelter one day per week so I could continue to access documents (eg physical animal files) stored in the shelter and ask follow-up questions about the data I collected. In March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began I started working from home following UBC directions. In November 2020 I received approval from UBC and the BCSPCA to conduct virtual focus groups



and follow-up interviews with BCSPCA staff as needed. I conducted focus groups in January and February 2021 using the web-based video conference platform Zoom (Zoom Video Communications Inc., San Jose, California 2021).

### **2.5.2 Participant recruitment**

After the initial meeting in April 2019, I began observing the daily meeting of frontline shelter staff. During these meetings, I made notes about the animals in care and work activities scheduled to be accomplished that day. I then asked frontline shelter staff if I could “shadow” them as they performed work activities, for example basic care of animals in the shelter, dog behavioural assessments and work with the public involving adoption or relinquishment of animals. Further, I observed the work staff did throughout the day by sitting in an area near the front door of the shelter. When additional or unplanned work activities came up (eg members of the public finding stray or injured animals and bringing them to the shelter) I asked staff if I could observe. I asked staff to sign the consent form before observations began. Sometimes staff mentioned other staff, officers and operators involved with what they were doing or noted that they coordinated their work with others in different capacities. In such cases, I contacted those individuals, shared the letter of invitation and consent form (Appendix B) and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study.

### **2.5.3 Observations and interviews**

I used both naturalistic (no researcher participation) and participant (researcher can participate) observation methods. Observations are common in IE and rooted in IE's focus on discovery. I did not approach observations with an existing research focus or question in mind, but rather observed the work frontline shelter staff and officers were doing with animals, following Smith's broad conception of work. Frontline staff are often participants in IE studies because they connect clients to institutional discourses and texts; in my case, shelter staff similarly connected clients (animals) to institutional texts by fitting animals into existing institutional categories, processes and protocols (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 27).

I also conducted interviews, both informally (during and after observations) and formally by scheduling appointments to talk with shelter administrators about their work. The interviews I conducted during observations can more appropriately be described as "talking with people" (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 22). I asked people about the work they were doing and asked them to explain the different steps they were taking to accomplish the work, as well as how they used physical and digital texts. I asked for copies of physical texts they mentioned as well as protocols, management plans and guidelines, and I had regular access to the shelter database to access digital texts (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 29). During scheduled interviews I often asked follow-up questions about data I had collected, checking my understanding of work processes.

I focused observations and interviews on the steps involved with different work processes, and observed how participants used texts in their work, how they entered

information into the database, and how they coordinated their work with other staff, officers and volunteers. During participant observation I offered to help, for example by gathering cleaning supplies, cleaning litter pans and kennels, assisting by holding or weighing animals during intake examinations, and directing members of the public to the kennels that housed adoptable animals. When observations involved members of the public in the shelter (eg people adopting or relinquishing an animal), I introduced myself as a UBC graduate student conducting research and learning about shelter processes and asked if I could observe. These individuals gave verbal consent to my presence. When observations involved animal protection officer work with members of the public, officers introduced me as a student observing and learning about their work. These members of the public gave verbal consent to my presence. When members of the public were present, I performed naturalistic observation where I did not participate. I recorded written fieldnotes. According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2 2018), “naturalistic or participant observational research that does not allow for the identification of the participants in the dissemination of results, that is not staged by the researcher, and that is non-intrusive should normally be regarded as being of minimal risk” (article 10.3 p 139).

#### **2.5.4 Confidentiality and anonymity**

As frontline shelter staff, officers and operators knew my presence was to collect data for this study, it was impossible to ensure full anonymity. However, I took the following steps to protect participant confidentiality. First, the names of all individuals, humans and animals, are

pseudonyms. I gave human participants a gender-neutral pseudonym and used the pronoun “they”. Second, I altered certain data features (eg locations, number of animals seized from a location, dates) in a way that maintained the approximate timing and features of events. Third, I refer to animal protection officers and Special Provincial Constables as “officers” and use the generic term “administrators” for all managers, assistant managers, regional managers, directors, and administrators.

### **2.5.5 Focus groups**

In January and February of 2021, I conducted four virtual focus groups on Zoom video communications software with BCSPCA personnel. BCSPCA members of the Animal Welfare Committee (the committee that approved my research) assisted with participant recruitment by sending the letter of invitation (Appendix C) via email to all BCSPCA officers, frontline shelter staff and administrators involved with animal management. Participants contacted me to express willingness to participate. Focus groups lasted 40 to 67 minutes, two of which were with shelter staff (n=2 and 4), one with officers (n=5) and one with administrators (n=11). I purposefully included individuals with very different experiences of the organization. The aim of these focus groups was to present key findings from the literature review (Chapter 3), ask participants to comment on the literature review findings, to describe whether and how their experiences were represented in the academic discourses, and to identify problems in their everyday work activities that were not covered in the research literature. These focus groups also provided a space for participants to discuss their shared experiences generated at *that*

location in the institution (shelter staff, shelter administrators, officers). I was able to check my understanding on topics discussed (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 23). Participants signed a focus group consent form (Appendix D) before the focus group. I also told participants they could increase the protection of their identity and personal information by not using their actual name and not turning the camera on in Zoom. I shared the Zoom link only with individuals who had signed the consent form, restricted screen sharing and used a waiting room and password for participants' entry.

#### **2.5.6 Data analysis**

The aim of analysis in this IE was to explicate how the events that happened with animals, and that were identified as troubling through the formulation of the problematic, were being coordinated through people's work activities and organized by institutional processes. As described by McCoy (2006 p 117), IE analysis can be summarized as first developing an understanding of what individuals are doing and experiencing in their daily work, and then analyzing how what people are doing and experiencing is being organized by institutional processes and ruling relations. The purpose is not to generalize findings about everyday material settings, people or (in this case) animals to a larger population but instead to "find and describe social processes that have generalizing effects" (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 18) and exist *across* settings. Bringing the institution into view in this way can point to specific institutional processes that need to be observed further or reviewed (Campbell & Gregor 2002 p 101).

The data analysis process in IE occurs during and after data collection in a highly

iterative way and I used a variety of analytical techniques to understand the social organization of animal sheltering and protection. Shortly after beginning data collection, I began writing about instances in my data that seemed to cause tension. This tension arose between concerns from the standpoint of animals and institutional concerns. The accounts and subsequent data analysis developed into the problematics explicated in this thesis. Broadly, I followed analytical guidance by McCoy (2006 p 111-115) to identify traces of the institution and institutional processes that people discussed and that led to concerns. I also followed Rankin's insights about conducting analysis in IE (2017a) and key analytical techniques of mapping, indexing and writing accounts (2017b).

One of the first steps I took after writing preliminary accounts of tensions was to create "maps" about what happened to a dog, Henry, during his life. Maps can be made in a variety of formats (eg chronological, diagram of steps taken in a process, see Turner (2006) for examples) and the mapping orients to a social (as opposed to geographical) landscape of relations (Dalmer 2021). Maps help to visualize work processes performed and texts activated in these processes (Rankin 2017b). They also show how work processes and texts occur as standardized sequences of action taken by individuals (Turner 2006). In chapter four, I use the map of Henry to write a detailed ethnographic account about the work processes and texts used by people that related to Henry while he was in the shelter. In chapter five, I use maps to visualize all work processes and texts used during the engagement of the operators and the officers who initiated and then investigated Henry's case. Based on the fieldwork and my growing understanding about Henry's case, I analyze specific texts and work processes in depth (Turner 2006 p 140). In instructing IE

researchers Smith uses maps as a metaphor. She notes that making a map is a technical process but the map itself must be accessible and usable by people (Smith 2005 p 29); the aim is to map how people are connected in social relations and ruling relations. Smith explained: “Like a map of the underground mall, with its arrow pointing to a particular spot accompanied by the words You Are Here! institutional ethnographies are designed to enable people to relate the locus of their experience to where they may want to go” (Smith 2005 p 51).

While I was making the maps of the work processes and texts, I was also listening to and “indexing” audio-recorded interviews and written fieldnotes. Indexing involves making notes of what people discussed or were actually doing in their work, ie actual empirical happenings (Rankin 2017b). I transcribed audio-recorded data (in full or partially, depending on the relevance to research problematics) and indexed transcriptions by inserting comments in the margins of the document. Physical fieldnotes were indexed using colour-coded tape. For instance, much of the work frontline shelter staff did daily involved “managing animals” which included sub-indices of “work involving animal transfers”, “work involving animal categorization”, and “work involving veterinary treatment”. I referred to indexed data frequently during analysis and writing to stay grounded in what actually happened and provide examples of empirical happenings. Indexing is not like common qualitative analytical procedures such as coding whereby researchers categorize or interpret what people are saying and doing; indexing focuses on actual, material work processes (Rankin 2017b).

Finally, I built upon the original preliminary accounts and wrote full ethnographic accounts detailing what was actually happening in situations and focused on identifying texts

used and traces of institutional discourses and processes in those accounts (Rankin 2017b). These accounts are used as an entry point into the research problematics that I explicated through writing chapters four to six. Indeed, “analytical writing” occurs through the process of writing and rewriting to clearly present and support findings (Campbell & Gregor 2002 p 93).

### **2.5.7 Summary**

IE is an approach to inquiry that differs from other qualitative research approaches. IE is grounded in a materialist ontology that focuses on describing everyday happenings in an institution, discovering latent puzzles in those happenings, and then analyzing how what happens is being organized and coordinated. The aim is not to use existing ideological tools such as theories or conceptual frameworks to understand what is happening; the analytic process is consistently grounded in observations or interview descriptions where people told me about what they do. IE analysis does not use qualitative analytical techniques like coding or categorization because such techniques aim to interpret or categorize, and in so doing they abstract what people are doing and saying. IE analysis instead focuses on mapping institutional processes and ruling relations that organize what happens in the everyday world.

In my study, I took the standpoint of animals in order to understand the institutional processes and ruling relations that organize what happens to animals as they become involved with animal sheltering and protection. I utilized observations, interviews, and analysis of documents and texts over an eight-month period, as well as focus groups convened after in-person data collection concluded, to discover how what happened to animals was being



organized. Chapter three is an IE-informed scoping review of animal sheltering. Chapters four to six explicate a series of disjunctures that arose as tensions between institutional concerns and the concerns of animals, frontline shelter staff, operators, and officers.

## **Chapter 3: Animal sheltering – a scoping literature review grounded in institutional ethnography**

### **3.1 Introduction**

For many decades the sheltering and protection of companion animals have been a primary focus of the animal welfare movement. These topics have also stimulated a large body of research that investigates the animals (Arhant *et al* 2015; Protopopova 2016), the people (Arluke 1991; Baran *et al* 2009; Schabram & Maitlis 2017) and the organizations involved (Irvine 2003; Weiss *et al* 2013). The research, however, has tended to concentrate on certain aspects of animal sheltering and protection such as relinquishment of animals by owners and the stress experienced by shelter staff who perform euthanasia. For the most part, the literature does not provide an integrated understanding of how the policies, processes and functioning of the institutions – which govern the everyday work of the staff – determine what happens to animals.

Institutional ethnography (Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008) is an approach to inquiry that aims to discover how everyday life and work are shaped and organized within “institutions” which Smith (2005 p 68) defined as “complexes organized around a distinctive function”, with health care and education as classic examples. In developing IE, sociologist Dorothy Smith proposed that instead of beginning sociological inquiry by applying existing methods and testing existing theories, inquiry should begin in the actual, concrete experiences of what people actually do. Smith thus called for “a sociology for, not of, people”,

and an “ontological shift” (Smith 2005 p 2) toward building knowledge by focusing on the actual, everyday world of people, and explicitly avoiding theorizing about what has been observed. Rather, IE’s goal is to materially “map” how experiences are organized to happen as they do.

In parallel with its different approach to research, IE also uses a different approach to reviewing the research literature. IE expands the focus from reviewing *what* is known about a topic (ie study results) to understanding *how* knowledge on a topic is organized. This approach is aligned with discourse analysis (Peacock 2017). Smith saw academic sociology as generating a discourse that organizes and regulates how sociologists conduct research, with whom they speak, and what they try to understand (Smith 1987 p 72). Within this academic discourse, certain topics become a focus of attention, and researchers develop and perpetuate certain methods of study and certain ways of thinking about and interpreting topics. Researchers thus position themselves as observers of a topic, “looking at” a setting with the aim to “observe and tell” what they find (Smith 1987 p 114-115, Smith 1990a).

In this review of research on animal sheltering, my aim was to follow the theoretical framework of IE to identify and analyze how the academic discourse created by researchers has shaped the approaches they have used and the accepted knowledge they have produced. Further, my interest is in identifying how well abstract, theoretical ideas circulating in published scholarship of animal sheltering represent the actual work and concerns of people working in the sector (Smith 1990b p 36-37; Rankin 2017a). Thus, in this early stage of the institutional ethnographic research and as part of discourse analysis, I also conducted focus groups with

people directly involved in animal sheltering. My aim in the focus groups was to hear about everyday problems (as a contrast to what I had learned through my review) and also to listen for where the discursive topics from the literature were taken up by people engaged in sheltering animals.

### **3.2 Materials and methods**

The topics for this review, which were chosen while I was conducting data collection, were selected so that they would align with IE's focus on actual, concrete work experiences. The first review topic included the breadth of what has been published about shelter staff and officers. The ethnographic data also led me to review two other topics – the relinquishment of animals by owners, and the length of time before an animal is adopted – which were clearly part of the work and focus of animal shelter staff and were also well-established topics for research.

I structured the review using the theoretical framework of IE with its interest in the social organization of knowledge, combined with a framework for conducting scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). I also took guidance on how to modify a scoping review for IE from Dalmer (2018, 2020). I searched for peer-reviewed articles in three databases (Ovid Medline, APA PsycInfo and Web of Science) using keywords, subject headings (ie phrases used to index articles by concept) and an asterisk to truncate words or phrases. For the first topic (research about staff and officers) the search terms were (people or staff\* or employee\* or veterinarian\* or officer\* or volunteer\* or worker\* OR subject headings "Employee Attitudes" or "Employee

Characteristics" or "Employee Retention" or "Employee Motivation" or "Veterinary Medicine") AND (animal shelter\* or animal rescu\* OR subject headings "Housing, Animal" or "Animal Shelters"). For the second topic (animal relinquishment) the search terms were (surrender\* or relinquish\*) AND (animal shelter\* or animal rescu\* OR subject headings "Housing, Animal" or "Animal Shelters") AND (pet or pets or "companion animal\*" or cat or cats or dog or dogs or rat or rats or rabbit\* or bird\* or mice or mouse or gerbil\* or hamster\* OR subject headings "Pets" or "animals, domestic or pets"). For the third topic (length of stay in shelters) the search terms were (length of stay OR subject headings "Length of Stay" or "Treatment Duration") AND (animal shelter\* or animal rescu\* OR subject headings "Housing, Animal" or "Animal Shelters"). I did not set date limits. I performed searches on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 and set notification alerts for each topic. I also identified references that our searches missed but were cited in other articles and I selected studies for review based on their relevance to the topics.

On the first topic, focused on shelter staff and officers, I excluded articles mostly or solely involving unpaid personnel (eg volunteers). I did not include articles about shelter medicine or dog behavioural assessments, as these articles did not focus on the everyday work of people engaged in practicing shelter medicine or conducting assessments. On the topic of relinquishment, I excluded articles on failed adoptions (animals that were returned soon after they were adopted). The final topic "length of stay" included articles that measured "live-release rate" as well as length of stay.

According to Arksey and O'Malley (2005) the aim of a scoping review is to identify prominent themes, patterns and findings on topics. However, an IE-based approach also

explores how published research generates an academic discourse where knowledge is explicitly built upon prior research, often using ideas, concepts, theories and methods proposed by earlier researchers. Therefore, in reviewing the literature I also focused on the foundational ideas, theories and concepts that guide how researchers have approached their investigations, and the methods and frameworks that have become the accepted ways of doing the research. In this I was following Dalmer (2018), specifically by identifying the foundational ideas and established methods that guided the approach used by researchers (Rankin 2017a).

As suggested by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) I also implemented a consultation exercise with BCSPCA personnel to gather insights into the problems they face that are not captured in the research literature. I did this through four virtual focus groups in January and February of 2021. Focus groups lasted 40 to 67 minutes, and two were with shelter staff (n=2 and 4), one with animal protection officers (n=5) and one with senior administrators of the shelters (n=11), thus including individuals with very different experiences of the organization. I audio-recorded each focus group and transcribed the recordings. In each focus group I presented the key findings from the literature review, listened for where topics from the literature were taken up by people engaged in sheltering and protecting animals, and identified other problems in their everyday work activities that were not covered in the research literature.

### 3.3 Results

Following the theoretical framework of IE, I start each topic I used to conduct my search with an excerpt of ethnographic data. I do this to ground the review in the reality of what people actually do in animal sheltering.

### 3.4 Shelter staff and officers

*The reception area of the shelter is a hub of activity. Telephones seem to always be ringing, staff pass by on their way to feed one animal or walk another, sometimes stopping to ask the manager questions or confirm the dosage of an animal's medication with the veterinary technician. Members of the public continually enter and leave the shelter through the main entry, asking staff where they can see animals available for adoption, dropping off an injured bird they found, filling out adoption applications and donating towels, toys and food. (Ethnographic observations of some of the daily work activities of shelter staff).*

Although I used broad search terms such as “people or staff or officers” AND “animal shelter” to find research on the actual work of shelter staff and officers, most of the research focused on the topic of “euthanasia-related stress”, while a small number of articles examined other topics including the presence of women in animal sheltering, animal intake procedures and staff attitudes toward animals.

Euthanasia-related stress is conceptualized in the research literature as a form of stress that arises among shelter staff because of their involvement with euthanasia of animals (see

Scotney *et al* 2015 for a review). This form of stress is widely regarded as a problem in animal sheltering and has become a major topic of research. Despite the early work by Owens *et al* (1981) who conducted group discussions with euthanasia technicians about their “feelings and concerns” about euthanasia, the interest in euthanasia-related stress has largely been built upon Arnold Arluke’s ethnographic study in an animal shelter in the USA. Arluke conducted observations and interviews and described shelter staff’s experiences, feelings and coping strategies related to the act of performing euthanasia (Arluke 1991; Arluke & Sanders 1996). Arluke coined the term “caring-killing paradox” to describe what he characterized as the clash of feelings that “animal people” (people who love animals and therefore work in animal sheltering) have when institutional practices require them to euthanize animals. The “caring-killing paradox” has become a foundational idea that subsequently influenced a body of research that measures, for example, how staff cope with performing euthanasia (Frommer & Arluke 1999; Baran *et al* 2009), how performing euthanasia affects the occupational health of staff (White & Shawhan 1996; Rogelberg *et al* 2007a; Andrukonis & Protopopova 2020), and shelter manager perspectives on euthanasia (Anderson *et al* 2013).

After Arluke’s study, several other USA-based researchers incorporated the concept of euthanasia-related stress in their research, often using standardized questionnaires to determine how performing euthanasia affects staff depression, burnout, turnover or substance use. For example, Reeve *et al* (2005) measured the extent that animal shelter staff experience euthanasia-related stress through several scales including: (1) the Euthanasia Attitude scale, (2) a Work-Family Conflict scale, (3) the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (to measure depression), (4)



the Symptom Management Coping scale (to measure substance abuse) and (5) a variety of job satisfaction scales. The results showed that staff “involved” with euthanasia had more general job stress, more work-family conflict, greater substance abuse and overall lower job satisfaction than staff “not involved” with euthanasia. Baran *et al* (2012) and Lopina *et al* (2012) surveyed shelter staff using a variety of scales (eg Work-Family Conflict, Maslach Burnout and the Brief Cope scale (coping style), Positive and Negative Affect scale, respectively) within the concept of “dirty work” (ie occupations or specific work tasks societally viewed as physically, socially or morally dirty or tainted). Baran *et al* (2012) reported that 40.4% of staff “directly involved” with euthanasia reported the task to be the most negative part of their job; the majority, however, reported other issues to be the most negative, for example supervisor-staff conflict and low pay. Lopina *et al* (2012), interested in whether individual characteristics measured through the scales could predict turnover, had staff complete questionnaires on their first day of work and gathered turnover information two months later. At two months, 28% of staff had voluntarily left their positions and those with more access to job information before starting work (eg talking with current staff, visiting the shelter and observing work, asking questions during the interview) were less likely to leave their positions.

Other researchers have used surveys to quantify how shelter staff “feel” about euthanasia. White and Shawhan (1996) surveyed staff and managers on their emotional responses to euthanasia and concluded that individual or group counseling may help alleviate euthanasia-related stress. Rogelberg *et al* (2007a) reported a positive association between staff turnover and dog euthanasia rates. In addition, Rogelberg *et al* (2007b) solicited

recommendations through an open-ended survey question about how shelter management could support staff performing euthanasia. Recommendations included being supportive of staff, offering professional counseling, and rotating staff performing euthanasia. Through a survey to determine shelter managers' perceptions of how their staff react to performing euthanasia, Anderson *et al* (2013) reported that managers thought staff performing euthanasia were experiencing burn-out but did not believe this led to increased turnover.

The term "compassion fatigue", a concept that was coined in the nursing literature to describe burn-out due to traumatic experiences (Joinson 1992), has been used to discuss what some shelter staff experience in their work, usually performing euthanasia. Schneider and Roberts (2016) conducted interviews about "occupational stress", another conceptualized form of stress, with staff from seven USA and Canadian shelters and reported that in addition to euthanasia-related stress, staff discussed other stresses such as dealing with public perception of high euthanasia rates, negative encounters with human clients, and witnessing animal suffering, all of which contributed to what the researchers categorized as compassion fatigue. Levitt and Gezinski (2020) interviewed seven shelter staff about compassion fatigue and "resiliency", and Andrukonis and Protopopova (2020) expanded the concept of compassion fatigue further by using the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) to measure Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They also analyzed occupational stress and "moral injury" (an additional concept used to study trauma) using two scales (the Professional Quality of Life scale and the Moral Injury Event scale). They reported, for example, that "compassion satisfaction" (ie pleasure from helping others through work) was positively associated with live-release rates (ie

live animal outcomes divided by total outcomes). Finally, two other books focus on better ways to understand and assess compassion fatigue through surveys (Figley & Roop 2006) or offer strategies for clinicians treating compassion fatigue (Fournier & Mustful 2019).

A few researchers have written about how staff “cope” with euthanasia-related stress. Frommer and Arluke (1999) observed shelter operations and conducted open-ended interviews with shelter staff and people relinquishing animals to the shelter. They framed their descriptive analysis on a theorized psychological defense mechanism known as “blame displacement”; the description concluded that relinquishers tended to blame others (eg family members, landlords) for having to relinquish their pet, or they blamed shelter staff if staff were unable to find a home for the animal, while shelter staff blamed relinquishers for being irresponsible or they convinced themselves that euthanasia may be better for animals than being abandoned. Through interviews with individuals working in animal sheltering or animal control, Reeve *et al* (2004) used an event-based analysis to identify themes based on positive or negative “turning-point events”, which marked changes in how individuals felt about and coped with euthanasia-related work. Finally, Baran *et al* (2009) used an open-ended survey to ask experienced shelter staff how they would advise less-experienced staff to cope with performing euthanasia. The main advice derived from the thematic content analysis was to express feelings, to avoid forming attachments to animals, and to acknowledge that in some cases euthanasia may be the best option.

In addition to euthanasia-related issues, there is a small body of research on the presence of women in the sheltering and protection of animals, with a focus on how gender

influences the work they do. For example, Markovits and Queen (2009) surveyed and interviewed dog rescue organizations in Michigan, USA, and concluded, based on statistical and discourse analysis, that women's involvement in dog rescue was due in part to their sentimental, maternal and emotional nature. In a literature review focused on gender differences in human-animal interactions studies, Herzog (2007) noted the preponderance of women in animal protection work – a trend supported by demographic information in several studies (92% in Markovits & Queen 2009; 86% in Schabram & Maitlis 2017, and 100% in Schneider & Roberts 2016; see also Taylor 2010). In fact, Coulter and Fitzgerald (2019) described the “feminization of animal control work”, arguing that this work has become gendered because the altruistic nature of the work draws many women.

Relatedly, Schabram and Maitlis (2017) applied a theory about work that may be termed a “calling” - that is, work researchers characterize as a “meaningful beckoning toward activities that are morally, socially, and personally significant”. Applying this theory in an interview-based study, they identified different “calling paths” that shelter staff took as they were doing and were challenged by their work (including, for example, euthanasia). Earlier, Taylor (2010) theorized that shelter staff do “emotion talk” (ie expressing anger and compassion when speaking to staff about engaging with clients or caring for and euthanizing animals), in order to do “emotion work” (ie managing their emotions). Although Taylor (2010) described the study as grounded in actual participants' activities, the findings are abstracted into sociological theories about emotion management.

A few studies have addressed other aspects of shelter work. Surveys regarding animal intake procedures have studied disease awareness, screening and vaccination protocols (Steneroden *et al* 2011; Spindel *et al* 2013; Fagre *et al* 2017) and the various interpretations of intake categories such as “stray” (Vinic *et al* 2019). Surveys have also been used to understand the relationship between shelter staff and veterinarians (Laderman-Jones *et al* 2016) and to identify challenges of funding and facilities in dealing with horse abuse and investigations of neglect (Stull & Holcomb 2014). Arhant and Troxler (2014, 2017) used an approach-test (commonly used to test farm animals for their willingness to approach people) and a survey to assess the attitudes of shelter staff toward dogs and cats. Shelter staff had positive attitudes toward cats but there was no clear relationship between these attitudes and cat approach behaviour (Arhant & Troxler 2017). While staff generally had positive attitudes toward their work with dogs, the results of the approach-test proved difficult to interpret (Arhant & Troxler 2014).

### **3.4.1 Focus group discussion about the literature on shelter staff and officers**

The opening ethnographic excerpt provided above provides a glimpse into the everyday work activities shelter staff are engaged in. These activities did not deal with euthanizing animals and indeed, for the most part, everyday work responsibilities are absent in the research literature. Although the ideas in the literature were not mirrored in the shelter staff’s work, focus group participants were familiar with the concepts of “caring-killing paradox”, “compassion fatigue” and “calling work”. This suggests that such concepts are influential within

the animal sheltering discourse. However, shelter staff and officers spoke about these ideas slightly differently than senior administrators. For example, senior administrators talked about being unsure how to best support staff experiencing compassion fatigue caused by dealing repeatedly with people in difficult situations. They pointed out different programs and counseling that exist, but they expressed concern that the staff and officers did not find the resources helpful. In contrast, shelter staff and officers talked more about and gave examples of individual animals or people they encountered in their work that saddened or challenged them.

However, in contrast to the focus of the research literature, participants emphasized stress arising from making decisions about euthanasia rather than only conducting euthanasia. In the organization under study, where only veterinarians and veterinary technicians actually carry out euthanasia, the decision to euthanize involves different work activities for individuals located differently within the institution. Shelter staff described their work as assembling information about animals (eg medical treatments and behaviour recorded on forms and checklists) for administrators and others who then make decisions to euthanize. Senior administrators discussed the development and use of frameworks and protocols, such as the Asilomar Accords and Adoptability Guidelines (Gordon 2016) which provide detailed criteria for categorizing animals based on their physical and behavioural health. This framework is meant to facilitate decisions to euthanize animals, but senior administrators expressed concern that a lack of adherence to the protocols generates tension between staff and/or between departments. Officers in the focus groups expressed that they are almost entirely removed from the decision-making process. Their official work responsibility ends after they remove an

animal from a harmful situation and bring it to the shelter. The focus groups revealed that the *decision* to euthanize, involving coordinated work activities for individuals using institutional texts, was a more relevant topic for the participants than the actual act of euthanasia. Thus, in contrast to how euthanasia-related stress is generally discussed in the literature, the focus group participants were more concerned about the tensions between staff or between departments that are generated by euthanasia decisions.

### **3.5 Relinquishment of animals**

*“When people call or email the shelter and need to relinquish their cat, we usually don’t have room and so we ask if they have a friend or family member that could take it or if they can wait a few weeks. If they can wait, then we send them the relinquishment forms so we can learn a little about the cat and we put them on the relinquishment list so we can call them when we have space”. (Comments by a shelter staff member detailing some of the initial work involved with “animal relinquishment”).*

Because many animals are relinquished to shelters by their owners, the process of animal relinquishment is part of the everyday work of shelter and animal protection staff. Typically, staff meet with people who bring an animal to the shelter, assess the situation and take people through the process of formally transferring ownership of the animal (through a signature) to the organization. Relinquishment of animals has generated a large research literature; Coe *et al* (2014) noted 192 citations on the topic, 44.3% of which were primary

research articles published since 2006. Protopopova and Gunter (2017) reviewed research on interventions aimed at decreasing relinquishment of dogs by intervening with the animals (eg training dogs to perform simple behaviours) or adopters (eg providing training or educational materials). Researchers often call for a better understanding of relinquishment because many of these animals are euthanized (DiGiacomo *et al* 1998; Salman *et al* 1998; Weiss *et al* 2014; Chua *et al* 2017; Sandøe *et al* 2019).

Most primary research articles on companion-animal relinquishment use surveys to collect data from people relinquishing animals. Several authors used data from the Regional Shelter Survey, an epidemiological survey done under the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP) in 1993 in the USA. Members of the NCPSP and Salman *et al* (1998) designed a standardized survey including a list of 66 potential reasons for relinquishing animals plus five additional reasons that the study participants gave during data collection. Subsequently, a number of studies built on the original survey to analyze and group common relinquishment reasons (Salman *et al* 1998): relinquishment due to health and personal issues (Scarlett *et al* 1999), moving (New *et al* 1999), owner knowledge about and experience with animal behaviour (New *et al* 2000), and relinquishment specifically for euthanasia (Kass *et al* 2001). The literature focused almost entirely on the reasons for relinquishment, not on the workers who deal with people and their needs to relinquish.

In a somewhat different approach, DiGiacomo *et al* (1998) used open-ended interviews to avoid what they termed the “one-word excuses of relinquishers”. While also finding that moving and animal behaviour were common reasons for relinquishment, the research also



noted that relinquishers often procrastinate in making the decision to relinquish a companion animal. Other researchers have developed original surveys that aim to understand relinquishment reasons in greater depth. For example, Weiss *et al* (2014) used a 26-question survey and reported that the majority of people in their sample cited a change in their household related to people or housing, not the animal's behaviour, as influencing their decision to relinquish dogs. Using a survey based in part on previous research on relinquishment (eg Salman *et al* 1998; Scarlett *et al* 1999), Zito *et al* (2016) reported that half of cat owners had multiple reasons for relinquishing their cat related to accommodation, personal factors and financial factors, while most non-owners (ie people relinquishing unowned cats) brought found cats to shelters in the belief that the cat would have better welfare in the shelter. Finally, others have adapted and built upon questions from the 1993 NCPPSP survey and subsequent studies. Weng *et al* (2006) adapted questions from New *et al* (2000) to understand dog behaviour knowledge in a Taiwanese sample. They reported that more than 90% of participants thought that dogs misbehaved to "spite" owners, higher than the 45% reported in New *et al* (2000). Jacobetty *et al* (2020) adapted scales (eg "general-trust-in-pets" and "attitudes towards pet relinquishment") and relinquishment reasons reported in Salman *et al* (1998) to construct a "motives-for-pet-relinquishment scale". "Pragmatic attitudes" about relinquishment (ie rational, justifiable relinquishment) was correlated with past relinquishment (Jacobetty *et al* 2020).

Some research on relinquishment has relied on shelter records where staff have recorded the owner-reported "reason for relinquishment", often in databases that allow only a

single reason to be recorded. Cook and McCobb (2012) and Ellis *et al* (2017) analyzed USA and UK shelter records, respectively, and reported that common reasons for rabbit relinquishment recorded in the databases were inability to provide care (or lack of time) and having too many rabbits; rabbit behaviour was also included as a reason for relinquishment in 12.2% of cases (Ellis *et al* 2017). Casey *et al* (2009) grouped open-ended responses from a standardized cat relinquishment form in the UK and developed responses into themes of common relinquishment reasons; themes included people “finding” straying cats and “owner circumstances”, which included moving, owner death/illness or financial problems. Alberthsen *et al* (2016) reported that 91% of cat relinquishments in Australian Royal SPCA (RSPCA) records were attributed to what were categorized as “owner-related” reasons such as accommodation (ie pets not allowed) and having too many animals. Also in Australia, Hemy *et al* (2017) reported that 29% of adult dog relinquishments were due to owner-related reasons (eg moving, poor initial decision). Jensen *et al* (2020) reported that reasons for relinquishment were most often owner-related rather than “animal-related” for cats (75%) and dogs (74%), the most common reason being poor owner health. Finally, Shore *et al* (2003) telephoned individuals who, according to shelter records, had relinquished an animal due to “moving”. Most individuals (57 out of 67) confirmed they were moving, but also cited other factors such as landlord restrictions on pet ownership or pet size and 17 confirmed secondary relinquishment reasons mostly due to animal behaviour (Shore *et al* 2003).

Researchers have also looked for relationships between animal intake data (including relinquishment) and census-based socioeconomic data. Rinzin *et al* (2008) reported a positive

but weak tendency for more cats and dogs to be brought to shelters from areas categorized as socioeconomically deprived by the New Zealand Deprivation Index. In Georgia, USA, Dyer and Milot (2019) reported that dogs from areas ranked as high on the Social Vulnerability Index were at higher risk of being euthanized due to behaviours such as aggression and fearfulness which are often associated with social neglect. To investigate socioeconomic factors in areas of high dog intake Spencer *et al* (2017) generated themes based on observations and participant interview responses and reported, for instance, that 40% of participants believed pet abandonment was due to 1) inability to provide proper care for an animal and 2) uncontrolled breeding. Morris and Steffler (2011) compared relinquishment data and home-foreclosure data in California, USA, finding that while relinquishments and foreclosures were concentrated in the same areas, only one of the 248 relinquished dogs came from the address of a foreclosed house. Weng and Hart (2012), using relinquishment data from 2000 to 2010 in Chicago, determined that the economic recession of 2008-2010 led to an increase in the relinquishment of older dogs.

Cost and regulatory factors have also been studied in relation to relinquishment of animals. Based on a survey Dolan *et al* (2015) concluded that cost was associated with the relinquishment of dogs but that other factors were also involved. Similarly, Carter and Clark (2020) developed themes from interviews with people who had relinquished animals in Australia and reported, for example, that relinquishment due to cost was mentioned, but only in combination with another factor, and that individuals often attempted to rehome their animal before taking it to the shelter. Others have performed statistical analyses on animal

intake data over longer periods of time (eight to thirteen years) and concluded that a free (Kass *et al* 2013) or subsidized (Scarlett & Johnston 2012) spay/neuter program led to a decline in the number of cats brought into shelters. Although there are fewer companion animals in Denmark compared to the USA, Sandøe *et al* (2019) concluded that regulations that require dogs be registered and controlled have decreased the number of dogs relinquished.

### **3.5.1 Focus group discussion about the literature on relinquishment**

The opening ethnographic excerpt provided a glimpse into some of the initial work processes shelter staff engage in when working with people who wish to relinquish an animal. These processes and the tensions they may generate were absent from the research literature. Almost all the research literature on animal relinquishment aims to understand the reasons for relinquishment by surveying owners or analyzing reasons recorded in shelter databases, but there has been little study of the related work activities done by shelter staff or officers.

For shelter staff, the relinquishment process typically begins with phone calls from individuals who want to relinquish a pet. This requires shelter staff to listen, to evaluate the animal's situation, to determine if the shelter has available space to house the animal, and to decide whether other resources (eg animal training, social service referral) might help. Such calls often involve people who are struggling with complex social circumstances. Focus group participants described this work as challenging. After describing a call involving a particularly difficult situation for the person and animal, one participant said that doing this work sometimes felt like managing a "crisis hotline".

For animal protection officers, work involves visiting people at their residence because the Provincial Call Centre received a report alleging abuse or neglect. Officers described how in these situations they follow applicable laws to require compliance, sometimes provide resources for animals (bedding, food dishes) so that people can address problems, or refer people to a low-cost or free veterinary clinic. Their work is focused mostly on keeping animals and people together if the animals' "distress" could be relieved.

The work of both shelter staff and officers is also restricted by the need to maintain sufficient space in shelters as determined by the Capacity for Care (C4C) program (Koret Shelter Medicine Program 2021). C4C calculates the optimal shelter animal population based on available resources and other factors, and by priorities of the organization, for example to keep some kennels available for strays or possible neglect or cruelty cases. As a result, staff sometimes have to tell individuals wishing to relinquish animals that they must wait until space becomes available. Thus, according to the focus group participants, how the topic of relinquishment is handled in the literature seems to have little relevance to the everyday "relinquishment work" that shelter staff do.

Noting that some relinquishment research relies on data from shelter records, shelter staff also noted that the databases they use in their work have limitations that could affect the research. The database category "stray", for instance, does not necessarily denote a homeless animal. Staff are required to assign this category to animals that people abandon outside the shelter, and also to animals that people bring to the shelter after finding them unattended, unsure if they are owned. Staff also noted that there is no database category for the increasing

number of animals relinquished by citizens who believe they have “rescued” them from online sources (eg Craigslist, Kijiji) where animals are given away or sold.

### **3.6 Length of stay in shelters**

*“Henry’s been in shelter for 32 days now and I was wondering if we could put something on the website, generate pictures saying we have this kind of dog here available for adoption?”*

This quotation is from a daily staff meeting that included a brainstorming session on how staff might facilitate adoption of a dog named Henry whose length of stay (LOS, defined as the number of days between entering and leaving the shelter) had greatly exceeded the average LOS of 11 days. Minimizing LOS emerged as a key feature of the animal sheltering literature, and research has conceptualized the topic in two main ways. One acknowledges that many animals are euthanized if they are not adopted promptly and investigates LOS (or live-release rate) to reduce euthanasia by increasing adoptions (Brown *et al* 2013; Protopopova *et al* 2014; Gunter *et al* 2016; Patronek & Crowe 2018; Hawes *et al* 2018). The other, noting decreasing rates of euthanasia in shelters, is focused on reducing LOS because long periods in a shelter can contribute to physical and mental health problems for animals (Kay *et al* 2018; Voslášková *et al* 2019; review by Protopopova 2016). In either case, the goal of the research is generally to identify how shelters can adopt more animals in less time.

Many researchers have tried to identify adopter “preferences” and other factors that may decrease LOS, often focusing on “phenotypic” traits of animals such as breed group, sex,

size, coat colour and age as listed in shelter databases. For example, Lepper *et al* (2002), Brown *et al* (2013), Brown and Morgan (2015), Kay *et al* (2018) and Voslášková *et al* (2019) used statistical analyses to compare animal traits to LOS, live-release rate (Patronek & Crowe 2018) or general outcomes of adopted, euthanized or transferred (Carini *et al* 2020). A common finding from such analyses is that younger dogs have a shorter LOS than adults (Brown *et al* 2013; Žák *et al* 2015; Patronek & Crowe 2018). The evidence linking LOS to coat colour is more mixed. Two studies reported that black dogs had a longer LOS than white or yellow dogs (Voslášková *et al* 2019; Kay *et al* 2018), and one reported that white cats had a longer LOS than black cats (Miller *et al* 2019). However, Patronek and Crowe (2018) reported no difference in live-release rate for different coloured dogs, and both Sinski *et al* (2016) and Carini *et al* (2020) concluded that coat colour was not a significant predictor of outcome (adoption, euthanasia, or transfer) for either dogs or cats. Studies often conclude that understanding shelter “context” and adopter preference is important (Brown *et al* 2013; Carini *et al* 2020).

Some authors have related LOS to other information in shelter databases, often using statistical analysis to interpret findings. Noting the source of animals, Notaro (2004) reported that animals brought to shelters by animal control officers had a longer LOS than animals brought by the public. Hawes *et al* (2018) used categorical information from animal intake (eg body condition, health problems) to determine what influenced LOS for older animals. Patronek and Crowe (2018) reported that dogs in foster or dogs returned after an unsuccessful adoption had increased odds of live release while Kay *et al* (2018) determined that dogs in shelters

located in larger human population centres had faster adoption times than those in smaller centres.

Other approaches have also been used to study LOS. Protopopova *et al* (2014) video-recorded dogs and developed an ethogram (ie a list of defined animal behaviours) to identify the types of behaviours in the kennel that influenced LOS; they concluded that LOS was higher for dogs leaning on the wall, facing away from the front of the kennel and standing. Other authors have investigated aspects of shelter organization. Using statistical analysis of Canadian shelter data, Janke *et al* (2017) and Karsten *et al* (2017) concluded that implementation of the C4C program decreased LOS for cats. A case study report about C4C implementation in Canada provided additional insights by asking and reporting what shelter staff considered worked well (eg additional cage space for cats) and did not work well (eg visitors being bitten when staff were not present in cat adoption rooms – Humane Canada 2018). Weiss *et al* (2013) reported improved live-release rates for cats and dogs in ASPCA shelters that had “partnerships” with other animal protection and rescue agencies, although they did not investigate causation and did not include details about the actual work processes and activities of the partnership. In addition, Abrams *et al* (2020) reported that dogs in a New York shelter were more likely to be adopted if they received the antidepressant trazadone.

Finally, a few researchers have investigated how potential adopters “perceive” animal photos, profiles and breed labels. Using data available through existing online pet-adoption platforms some authors have explored how dog photos (Lampe & Witte 2015; Nakamura *et al* 2020) or written profiles (Nakamura *et al* 2019) affected speed of adoption. Rix *et al* (2021)



concluded that cat profiles written in the third person (rather than the first person) were associated with shorter LOS, while Nakamura *et al* (2019) focused on specific words used in dog profiles. For example, Staffordshire Terriers and Jack Russel Terriers had the shortest LOS when the word “gentle” was used. Interestingly, Lampe and Witte (2015) reported that dogs photographed outdoors were adopted more quickly while Nakamura *et al* (2020) reported that dogs photographed in a kennel setting were adopted more quickly. Gunter *et al* (2016) designed a study that used shelter database records and an experiment which showed members of the public photographs of pit-bull-type dogs and “lookalike” dogs with and without labels to identify the breed. They reported that a label of “pit-bull” could increase LOS because of a negative perception of the breed. Finally, Cohen *et al* (2020) examined shelter records before and after the removal of breed labels and reported that removal of breed labels for dogs decreased LOS.

### **3.6.1 Focus group discussion about the literature on length of stay**

The opening ethnographic excerpt for the topic of LOS provided a glimpse of an actual concern expressed by a shelter staff member about an individual animal that had an extended LOS in the shelter. Noting that much of the research concentrates on animal characteristics that influence average LOS for groups of animals, focus group participants identified other features of their work not covered in the literature that increased LOS. This work was completed mostly by shelter staff and included work they described as “veterinary treatment” and “behavioural modification” of animals.

Regarding veterinary treatment work, both shelter staff and senior administrators noted that the need to follow protocols for veterinary interventions (eg treating ringworm) or referring animals to specialists took time and thus increased LOS for animals. Regarding behavioural modification work, senior administrators noted that animals currently being relinquished seem to have more behavioural problems than in years past yet there are not enough trained staff to carry out behavioural modification. Nonetheless, shelter staff reported feeling responsible and sometimes compelled to do behavioural modification work with animals so they could be adopted more quickly, for instance by sitting with fearful animals, bringing food rewards so the animals would associate people with positive occurrences, and habituating dogs to wearing collars and leashes. Officers also recognized that staff are limited in doing behavioural modification work, and this influenced their efforts to try and keep animals with their owners, when possible, for example by donating supplies and referring owners to low-cost veterinary care.

Finally, shelter staff and officers identified a need for research on how transfer programs affect animal behaviour and health. Transfer programs aim to decrease LOS by moving animals to larger cities with more adopters, but also involve additional work activities like preparing kennels, performing medical intake procedures and moving animals around within the shelter to accommodate those with special needs.

### 3.7 Discussion

In this review, I attempted to identify how approaches and ways of thinking seen in the research literature have shaped the current understanding of animal sheltering, and how the research literature is relevant (or not) to problems and challenges discussed by people doing the actual work of animal sheltering.

The growing literature on euthanasia-related stress, which has received much attention since the 1990s, shows that this topic remains a strong focus of research framed by concepts like compassion fatigue and the caring-killing paradox. Scientists are now using established social-science research methods such as standardized questionnaires and psychometric constructs to build on prior knowledge, with the proposed aim of understanding the phenomenon and its effects on staff. When Arluke (1991) and Arluke and Sanders (1996) began to report study findings, euthanasia of shelter animals was very common in North America, but it is now declining sharply. In Canada, for example, the percentage of animals euthanized in shelters declined between 1993 and 2019 from 30 to 10 percent of dogs and from 60 to 15 percent of cats (Humane Canada 2021). In the USA, a survey undertaken in 1973 reported that 13.5 million animals were euthanized (Rowan & Kartal 2018) and estimates remained high in the late 1980's and early 1990's (Bartlett *et al* 2005); a more recent estimate, however, reported that 920,000 cats and dogs are currently euthanized each year (ASPCA 2021a). The continued strong focus on euthanasia-related stress may be an example of how, once a topic has become established in the research literature, it can continue to be a focus of study even if the need declines or changes.

Focus group participants described their euthanasia-related problems in different ways than what has been represented in the literature, but they were nonetheless fluent in the language of euthanasia-related stress and compassion fatigue. They used these terms in relating their own experiences, thus showing that the concepts are well established in practical animal sheltering. Indeed, for Smith, topics within the academic discourse also circulate in institutions, and people actively participate in them, for example through their use of texts and language in their everyday work (Smith 2005 p 224). However, for the participants – working in an institution where the modest number of euthanasias are done by veterinary staff – the challenges are now different. For focus group participants, the stress associated with euthanasia was linked more with making, discussing and sometimes defending the decision to euthanize rather than conducting euthanasia routinely. To better understand these tensions, therefore, my research focuses on the actual work processes that contribute to the outcomes of relinquishment, adoption and euthanasia.

In line with IE, more detailed attention to the actual work involved with an animal's institutional pathway that results in euthanasia might also give more specific insights. Arluke (1991) recognized two distinct roles that are involved in euthanasia – the “holder” who controls the animal and the “shooter” who administers the injection – but the bureaucratic processes and the work done along the animal's pathway to euthanasia remained unexplored. Baran *et al* (2012) also understood that euthanasia is a work process noting the additional “roles” of selecting animals for euthanasia and confirming death. These authors suggested that these specific work procedures may lead to quite different responses and levels of stress. In this

research, however, euthanasia is categorized as a distinct “episode” of work – disconnected from the series of happenings and decisions that have been made along the way. Moreover, most studies have identified shelter staff simply as those who “participate in” (White & Shawhan 1996), are “involved with” (Reeve *et al* 2004, 2005), “perform” (Rogelberg *et al* 2007a; Anderson *et al* 2013), are “directly involved with” (Baran *et al* 2009) or have “direct or indirect contact with” (Lopina *et al* 2012) euthanasia. Attention to the actual work activities, rather than these generic categories, could lead to greater insight into how tensions and conflict may arise.

While most existing research on compassion fatigue in shelters is focused on euthanasia, focus group participants noted the emotional toll on staff and officers who deal with *people* in “distress”, for example, as they decide whether to relinquish animals. This often involves listening to people and referring them to any available services – tasks that are more related to social work than to traditional animal sheltering yet are important for the widely accepted priority of keeping people and animals together (eg LaVallee *et al* 2017; Baker *et al* 2018). Some research has discussed shelter staff interacting with relinquishers (DiGiacomo *et al* 1998; Frommer & Arluke 1999; Irvine 2003) and with the public (Schneider & Roberts 2016) but the focus has been on negative interactions. Thus, research could shift to examine the actual work staff and officers do to keep people and their animals together including coordinating and collaborating with social service agencies that may also be involved.

Only a few research studies on shelter staff have applied the methods of ethnography rather than relying on questionnaires and scales. Taylor (2010) used observations and interviews with shelter staff to understand how they expressed emotions. However, unlike an

IE approach that stays firmly connected to happenings and experiences, these authors analyzed the findings within sociological theories about “emotion management”. Irvine (2003) made ethnographic observations of the relinquishment process and conducted in-depth interviews with people relinquishing animals. She pointed out that the current understanding of relinquishment may be limited by research relying on information from standardized intake forms or a drop-down list of relinquishment reasons in a database (following, for example, Salman *et al* 1998; New *et al* 1999; Kass *et al* 2001) or if the records allow people to report only a single reason for relinquishment. Irvine’s ethnographic misgivings about the accuracy of the current knowledge about relinquishment is supported by a review by Protopopova and Gunter (2017) who noted that much of the understanding about dog relinquishment has been influenced by the 1993 NCPPSP survey. As noted by Levitt and Gezinski (2020), future research should expand to include other aspects of animal shelter work beyond euthanasia “to gain a more holistic understanding of [animal shelter workers] experiences and needs”.

In discussing relinquishment, the focus group participants also suggested that understanding may be limited by the prevailing reliance on shelter data which may not have been collected with research purposes in mind. For example, the term “stray” in shelter data is sometimes used for various categories of animals (Zito *et al* 2016; Vinic *et al* 2019). Shelter staff reported that owners often express multiple reasons for relinquishing their animal, and it is difficult to select a single reason as required by the database. “Following up with relinquishers”, as done by Shore *et al* (2003) and Irvine (2003), could also help overcome the limitations inherent in the use of shelter records for research.

Like research on relinquishment, conventional statistical research on LOS may also be limited by heavy reliance on shelter database records. Shelter records are typically collected to track average LOS for the purpose of generating annual reports and information for the organization. The variables recorded, and hence used by researchers, may not be the most important determinants of LOS, and without specific training, staff may not assess some variables – such as breed and coat colour – in a consistent way (Kay *et al* 2018; Patronek & Crowe 2018; Carini *et al* 2020).

Focus group participants clearly appreciated LOS research that could help shelters achieve more prompt adoption but noted that they must follow protocols related to animal health (eg treating fungal infections, collecting samples for testing) and these practices increase LOS for animals in shelters. The large “shelter medicine” literature on prevention and treatment of disease mainly reports animal-based outcomes (eg upper respiratory infection in Gourkow *et al* 2013 and enteric parasites in Villeneuve *et al* 2015). An alternative approach to developing knowledge about LOS and animal health would be to shift attention to the everyday work tasks of staff involved with the treatment and prevention of diseases.

Research on LOS has tended to emphasize adopter preferences and effective ways to present animals to potential adopters. Focus group participants, however, emphasized the increasing number of animals with behavioural problems that prevent prompt adoption and require the extra work of behaviour modification. Behaviours that need to be modified are formally identified through behavioural “assessments”, but the validity and utility of such assessments is debated (Patronek & Bradley 2016). The actual work involved in performing

such assessments is less clear although Mornement *et al* (2010) noted through interviews that shelter staff thought the assessment could be improved by assessing more behaviours and having more time for the assessment.

The work of conducting behavioural modification in shelters has been explored by some researchers (eg Orihel *et al* 2005 and Orihel & Fraser 2008 on inter-dog aggression; Mohan-Gibbons *et al* 2012 on food guarding; Marder 2013 on behavioural pharmacology), and animal sheltering organizations have created training materials on this topic (eg ASPCA 2021b). Recent research has reported that fearful animals from hoarding situations require more time from shelter staff (McMillan *et al* 2016; Strong *et al* 2019). A more nuanced understanding of the actual work involved with behavioural modification (eg how behavioural modification is done, by whom, the training required) could give insight into how shelter staff monitor the progress animals make toward becoming adoption candidates and how they make “adoptability” decisions about animals in care.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Research on animal sheltering is organized around a few key theories and frameworks. Many studies apply high-level concepts (compassion fatigue, euthanasia-related stress) and attempt to quantify these through standardized scales. Studies on animal relinquishment often use standardized questionnaires or shelter database records to understand the reasons why people relinquish animals. Studies on length of stay commonly rely on shelter database records



to understand animal characteristics that increase time spent in the shelter. The contribution of IE to developing knowledge about animal welfare in animal sheltering practices will:

- Focus on the actual work practices of shelter staff and officers to describe what is difficult and challenging in their work (with both people and animals) and then tracking the social organization of those tensions. This would allow insight into what people are actually *doing* and *experiencing* and thus complement current approaches that theorize about experiences using concepts like compassion fatigue.
- Map and track the actual work involved with making decisions to euthanize and discovering how those decisions enter the work practices of shelter staff.
- Describe what happens when animals are relinquished and the processes that owners, staff and animals are subject to.
- While metrics regarding LOS are useful, they are a crude form of knowledge insofar as they overlook the work processes and circumstances that shelter staff and animals are drawn into that may offer more insight into the various lengths of stay such as that of Henry (in the vignette) whose stay far exceeds the average.

## Chapter 4: Working with “orange” animals: The social organization of animal shelter work

### 4.1 Introduction

Prompt adoption is a central aim of animal shelters. The longer animals stay in the shelter environment the more likely they are to become ill or develop a behavioural problem (Protopopova 2016; Wagner *et al* 2018). Further, shelter facilities have been designed for short-term stays and do not adequately provide for the physical and behavioural needs of animals in the long term (Attard *et al* 2013). Prompt animal adoption is also considered a measure of shelter efficiency and performance. For example, the average LOS for groups of animals (eg dogs, cats) is often reported in annual reports (eg BCSPCA 2017; Montreal SPCA 2019; Winnipeg Humane Society 2019) or broadly as part of national animal shelter statistics (Humane Canada 2019).

Achieving a short LOS for shelter animals has not always been a central focus in animal sheltering. In North America in the 1970s, concern and media reports about pet “overpopulation” (ie when the number of stray, free-roaming, abandoned or unwanted animals exceeds the number of people wishing to adopt an animal) and high rates of euthanasia led veterinary and humane stakeholder organizations to hold meetings and discuss how to manage the problem (Rowan & Wilson 1985; Salman *et al* 1998). These organizations developed and implemented a multi-pronged approach of legislation (eg licensing requirements for dogs), owner education and pet sterilization to decrease pet overpopulation. Over time, these measures, in addition to increases in shelter animal adoption, greatly decreased the number of

animals euthanized in shelters (Protopopova 2016; Rowan & Kartal 2018; Humane Canada 2021; ASPCA 2021a).

Noting it as a problem when animals spend long periods in shelters, researchers have aimed to identify risk factors for LOS, usually by analyzing relationships between average LOS and animal characteristics such as age, sex, breed and coat colour (eg Brown *et al* 2013; Patronek & Crowe 2018; Voslářová *et al* 2019). The goal of such research is to determine how shelters can promote adoption of certain animals (eg older animals) or better understand adopter preferences. This research typically relies on categories of animals and calculates measures of central tendency (eg mean, median) to report LOS and as such does not include details about exceptional animals that spend extended periods in the shelter.

This chapter begins with the case of a dog named Henry that spent an extended period (60 days) in the shelter and was eventually euthanized – the opposite outcome of what animal shelters aim to achieve. Henry had behavioural problems and thus was categorized through a standardized behavioural assessment as an “orange” dog. Henry’s story is an entry point into animal sheltering work processes and coordination that show that concerns about the well-being of an animal with a long LOS like Henry (ie being in a stressful shelter environment for an extended period), and the concerns that frontline shelter staff have for these animals that they work with daily, can be at odds with institutional processes and priorities which are designed for efficient shelter management and prompt adoption of most animals as reflected in a low average LOS. In this chapter I present and explore a series of tensions that arise in the everyday

work that frontline shelter staff do to manage “orange” animals like Henry – work that complicates the animals’ pathways to adoption.

#### **4.1.1 Ethnographic account**

The account below is based on observations of everyday frontline shelter staff (animal care and customer service staff) and their work with Henry. This account illustrates some of Henry’s difficulties as an animal with behavioural problems who has spent an extended period in the shelter. This account is also used to show that although frontline staff expressed concern about Henry’s difficulties, their work activities are organized mostly to manage the population of animals in the shelter and to promote prompt adoption of most animals, whereas the special needs of animals such as Henry may not be well met.

*I met Henry, a 6-year-old muscular American Staffordshire Terrier mix, on June 30, a few days after he was transferred from another shelter branch. Henry had been “seized” from a property by animal protection officers approximately three weeks earlier. Notes on Henry’s file made by frontline staff indicate that he has been observed performing behaviours that indicate he is stressed. He barks at people as they pass his kennel. This, and the fact that Henry seems to bark less and be more comfortable when someone sits with him in his kennel, lead frontline staff to believe that Henry has some form of “separation anxiety”. In a formal behavioural “assessment” that frontline staff completed for Henry, he was categorized as an “orange” dog. Henry’s main behavioural problem is “dog reactivity”: hearing and*

*seeing other dogs in the shelter or on walks causes him to bark and sometimes lunge at the dogs.*

*A clipboard attached to the front of Henry's kennel includes his "profile" plus forms and checklists that frontline staff and volunteers use to record observations of Henry. Someone has crossed out the phrase "dog aggressive" on an observation form and written "dog reactive". With Henry categorized as an "orange" dog, frontline staff monitor Henry's behaviour and discuss his progress in staff meetings. Additionally, they do some work with Henry on his behavioural problems and provide written notes to volunteers about how they can help, for example, by using treats to redirect Henry's attention when he sees another dog, spending extra time with Henry in his kennel after walks and that he should only be walked by confident walkers. Recorded observations are mixed but mostly positive, with notes like "great walk!", "sweet boy!", "no concerns" and a few notes like "difficulty focusing after seeing another dog".*

*On July 5, during the regular morning meeting, frontline staff discuss tasks that need to be completed that day in addition to regular feeding, walking and cleaning duties (for example, a behavioural assessment for a newly arrived dog and scheduling veterinary appointments for two other dogs). They then discuss Henry's situation. Frontline staff are concerned because Henry has been in shelter care for a total of 32 days, much longer than the 11-day average. Frontline staff believe Henry is adoptable and just needs to find an adopter who can help him manage his*

*behaviour, but they are also worried that Henry is becoming increasingly frustrated in the shelter. They make plans to move Henry to the other side of the shelter where there is less foot traffic from staff, volunteers and members of the public, and they discuss featuring Henry online or on social media to help attract an adopter.*

*On July 12, I meet a volunteer who tells me excitedly that Henry has an adoption application. However, the excitement is short lived as the next day I learn that the application “fell through”. The days continue to pass, and frontline staff note it is becoming increasingly difficult for Henry to redirect his focus after seeing dogs on walks; some volunteers share that they are no longer comfortable walking Henry.*

*On August 2, 60 days after being seized, shelter administrators decide to euthanize Henry because his reactivity to other dogs was too severe for him to live safely in the community. During the morning meeting on August 3, frontline staff take a moment to express their sadness about Henry and that they were unable to find him a home. They then turn their attention to the list of tasks to complete that day.*

#### **4.1.2 Frame for the chapter problematic**

The account of Henry’s stay in the shelter contains glimpses of frontline shelter staff work (eg transferring animals, performing behavioural assessments, daily animal care) that will be recognizable to people who work in shelters. As well, Henry’s story as an “orange” animal (ie a dog with challenging behaviours that needs to be “managed”), and staff’s sadness when Henry is ultimately euthanized, are likely familiar to frontline staff and others involved in animal

sheltering. The way that Henry's life in the shelter unfolded generates questions about how frontline staff spend their time and what directs the day-to-day events in the shelter. It also raises questions about how a dog such as Henry, who has been "rescued" and is initially affectionate and responsive, became increasingly harder for staff to manage. The ethnographic data reference the assessments and texts that organized what happened to Henry. The data illuminate concerns that are generated for frontline staff when a dog stays in the shelter for a long time, and how such cases are upsetting when the dog is euthanized. It has clues about the "adoption" and "behavioural modification" work that frontline staff and volunteers were engaged in. In summary, this account provides an entry point to explore the series of tensions that arise in the everyday work of frontline staff in managing "orange" animals like Henry and that complicate the animals' pathway to adoption. The tensions centre around: conducting behavioural assessments, doing behavioural modification and monitoring and anticipating kennel use.

#### **4.2 Conducting behavioural assessments**

*From the account: In a formal behavioural "assessment" that frontline staff completed for Henry, he was categorized as an "orange" dog.*

Like all dogs over five months of age Henry underwent a standardized behavioural assessment in the shelter after receiving a medical intake examination. The assessment tool uses metrics to categorize dogs based on their behaviour; specifically the dogs are given a score based on their 1) aggression towards people, 2) aggression towards dogs, 3) excitableness, 4)

fearfulness, and 5) anxiety when left alone. These behaviour scores are then used to determine the colour category that designates the dog's "suitability for rehoming". Colours include Green, Yellow, Orange and Red (other assessments use numbers instead of colors to categorize dogs). A Green dog can be adopted to a "lifestyle match" (eg a young, athletic dog would be matched with a person who enjoys walking or hiking). A Yellow dog can be adopted to a "lifestyle match" and with behaviour handouts and owner education specific to the dog. An Orange dog cannot be adopted except after behaviour modification (in shelter or foster) and with "specific matching", behaviour handouts and potentially post-adoption support. A Red dog cannot be adopted because it poses a high risk to people and is at risk for poor welfare.

One day, I observed frontline animal care staff member Blake perform an assessment. Blake explained:

*"The assessment helps us know about special considerations for placing the dog in a type of home. But I don't want to put up too many barriers for this dog to getting adopted, and we want to decrease barriers for people who want to adopt animals".*

Blake's work, as they have come to understand it, is trying to find a balance between providing important information so that adopters can make an "informed decision" without putting up too many "barriers" to adoption. Blake explains that when they started work at the shelter, they received training on the Humane Society of the United States *Adopters Welcome* program (HSUS 2021a). This program, commonly used in North American shelters including the BCSPCA, aims to decrease barriers for people adopting animals (eg removal of specific housing requirements) and the program promotes strategies to engage with potential adopters openly



in a conversational way to discuss adoption options. This program aims to increase the adoption of animals and encourage adopters to see the sheltering organization as a source of support and information.

A few weeks earlier when performing Henry's assessment, Blake identified a few "special considerations": Henry was "dog reactive" (he reacts negatively to other dogs by barking and sometimes lunging at them), had a strong "prey drive" (he fixates on and tries to chase small animals like squirrels or cats) and showed "separation anxiety" (he barks, whines and seems anxious when left alone). Thus, on Henry's online profile which can be viewed by people interested in dog adoption, Blake included that Henry "needs experienced and understanding owners" and two boxes next to "no cats" and "no dogs" are checked.

These special considerations require "specific matching" (following the "orange" dog categorization described above) and are potential barriers to Henry being adopted quickly. While it may be easy to find an adopter who does not have other animals, finding an "experienced and understanding owner" may be more difficult. To find such owners, frontline staff review adoption applications (see Appendix E – dog adoption application) and discuss applications with the shelter administrators, animal care staff and customer service staff in daily meetings. Frontline staff focus on how applicants complete specific parts of the application including a list of "problems you are willing to work on" and a series of questions about previous dog ownership. Regarding Henry's application that "fell through", Blake had reviewed the application and telephoned the potential adopters. After this communication, Blake reported that the potential owners, while willing to work on Henry's dog reactivity, had

children and so were nervous about adopting Henry especially after Blake explained Henry's history, behaviour and strong prey drive. Henry's special considerations thus made it harder for staff to find an adopter and potentially a more difficult and lengthy process compared to dogs with few or no special considerations.

The work of behavioural assessments serves not only to support matching the dog to a new home but is also required by shelter administrators as a form of accountability: a record of the animal's behaviour that could be referenced if there is an incident. This accountability to prevent "incidents" involves several components. First, volunteers are not allowed to interact with dogs until they are assessed by an animal care staff member. Second, dogs with dog reactivity or "mouthy" or "jumpy" behaviours that could unintentionally harm a human must be handled only by frontline staff and by certain experienced volunteers designated by staff. Third, behavioural assessment records, medical examination documents and all observation forms used to track an animal's behaviour while in shelter are kept for seven years and could be reviewed if the animal was adopted and then returned or if there was an incident with the dog (eg harming a child or another animal) after adoption.

Assessing animals by using the standardized behavioural assessment tool is a required task before a dog can be adopted into the community even if the dog is well known to staff as affectionate and trainable and already has a potential adopter. This was reflected when I observed another frontline staff member, Taylor, perform an assessment for a dog that had recently arrived at the shelter but had not yet been formally assessed. Taylor explained:

*“We have a potential adopter for this dog, but we don’t want to adopt an adult dog without having done an assessment, so we at least have something on record about the behaviours we saw”.*

What made this work seemingly redundant was that Taylor knew that this dog was extremely friendly: a “Green” dog. The approximately 30 minutes taken to gather the materials, complete the assessment and enter information into the database confirmed what Taylor already knew. Even though frontline staff had met and cared for the dog for the past few days, knew it was friendly and knew that no behavioural problems would arise in the assessment, Taylor was required to complete the official assessment to have a record of observed behaviours.

Conducting behavioural assessments for dogs not immediately categorized as “Red” (eg a dog that had seriously harmed or killed another animal or bitten a human without provocation) is part of the social organization of shelter practices and is specifically linked to two main institutional priorities noted above. The first focuses on identifying problem behaviours that would be important for a potential adopter to know before deciding to take an animal home. The second priority is linked to accountability and litigation: the institutional responsibility to protect volunteers and community members from potential harm and to protect the organization from legal action. The shelter must have a record of each dog’s observed behaviours. These institutional priorities cause tension for animals like Henry that have been categorized as “orange”. Below I analyze how frontline staff work is organized in cases when problem behaviours have been identified through assessments, information gathered during medical examinations and shelter intake procedures, and while providing daily

care for animals. Such cases arise within the social organization of institutional goals that aim to facilitate prompt adoption for most animals and provide basic care for animals in the shelter efficiently.

#### 4.3 Doing behavioural modification

*From the account: With Henry categorized as an “orange” dog, frontline staff monitor Henry’s behaviours and discuss his progress in staff meetings. Additionally, they do some work with Henry on his behavioural problems and provide written notes to volunteers about how they can help, for example, by using treats to redirect Henry’s attention when he sees another dog, spending extra time with Henry in his kennel after walks and that he should only be walked by confident walkers.*

It was because of Henry’s “dog reactivity” and “separation anxiety” that he was categorized as an “orange” dog. According to information included on the behavioural assessment form, “orange” dogs (my underline for emphasis):

*“Cannot be adopted until sufficient & appropriate behaviour modification is provided at the shelter or in foster” so that [the] adopter can take over treatment at home. Must not pose a risk to people or other animals. Provide specific matching, handouts & demonstration of appropriate handling. May need post adoption support”.*

Here the institutional formulation of “risk” and the work that the form is doing as part of an accountability system begin to become apparent, where the conditions for an adoption are

linked to evidence of “sufficient and appropriate” work with the animal. Such work is linked into an established set of standards and guidelines that are expected to support BCSPCA work.

In addition to this direction included on the behavioural assessment, the Asilomar Accords (AA) and Adoptability Guidelines (Gordon 2016) provide more standardization and structure for animals such as Henry who have been assessed as “orange” and designated as requiring behavioural modification or other treatment. The AA were originally developed in 2004 by animal sheltering representatives in the USA and include standardized criteria for categorizing animals based on their physical and behavioural health. Animals can be categorized as: Healthy, Treatable-Rehabilitatable, Treatable-Manageable or Unhealthy-Untreatable (Gordon 2016). Based on these categories, the AA Adoptability Guidelines were created by the BCSPCA to provide additional details about categorizing animals and to integrate the behavioural assessment colour categories into the health-based criteria. While there is no formal behavioural assessment for cats, they are informally classified into colour categories based on their physical, emotional and behavioural health (Gordon 2016). The AA Adoptability Guidelines are an institutional text used in BCSPCA shelters. Frontline staff consult the text as a reference when questions arise about the adoptability of animals in care. The guidelines state the following about “orange” dogs specifically with “aggression towards dogs” (my underline for emphasis):

“Dogs assessed orange require in shelter behaviour modification & evaluation of progress before adoption. They already have behaviour problems & are at high risk

*for poor welfare. Treatment is required to prevent return and/or increased severity of problem. Dogs assessed orange will need to be managed. Decision to provide behaviour modification depends on Society's ability to match needed resources with problem, for example, foster with knowledge, experience, and/or trainer with expertise. History and in shelter behaviour/progress will help with decision to place orange zone dogs".*

According to the behavioural assessments used in BCSPCA shelters, which are built into and aligned with the AA Adoptability Guidelines built on the original AA used by many North American shelters, Henry is a dog that "needs to be managed".

Staff understand the implications of the AA categories and behavioural assessment colours, and this knowledge influences the choice of words that circulate in their work. Words, generated through the form-filling activities that staff complete daily, enter into ordinary conversations among shelter workers. On Henry's profile clipped to the front of his kennel, for example, the word "aggressive" was crossed out by someone and replaced with "reactive". Frontline staff seem to use the terms "aggressive" and "reactive" somewhat interchangeably in conversations about animals, but they know that certain words influence an animal's chance of adoption and that being "aggressive" may be seen as a more serious behavioural problem than being "reactive". This is one way that staff are participating in what Smith (2005 p 105) calls a "text-reader conversation", that is, the way in which people respond to and take up the form in their work.

For Henry's adoption process to proceed, in addition to needing an appropriate home and owners who can manage Henry's "reactivity", Henry requires "behavioural modification and evaluation". Moreover, frontline staff and administrators frequently remarked that the type of animals they encounter today compared with years past are "harder" animals, meaning that more animals have some type of behavioural or veterinary problem and need treatment before they can be adopted. But how is behavioural modification accomplished?

When frontline staff said that they were "doing behavioural modification" with animals, I observed them doing a variety of different activities which seemed to be "added on" to their many other formal job responsibilities. Frontline staff seemed to squeeze this work (to establish a relationship with an animal, to modify its behaviour) in among their other day-to-day duties. In Henry's case, his official behavioural modification program included "counter conditioning" which aimed to change Henry's typical behavioural response of barking and lunging at other dogs. Counter conditioning is the process of a person exposing Henry to another dog at a distance, and then giving him a food reward when he looks at the dog, gradually allowing Henry to see the other dog as a "good" thing. Using counter conditioning over time and with repetition can change an animal's behaviour to elicit a positive rather than negative response. After staff or volunteers did such activities with Henry and other "orange" animals they recorded what they did, and for how long, on the behavioural modification observation form (Appendix F) and daily observation form (Appendix G). Staff would read these forms and discuss animals and their progress in daily meetings.

Henry's planned behavioural modification also included avoiding encounters with other dogs during walks. This was sometimes difficult to achieve because members of the public regularly walked their dogs near the shelter and so staff had to avoid certain areas. Before staff walked Henry, they would also take a few minutes to move the other shelter dogs to the back of their kennels so Henry could pass by without seeing them. Additionally, frontline staff endeavored to spend time sitting with Henry in his kennel during their breaks as he appeared to enjoy being around people. A decision was also made to kennel him away from other dogs in an area with less foot traffic. According to the frontline staff, these activities were all part of "doing behavioural modification" with Henry and other animals, aimed at improving behaviours, decreasing stress in the shelter and facilitating adoption. This work took time and resources, even for the simple task of walking Henry, and "doing behavioural modification" seemed to be done mostly when frontline staff found extra time while doing their regular everyday work.

The daily complement of shelter staff included 6-8 people. "Frontline shelter staff" refers to those people who work directly with animals or the public. There was generally a veterinary technician (5 days a week), one paid frontline staff member to provide basic care (feed, water, toilet, and kennel clean) for dogs, cats and small animals, plus 2-3 frontline staff in charge of human "customer service" and 1-3 shelter administrators who worked at the shelter every day. Additionally, I frequently encountered part-time and auxiliary staff who worked in different shelters based on their availability and shelter need (for example, in cases of large-scale animal intakes when more than five animals were brought into the shelter at once). The



capacity for staff to work in auxiliary positions and in different shelters produces a highly flexible workforce.

With only one person assigned for basic animal care, however, making time for behavioural modification with animals was challenging and this was a source of pressure and stress for staff. In the two quotes below, frontline staff members Reese and Avery described how they use their time and understand how their work is connected to adoptability and euthanasia decisions about animals, especially those with behavioural problems. As Henry's stay in the shelter continues, this rationing of time becomes a source of pressure for staff. The quotes express the demands embedded in the frontline staff's work and how staff worried about accomplishing all their responsibilities – both the formal and the ethical responsibilities they had for the animals in their care – and the ethical dissonance they experience. Reese explained:

*"[What] if I don't have enough time, let's say, to spend with that animal. Knowing the shelter environment is more stressful, if only I had a foster, if only I had more volunteers, I feel stretched thin in a sense of, I still have to do the dishes, but if I don't spend enough time with [animal name], and she doesn't make improvements soon a decision might have to get made".*

Avery added:

*"Euthanasia for behaviour is a gray area. If we get a fearful cat, the shelter administrators might say, 'let's see what happens in a few days', but I know what*

*that means. I need to get this cat to like people in three days! I would love not to feel like that. I will spend my lunch break with the cat to make it adoptable”.*

In the quotes, frontline staff expressed their feeling of concern and the need to work with Henry and other animals assessed as “orange” to make them “adoptable”. They endeavoured to work with them whenever opportunities arose. Customer service staff also took part in doing behavioural modification work when opportunities arose although it was not among their formal job responsibilities. Further, although frontline staff know that there is technically no time limit for how long an animal can remain at the shelter, staff are also aware that the longer an animal remained the potential for adoption was diminished and euthanasia could be more likely.

Whereas the concerns expressed by Reese and Avery were for individual animals, shelter administrators expressed a parallel concern at the level of overall capacity, noting in a virtual focus group that not all shelters have the staff and resources to do behavioural modification. Administrators also discussed behaviour modification as a specialized task which, in their view, required specific training or knowledge; specifically, frontline staff were required to receive additional training to perform dog behavioural assessments, and official behaviour modification plans (Appendix H) are developed by trained individuals. Such plans instruct what the frontline staff and volunteers are to do with the animals. Reese and Avery (above), however, also have extensive experiential knowledge that they bring to their work, especially what they learn from their close contact with specific animals such as Henry.

The designation of “behaviour modification” as a specialized task seems to run contrary to the ongoing, everyday interactions that frontline staff have with animals and that almost certainly influence the animals’ behaviour. Perhaps casting “behavioural modification” as a specialized task contributes to the fact that workers (such as Reese and Avery) must “fit in” the work they do to develop social relationships with animals, work that responds to animal behaviour and seems to be critically important to each animal’s welfare as well as facilitating their adoption. In the official running of the shelters, official behavioural modification plans are developed by administrators or staff with additional training and frontline staff talked about following these plans, but the efforts that workers make to address animals’ problems are not included in any of the official frontline staff job descriptions.

In summary, the tensions that arise in behavioural modification work are vested in ideas about how frontline staff spend their time, who has training and expertise for doing behavioural modification and mitigating risk to people and animals. These ideas organize which frontline tasks are prioritized over others and how risks are formulated and addressed. This tension seems to have consequences for dogs such as Henry and other animals in need of behavioural modification. Moreover, being implicated in, but having little control over the euthanasia decisions (as they arise within the complexities of “orange” animals) is an emotional cost to staff as they bond and work with these animals daily, and feel pressure to find time to do what they can to make them adoptable. This finding about the organization of everyday work activities, and what this means for how staff use their time, sheds a slightly different light

on the ideas in the literature about euthanasia-related stress and compassion fatigue as discussed in more detail below.

#### **4.4 Monitoring and anticipating kennel use**

*From the account: During the regular morning meeting, frontline staff discuss tasks that need to be completed that day in addition to regular feeding, walking and cleaning duties (for example, a behavioural assessment for a newly arrived dog and scheduling veterinary appointments for two other dogs).*

In addition to providing daily care to animals (eg cleaning kennels, feeding, walking, examining and medicating animals) frontline staff performed a myriad of administrative tasks: monitoring kennel use through the shelter database, reviewing the weekly animal transfer emails, reviewing requests for animal relinquishment and information from owners about these animals (“owner surrender forms” – Appendix I), reviewing and processing adoption applications, performing the “intake” of animals coming in as “strays” and “owner surrenders”, and talking with animal protection officers about animals that may be seized and need kennel space. “Stray” animals include those brought to the shelter by concerned members of the public who are unsure if an animal they “found” is owned. In these cases, staff collect information about where the animal was found and categorize them as “stray hold” in the database which automatically lists the animal on a “lost animal” website. Animals not reclaimed after four days become legal property of the BCSPCA and can be adopted. “Surrendered” (ie relinquished) animals include those brought to the shelter by animal owners. In these cases,

staff collect information about the animal from the owner and the owner formally transfers (through a signature) the animal as property to the BCSPCA. Broadly, these administrative tasks and animal categories focus on what staff refer to as the “flow” of animals coming in and out of the shelter daily. Staff manage the flow of animals by monitoring kennel use within individual shelters and across shelters in the province and by anticipating and preparing for kennel use based on the arrival of “stray” and “owner surrender” animals from the community.

Monitoring kennel use also involves moving animals within the shelter to accommodate the needs of different animals who are there. One morning while I shadowed animal care staff member Reese performing daily care for cats, Reese explained the difficulty of accommodating the number and various needs of the cats within the shelter:

*“I’m trying to figure out where to put cats all the time. We have anxious cats, sick cats, fearful cats. There is no perfect solution because cats are coming and going all the time”.*

When I asked how they approach finding a solution, Reese explained that each day they check the shelter database to confirm the “inventory” of cats in the shelter by running the “In care inventory” report. Note use of the word “inventory”: Reese understands their work in this situation as managing a population of cats that are “coming and going all the time”. They then consider and speak with other frontline staff, the shelter administrators and sometimes volunteers about which cats could be moved to an area with public access (eg cats that are friendly toward people and will likely be adopted quickly) and which cats need to be

quarantined due to illness or have recently arrived and are perhaps fearful and should be housed in a quiet part of the shelter.

The work involved with monitoring kennel use for dogs was similar. When Henry was in the shelter, another dog (Sam) was quarantined for upper respiratory infection. To limit the spread of infection, staff housed Sam in an area removed from the other dogs and the five kennels next to him were intentionally left empty. During one morning meeting, staff member Blake strategized about kennel use much as Reese had worked to “figure out” where to put cats:

*“Henry...he’s doing well. He’s pretty stressed out with the other dogs in. It will be nice to get Sam out [adopted after quarantine lifts] because I want to move Henry on the other side [of the shelter where there is less foot traffic]. Every time the other dogs bark it just gets him really stressed out”.*

With these examples, we can see Reese and Blake’s work. They have detailed knowledge about the current population in the shelter, the individual animals and their needs, how kennels can be used, and strategies for managing “foot traffic” and adoptability. Managing Henry and other “orange” animals requires staff to juggle the unique needs of “orange” animals with the needs of all the other animals in care.

In addition to monitoring and managing animals within the shelter, each week staff also prepare for the arrival of animals transferred from shelters across the province. The work involves assigning kennels to incoming animals, setting up kennels with bedding, toys, food and water and performing animal intake examinations. Intake examinations are a time-consuming

activity that involves the veterinary technician and one of the frontline staff on duty who assists with handling animals when needed and entering information about animals into the shelter database. All staff help unload animals when the truck and transfer coordinator arrive, from what is typically a several-hour trip, starting at shelter branches in Northern BC and driving south, stopping to drop off and pick up other animals in shelters along the way. The goal of such animal transfers is to facilitate prompt adoption by bringing animals from shelters in rural areas to urban areas with a larger population of potential adopters. On one transfer day, staff member Taylor explained how this works:

*“Any of our animals [ie animals in BCSPCA shelters across the province] that hit the transfer list go to the bigger shelters that get lots of foot traffic. These animals come in one day on a transfer and then are out [adopted] the next day. So we’re moving those animals out and they help to keep our length of stay down”.*

Successful adoption through facilitating transfers depends partly on whether the receiving shelters have available kennels to house animals. Transfers typically occur once a week but fewer animals are transferred if the receiving shelters have insufficient capacity. An animal’s total LOS is calculated for the entire time they spend in shelters, from arrival to exit, but if they are transferred to a shelter with heavy foot traffic they would likely be adopted sooner and hence have a shorter LOS. Henry and other long-stay animals limit the number of other animals that can be received on transfer.

Frontline staff also anticipate how much kennel space is needed for animals not yet in shelter care (eg “stray”, “owner surrender”, and “cruelty case” animals). Anticipating and

deciding about the need for kennels is organized by legal and standardized work practices occurring both in and out of the shelter. From a legal perspective, most municipal animal control laws in British Columbia allow cats to roam freely; as a result, members of the public often find cats “straying” and telephone, email or visit the shelter in person with the cat and ask staff what to do. Each time, customer service staff explain that no laws prohibit cats being outdoors and that the person should try to determine if the cat is owned before bringing it to the shelter, unless the cat is in “distress”, in which case staff transfer the call to the Provincial Call Centre. If these options do not fit the situation, customer service staff tell people to bring the cat to the shelter. Municipalities are usually responsible for holding stray dogs; cities typically control, for instance, dog licensing, rabies vaccination and leashing requirements. Thus, when individuals contact the shelter about stray dogs, customer service staff refer the person to municipal animal control or the Provincial Call Centre if the dog is in “distress”.

Customer service staff also follow a set of standardized work practices for interactions with people wishing to relinquish their animal or drop off an injured or stray animal. Such interactions involve emails, phone calls and in-person visits. In some cases, animals are left outside the shelter door and these situations also trigger standardized work processes considered “customer service” work.

One day, I observed customer service staff member Riley speak on the telephone to a person wishing to relinquish their cat. Riley first asked the person for some basic information about the cat (age, sex). Riley then told the person that they currently did not have a kennel to accept the animal but would email the person “owner surrender forms” (Appendix I) to fill out.



Each month administrators in each shelter branch calculate the number of kennels that the frontline staff need to leave open for stray cats based on the monthly average of strays over the previous three years. Riley advised the person that they were on a wait list and would be contacted when a kennel was available. Later in the daily meeting, Riley told the frontline staff and the shelter administrator that the person's cat would be added to the "surrender list". Customer service staff follow these same steps for each relinquishment request.

Although shelters are not *required* to keep kennels available for cruelty or neglect cases, officers telephone, email, or speak to shelter administrators and frontline staff when they anticipate seizing an animal. They do this in advance of the seizure to determine which shelter has space. If they are unable to anticipate seizures, they contact shelters based on location and available space.

In summary, customer service staff follow legal and standardized work practices which require interaction with members of the public and other staff members. This work, focused on providing people with good customer service, pulls frontline staff's attention away from animals currently in shelter care towards animals that may soon be in shelter care.

Customer service staff regularly interact with the public and make decisions about how to respond to people and animals based on fairly standardized criteria for kennel use. Avery, who works regularly in the customer service role, explained their understanding of these priorities. They noted that one of the most difficult parts of this work is talking to people who are planning to relinquish their animal. They explained how these calls are managed within the

institutional criteria for prioritizing which animals will be housed at the shelter and which animals must wait for an available space. They said:

*“We have to prioritize which animals come in first. First it’s stray animals and cruelty or neglect cases, then transfers within branches, then animal control contracts if we have them and finally surrenders”.*

Here, Avery expresses one form of knowledge: how the institution prioritizes different categories of animals coming into the shelter. They then added:

*“It’s really hard. There are a lot of people in need, sometimes crying on the phone because they need to surrender their animal and I am trying to make it work. But I have to be conscious about the number of animals we have in care following C4C”.*

Here, Avery expresses another form of knowledge: how the institutional priorities create a challenge in their work with people who may be in a difficult situation. This creates a tension between these two types of knowledge, one that is seemingly objective, logical and rational that must adhere to the institutional priorities and the other concerned with the actual subjectivities of the work – the difficult, apparently *ad hoc* work of talking and responding to people in difficult situations.

Avery also references their obligation to “follow C4C”. C4C stands for Capacity for Care which is an approach used by North American shelters as well as the BCSPCA. C4C consists of administrative practices and strategies that shelters use to provide care to animals. Broad aims of C4C are to decrease LOS and euthanasia by minimizing barriers to adoption (Blake’s work), to improve the welfare of animals by housing them based on their needs (Blake and Reese’s work)

and to manage the intake of animals by using “surrender waitlists” and standardized criteria for kennel use (Riley and Avery’s work).

The work related to the C4C approach emerged as a key component of the administrative work that both the animal care and customer service staff undertake. In the excerpt above, Avery’s list of priorities for space uses the C4C approach to monitor and anticipate kennel use. The frontline staff work of monitoring kennel use within the shelter, using predictive calculations to monitor kennel use, preparing for animal transfers, and interacting with members of the public and staff about animals potentially coming into the shelter is guided by C4C and tracked in the shelter database. Specifically, this work links the daily work of staff into the central aims of C4C which is used by administrators to calculate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to benchmark shelter efficiency. KPIs are used by administrators to assess how well the shelter is operating. The administrative goal is to maintain a low average LOS for targeted animal groups (dogs, puppies, cats, kittens and rabbits).

While the C4C approach is useful for administrators who are responsible for tracking average LOS and reporting these data to their boards and donors, it is not as useful for frontline decision-making and does not support staff to deal with “outliers” like Henry, or other “orange” animals with long stays in the shelter. Such animals are referred to as “bottlenecks” in the system. During the time when Henry was in the shelter, for instance, the average LOS was 11 days for dogs and nine days for puppies. The BCSPCA achieved this average because most dogs and puppies were adopted easily and promptly. According to this KPI, the BCSPCA can say that they are helping many animals and performing optimally and efficiently compared to other

shelters in Canada. However, “bottleneck” animals like Henry could complicate C4C data or delay the intake or transfer of other animals that may be easier to adopt (“green” or “yellow” animals). This puts some pressure on staff to make a decision about an animal’s prospects (euthanasia) if an animal is not adopted promptly. The more time that passes, the more pressure seems to be put on this decision. At one meeting when Henry had been in the shelter for over 30 days, an administrator asked staff to brainstorm ideas of how they could promote Henry online or through social media to facilitate his adoption. This strategy did not work, however, and Henry’s behaviour deteriorated to the point that volunteers were no longer comfortable walking Henry and the decision to euthanize was made, ultimately causing sadness for frontline staff.

In summary, the routine work of monitoring and anticipating animals requires staff to optimize the use of shelter housing based on the specific needs of animals and to anticipate and prepare for animals arriving into the shelter as “strays”, “owner surrenders”, “seizures” or “transfers”. This work also involves assisting members of the public with their questions about “stray” animals, relinquishment and adoption. These work activities and accompanying texts are organized by the C4C approach which prioritizes optimal and efficient movement of animals in and out of the shelter, often measured by a short average LOS. However, the organization of work around these activities leaves little time for work with animals like Henry that have extended shelter stays.

## 4.5 Discussion

“Orange” animals like Henry face complicated and unstable pathways to adoption that arise as a series of tensions in the everyday work of frontline staff. These tensions arise because frontline shelter staff are organized to perform work activities and administrative tasks that include, for example, receiving relinquished and stray animals from the public, moving animals within the shelter based on special needs, transferring and receiving animals from different shelters to facilitate prompt adoption, performing intake examinations and behavioural assessments, meeting with adopters and reviewing adoption applications as well as daily animal care. The prioritization of these tasks is linked to the C4C approach which directs shelter work to focus on goals of efficiency, low average LOS and animals in categories that “fit” into the rapid movement of animals in and out of the shelter. With these various tasks and priorities, however, there is little to no time for frontline shelter staff to work with “orange” animals that need additional support before they can be successfully adopted.

The work of frontline staff in conducting dog behavioural assessments is a textual work process that was developed to help facilitate successful matching of dogs to adopters. However, frontline staff see this time-consuming process as redundant in cases where a “green” classification is obvious to them. Further, when behavioural problems are identified, the assessment process does not appear to lead to an allocation of staff time to address the problem. This is especially problematic as behavioural problems have become a major reason for relinquishment of dogs (Powell *et al* 2021). Furthermore, it is not clear whether the frontline staff’s day-to-day practices for “orange” animals (such as sitting with an anxious dog to improve

their sociability) flow from the expert behavioural modification plans. While behavioural modification may be seen by experts as a specialized task that requires specific training, there may still be scope to better integrate the experiential and local knowledge of frontline staff in identifying when a full, formalized behavioural assessment is needed, to ensure that their handling methods are in line with the remedial plan, and to create appropriate links between the identification of challenging behaviours and actions that staff could take to contribute to behavioural modification.

Most of the literature on behavioural assessments is focused on evaluating their validity (eg Duffy *et al* 2014; Menchetti *et al* 2019) or debating their utility (Patronek & Bradley 2016, see Halm 2021 for cat behavioural assessments). Clay *et al* (2020) systematically reviewed the literature and concluded that assessments are a useful tool for understanding a dogs' overall behaviour and for matching dogs to adopters. However, the actual daily work that frontline staff do to provide behavioural modification has not been well described in the literature. A survey by Orihel *et al* (2005) that reported that lack of time and financial constraints were the main reasons why shelters did not have behavioural rehabilitation programs for inter-dog aggression. Orihel and Fraser (2008) and Mohan-Gibbons *et al* (2012) performed interventions to modify inter-dog aggression and food guarding, respectively. More recently a case study reported the successful implementation of behavioural modification (counter conditioning and anxiolytic medication treatment) with cats from an animal hoarding situation (van Haaften 2018). These studies, however, do not describe who (ie shelter staff, trainers, researchers,

volunteers) actually performed the interventions nor do they describe the time and human resources needed.

With its focus on the actual daily work activities of frontline staff, this chapter shows that their work involves establishing relationships with animals and these may become especially strong for animals that stay in the shelter for extended periods. There is a small literature about shelter staff's relationships with animals. Baran *et al* (2009) surveyed experienced shelter staff to gather recommendations for less experienced staff performing euthanasia and reported that "avoiding becoming attached" to animals was a key recommendation from experienced staff. Andrukonis and Protopopova (2020) reported a correlation between positive animal outcomes (adoption or transfer to another shelter, not euthanasia) and levels of "secondary traumatic stress" (defined as trauma experienced through something or someone else); this suggests that euthanasia is more traumatic in shelters with low euthanasia rates where staff may spend more time with animals and become attached to them. However, the practicalities of frontline staff's work activities, especially with animals in need of behavioural modification, are mostly absent from the research on behavioural interventions in shelters. My analysis explicates why frontline staff find it challenging to find time to work with "orange" animals. Future research, which might be participatory research involving shelter staff and managers, could assess whether and how to better integrate behaviour modification into shelter work; it might also assess whether and how work designated as "behaviour modification" may be interconnected with other important relational work between staff and animals.

Previous research on the well-being of shelter staff has focused strongly on how staff feel about and cope with performing euthanasia, often framed through the concept of compassion fatigue (eg Reeve *et al* 2005; Anderson *et al* 2013; Andrukonis & Protopopova 2020). The observations reported here identify quite different factors that influence staff well-being. Staff enjoyed being around Henry and animals like Henry, and often saw their potential. This led to stress about “running out of time” to help these animals and also to sadness when time did run out. Future work could observe these and other work activities in further detail to understand more precisely what is challenging, also what is fulfilling, about shelter work.

Like many shelters, the shelter in this study was guided by the C4C approach. The standardized elements of C4C that direct staff’s everyday work (eg providing basic care, monitoring shelter “capacity” and kennel use, transferring animals) are focused on decreasing the average LOS and managing populations of animals (in the community and shelter) as efficiently as possible (Newbury & Hurley 2013). Outcome measures like the KPI of average LOS is one way that this efficiency is measured. For instance, a BCSPCA report (BCSPCA 2020) noted the average LOS for groups of animals in 2019: dogs stayed an average of 10 days and cats an average of 15 days, figures less than half the national average (Humane Canada 2019). This KPI is an example of how the BCSPCA determine they are operating efficiently. The research reported here is not intended to undermine this good work, but rather to show how such standardization unfolds for workers and for certain exceptional animals in workers’ care. It suggests that more work may be needed that looks specifically at those animals whose assessment category indicates they require more intensive sheltering services. One



recommendation would be to focus on expanding opportunities to foster “orange” animals so that problem behaviours can be addressed outside the time constraints of shelter work and the complex and stressful shelter environment.

Published research investigating the impact of C4C on shelter management has generally used measures of central tendency and broad categories of animals for analysis. For example, Janke *et al* (2017) and Karsten *et al* (2017) statistically analyzed shelter databases and reported that implementation of C4C decreased LOS for cats. Janke *et al* (2018) reported further that C4C decreased the number of cats brought to the shelter. These findings reinforce that C4C is “working” efficiently to “optimally” manage cat populations in shelters. More recently, Hobson *et al* (2021) investigated the managed intake process (ie use of scheduled or wait-listed intake of animals based on shelter capacity) for cats by analyzing the outcomes of cats put on a waitlist when their owner contacted the shelter for relinquishment (part of Riley’s work process described above). Again, the findings are reported as metrics, such as median wait time for relinquishment that was reported as 20.1 days with 10 and 15% of cats retained or rehomed by owners, respectively. Although such metrics are very informative, they leave out a great deal of the actual work completed by workers as well as their and animals’ experiences. The findings reported in this chapter reveal concerns that provide insight into how organizations established for animal welfare may become even better at mitigating undesired outcomes (eg exceptionally long stays, euthanasia), so that the work in shelters can be done in the interests of all the animals including those that require additional support.

As a managerial approach, C4C functions at a population level, and its success, as noted above, is commonly assessed through summary statistics such as average LOS. I have shown how “orange” animals (such as Henry) can be somewhat marginalized within work activities that are conducted in pursuit of these well-intentioned goals. Thus the BCSPCA’s C4C efforts to “meet the needs of every animal that is brought to our shelters and ensure that we have the resources to care for these animals” (BCSPCA 2021d – my underline for emphasis) seems to fall short for “orange” animals that have exceptional needs. Nobody at the shelter intends for this to happen but my analysis reveals that the way that C4C and staff responsibilities actually play out in the daily work routines functions to the disadvantage of dogs such as Henry. The focus on monitoring “populations” of animals, rather than individuals such as Henry or others in need of special attention, seems at odds with the stated goal of the BCSPCA. The work processes of frontline shelter staff could be observed and examined further in order to more effectively work on behalf of these difficult to adopt animals.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Starting in the standpoint of animals and tracing the series of tensions from the case of Henry into institutional processes, this chapter explicates how the lives of “orange” animals like Henry are socially organized in ways that are not in the interests of this particularly vulnerable category of animal. Institutional practices focused on monitoring populations of animals, anticipating animal arrival from the community and facilitating prompt adoption for most animals creates complicated and unstable pathways to adoption for “orange” animals like

Henry. These socially organized practices direct frontline staff to spend much of their time reviewing the digital shelter database, reviewing adoption applications, making decisions about where to house animals, interacting with people, and the daily care of animals and cleaning of the shelter, leaving little time for special attention, socialization and behavioural modification for exceptional animals.

Continued observations of the everyday work frontline staff do with animals as well as the incorporation of their experiential knowledge could help inform and refine behavioural assessments as well as other routine work processes that are currently organized by institutional policies and management approaches like C4C. Given that “harder” animals are becoming more common in some shelters, appropriate human resources should be allocated to these animals in need of behavioural modification. Finally, when animals are identified to need behavioural modification and do not pose risks, fostering should be expanded and time allocated so that frontline staff can feel less pressure to help these animals be adopted successfully.

## Chapter 5: Animals in “distress”: The social organization of animal protection work

### 5.1 Introduction

Animal protection law enforcement aims to protect animals living under human care. In Canada, the federal *Criminal Code* prohibits wilful (including reckless) acts that cause unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to animals, and it includes a ban on animal fighting or baiting. Additional animal protection laws exist in most provinces, territories and municipalities. Most provinces have laws that prohibit people from causing or permitting an animal to be in “distress” although definitions of this term vary and have broadened over time (Fraser *et al* 2018). Approaches to law enforcement also vary across jurisdictions (Fraser *et al* 2018) with SPCAs, government agencies, municipal agencies and police taking the lead, depending on the location. Enforcing the law relies substantially on the reporting of concerns by members of the public, as well as by veterinarians and others who frequently interact with animals. People who are worried about an animal’s care and living conditions contact enforcement agencies. In BC, the BCSPCA is the organization responsible for enforcing animal protection law although police and RCMP can also enforce animal protection laws. The vast majority of enforcement actions are based on the provincial *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act*.

In animal protection law the legal terms used have been analyzed by researchers in order to understand how the terms structure what happens when the laws are applied. For example, Gacek (2019) analyzed case studies (summaries of court cases) focused on the term “wilful neglect” in the *Criminal Code*, and Ziegler (2019) examined the powers of the provincial

*Manitoba Animal Care Act* compared to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Verbora (2015) analyzed parliamentary proceedings regarding changes to the animal section of the *Criminal Code*, some of which centred on disagreements about the definition of “animal” and the implications of animals being termed a form of property. Thus, although specific topics vary, there is a body of research examining how different legal terms function and how they influence the actions that law enforcement organizations can take for animals.

This chapter uses a different approach to understand how animal protection law organizes what can and cannot be done for animals through law enforcement. It explores the actual, everyday work activities that Provincial Call Centre operators and Animal Protection Officers engage in when they receive and respond to calls of concern from members of the public. I use a map of Henry’s early life as an entry point into everyday operator and officer work. I then integrate interview, focus group and textual data to describe how this work is accomplished. Through this analysis, I discover a series of tensions that arise for animals living in situations that are of concern but where the activities of enforcement staff are organized and constrained by municipal, provincial and federal laws, and in particular, the *PCA Act* which directs operators and officers to look for and identify animal “distress” as it is defined in the law.

### **5.1.1 Ethnographic account and maps**

The account and maps below describe a series of interactions between Henry and the BCSPCA in the early part of Henry’s life. They provide a description of Henry’s living

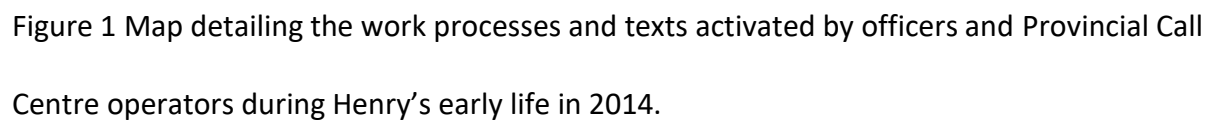
environment as well as a broad introduction to the everyday work processes that Provincial Call Centre Operators (henceforth called operators) and Animal Protection Officers and Special Provincial Constables (henceforth called officers) do when they receive calls of concern from the public about animals.

*After Henry was euthanized, I reviewed information about Henry in the shelter database including documentation of different work processes and texts used by Provincial Call Centre operators and officers. A veterinary report completed during the seizure included photos of the property. Henry and the six other dogs had been living in squalor; floors and surfaces were thickly covered with layers of faeces, urine, mould, garbage and debris. One section of the floor was layered with empty dog food bags, and an empty bucket (presumably used for food) lay next to the sole water source: a dirty toilet. The report described the property, including high ammonia levels irritating the officer's (and dogs) lungs and eyes, overgrown bushes, and flies. Veterinary assessments reported that the dogs were mostly bright and alert but undernourished, had evidence of old scars on their faces and bodies, mites and suspected ringworm. The report noted that, based on the state of the property and dogs, the dogs were in "distress" as defined by the PCA Act and thus officers removed the dogs from the property and brought them to a shelter.*

*As I looked at other texts about Henry, I saw that, over the six years before the seizure, officers had visited Henry and the other dogs on multiple occasions.*

*Members of the public telephoned the call centre and operators "entered*

*complaints". After each call, officers "attended" (visited the property) and "posted" (left a doorknob tag indicating the time of the visit) at the property multiple times for each call and attempted to communicate via telephone and in person with the owner about the dogs. When Henry was 6 months old, officers made contact and talked with the owner on their first visit to the property. When Henry was 1.5 years old, after three attempts to contact the owner, officers applied for and obtained a search warrant from a judge to search for and collect evidence of "distress" at the property. For each complaint, after talking with the owner, officers "issued orders" that detailed what the owner needed to do to alleviate the dogs' "distress". Orders were "finalized" a few weeks later in each case. Chronological maps (Figures 1 and 2) show the different work processes and texts activated by officers and operators during these time periods.*





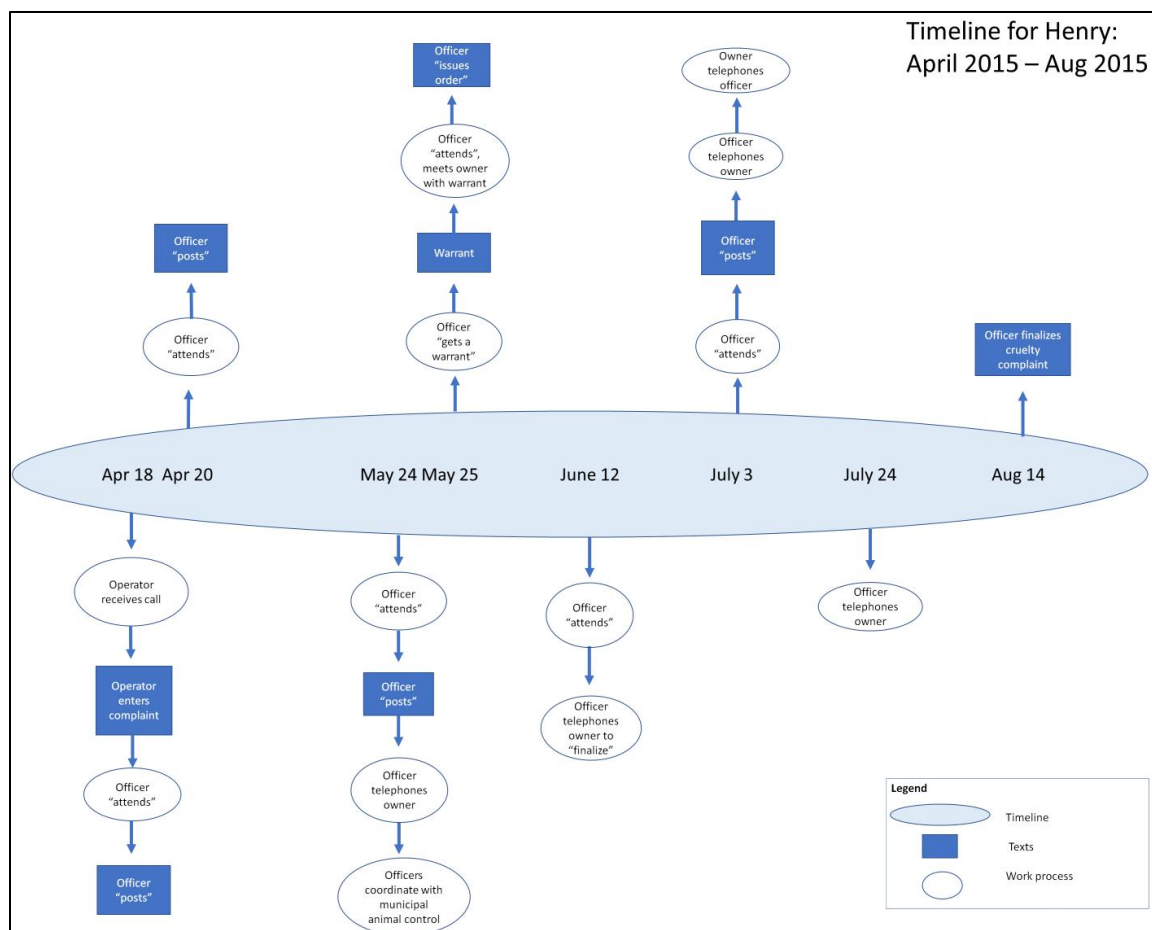


Figure 2 Map detailing the work processes and texts activated by officers and Provincial Call Centre operators during Henry's early life in 2015.

### 5.1.2 Frame for the chapter problematic

Given Henry's behavioural problems in the shelter, as well as the state of the property in which he and the other dogs lived, this account about Henry together with the maps chronicling the involvement of the BCSPCA generate questions about the day-to-day work of operators who receive complaints about animals from members of the public, and officers who investigate those complaints. This map provides clues about the work processes and texts that

organize and direct what operators and officers do in their daily work. It references texts, some of which are “regulatory” texts that contain legal terms like “distress”. These texts organize what officers can and cannot do for animals. The map raises questions about multiple intervention attempts made by officers and the work of “finalizing” a case and what this means for animals. In summary, the account I generated from the database, together with the maps, provide an entry point to explore a series of tensions that arise between the organization of everyday operator and officer work and the interests of animals living in deprived situations. Examining these tensions focuses on the limitations created by the legal definition of “distress” as that definition is applied to the concerns that members of the public and operators and officers have for these animals. I identify these tensions as they arise within the work processes of: 1) receiving and entering complaints, 2) looking for and finding (or not) evidence of “distress” and 3) responding to concerns not covered by the law.

## **5.2 Receiving and entering complaints**

I begin by explicating the work processes and texts that appear on the maps as: “operator receives call” and “operator enters complaint”.

A large part of the work that operators do at the Provincial Call Centre is to receive calls from members of the public who are concerned about an animal(s). I joined Lee, an operator, to observe how this work is accomplished. Lee greeted each caller kindly and asked them to explain their concerns for the animal. Lee listened intently while typing notes quickly in a Word document. One caller had concerns about a dog tethered outside in a backyard that was left

alone most of the time. Lee listened to the caller's concerns and then explained that most municipal animal control laws allow people to tether their dogs, but some include specifications. Lee needed more information and thus proceeded to ask the caller specific questions, listening and typing notes after each question:

*"Can you describe the yard?"*

*"What is provided for the dog? Food, water?"*

*"Can you describe the tether – what is it made out of? Chain, rope? Is it around the dog's neck?"*

*"What about the area around the dog, are there faeces or other potentially injurious objects?"*

The caller confirmed that the dog has food, water, shelter, and the area is relatively clean. Lee then opened a computer folder, organized by municipality, with information about the local SPCA branches, veterinary clinics, municipal animal control and police departments, dead animal pickup (eg for roadkill) and wildlife rehabilitation centres. Lee found the municipal by-law regarding dog tethering for the caller's city and confirmed that what the caller described is permissible under municipal law. The caller expressed their concern again that the dog is left alone for most of the day, to which Lee responded:

*"I understand, but the law does not require people to spend a lot of time with or play with their animals. The law requires that the animal's basic needs are met, food, shelter, water, things like that. Another concern could be matting – can you see how dog's coat looks?"*

The caller stated that they are unsure, but the coat does look “rough”. With this, Lee decided to enter the caller’s concerns into the database as a complaint. It is the report of the coat looking “rough” and speculation that it could be matted, not the caller’s original concerns about the dog being left alone on a tether, that ultimately leads to Lee’s work of entering the complaint in the database.

To enter the complaint officially, Lee clicks “New file” in the shelter database and begins to add information into different fields: the dog’s physical characteristics, the address, the information the caller gave about the animal’s presumed guardian (designated as the “person of interest” or POI) and the caller (designated as “the complainant” or COMP). Lee then copies and pastes some of the notes from the Word document into the “Notes” section of the file. I asked how they know what to include and Lee explained:

*“We get a lot of calls about dogs left alone outside. When I trained with other operators, I learned what to ask, which words to use. A lot of it is just listening to people. They share more information that isn’t needed for the file. You have to narrow it down and just pick the details you need, like what the distress is, the specifics of the injury. Also dates and times are really important”.*

Through training with other operators and experience, Lee’s understanding of their work in this situation is to listen to people and to pay attention to specific details that should be included in the official file. Finally, Lee assigned a “cruelty code” of “matting”. Cruelty codes are assigned by operators so officers can easily judge the general nature of the complaint when they look at the file. Lee provided the caller with a file number so they

could follow up if they wish and said that an officer would be at the property within the next few days.

In this account, the questions that Lee knows to ask the caller and the details included in the file are specifically organized around the legal definition of “distress” in the *PCA Act* as well as municipal by-laws that regulate tethering. As I observed operators take calls, while empathetic to callers’ concerns about animals, they all followed lines of questioning similar to those that Lee asked. This is work that operators do to determine whether an animal may be in “distress” and whether “grounds” exist for an officer to investigate. What officially constitutes “distress” is included on the official “BCSPCA Order” which can be given to owners by officers who have identified animals in “distress”. The order includes a list of actions that an individual must do to relieve “distress”, including providing food, water and shelter, ensuring the area is kept free of injurious objects or other hazards and ensuring the animal’s coat is free of matting or debris. The callers, however, often have different concerns for animals, as in this case with the tethered dog. In that call the caller’s main concern was that the dog is kept alone in the backyard for long periods without human contact. This account shows that although Lee, and other operators, listen empathetically to callers, the legal term “distress” enters into their daily work as operators and reveals a tension between what they (and the public) understand could cause animal “distress” (eg a social animal spending the majority of time alone) and what is needed to build the official account of “distress” which, in this situation, relied on a vague report of matting that provided Lee with the grounds needed for the file to be investigated.

### 5.3 Looking for and finding evidence of “distress”

In the early part of Henry’s life (Figures 1 and 2), on each occasion that calls were received from members of the public, operators determined that there may be “distress” and thus entered a file in the database with the cruelty codes “underweight” in 2014 and “animals abandoned” and “living conditions” in 2015. These official codes that could be applied to the file permitted officers to begin an investigation. But the question remains, how did it happen that Henry had repeatedly entered animal protection work processes over the course of two years when he was a puppy, but was not removed until he was six years old? Examining the work processes and texts on the maps: “officer attends”, “officer posts” and “officer issues order” provides an institutional analysis of how these events unfolded in Henry’s early life.

A large part of the everyday work that officers do is to investigate the files that the operators have opened. Officers more commonly referred to files as “calls”. These are the calls that have been received and entered as “complaints” in the database. To observe how this work is accomplished I arranged “ride-alongs” (ie I accompanied different officers on their shifts as a passenger in the vehicle). One morning I accompanied Officer Casey who explained that the first thing they do at the beginning of their shift is review the list of outstanding complaints that have a call status of “awaiting assignment” in the database. Casey explained that they were trained to screen this list to prioritize emergency calls and calls that are causing more “distress” to an animal. To support this triage work, operators not only “enter complaints” as “awaiting assignment” but they also telephone officers directly when they receive an emergency call. For non-emergency calls, officers “assign” calls to themselves by selecting their

name from a dropdown list, thus changing the status of the call to their name so other officers know the case has been taken up and there is a plan to investigate. I watched as Casey reviewed the list and took notes in a small notebook about several complaints they planned to investigate that day. We then departed the office to “attend” the first call.

The call is based on a complaint about a dog confined in a doghouse in the backyard of a home. The caller reported that the dog was unable to leave the doghouse, and the caller could not see if the dog had access to water which was especially concerning given the hot weather. When we arrived at the property, Casey checked the database again to confirm details about the POI (the animal’s presumed guardian living at the address according to the caller), concerns for the animal and the address. We got out of the truck, walked to the property and knocked on the door. No one answered. *“Let’s wait a few minutes”* Casey said. While we waited, we walked through the alley to the back of the house to look for any evidence related to the call: the dog, the doghouse, food and water dishes, toys. Casey explained: *“We have to be careful and respect people’s property. And we have to get consent to go on their property”*.

As we looked at the yard from the alley, we identified the doghouse but no dog. We waited another five minutes and then Casey decided to “post” on the property so we could continue to the next call. To “post”, Casey removed a BCSPCA doorknob tag from a stack in the truck and wrote their name, phone number, time and “please call” at the bottom of the tag. Casey then hung the tag around the doorknob on the front door of the house. Back in the truck, Casey wrote a brief description about what we saw and did in their notebook. *“Hopefully they’ll call us soon”* Casey said while starting the truck to head to the next call.

This account of “attending” and “posting” was something I observed officers do routinely. The actions Casey takes while posting and attending are oriented toward their knowledge about respecting property and privacy organized under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as sections 13 and 14 of the *PCA Act* (sections which detail whether and when officers have authority to enter premises with and without a search warrant as discussed later in this chapter). While officers have the “right of inquiry” under Common Law (ie the legal system used in commonwealth countries like Canada and Australia that includes laws and accepted rules that guide the actions officers can take based on precedent) they must also follow the *Charter* which protects Canadian’s rights including that “*everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure*”. These legal requirements constrain what Casey can do when investigating calls of concern about animals; they cannot go on the property to look thoroughly for the dog, and they have to give people time to respond to posts. If the person does not respond to the post, Casey will repeat the process of attending and posting in a few days depending on the urgency of the situation (eg animal injury, weather conditions). Indeed, officers working on Henry’s case repeated the process of “attending” and “posting” multiple times before talking to the owner, giving the owner time to respond to posts during which time the animals’ situation could not be assessed or addressed (Figures 1 and 2).

On another morning I joined Officer Bryce for a ride-along. As Casey had done, Bryce reviewed the database and prioritized calls, writing notes about the animal, concern, and POI. The first call we attended was a complaint from a caller concerned about a dog on a long tether in the front yard of a home in a semi-rural area. The dog barks and runs at other dogs, children,



people and cars when they pass by. We drove to the property and saw the dog running back and forth frantically barking at us. Bryce checked a few details in their notebook and we got out of the truck, approached the property and knocked on the door. The owner appeared. Bryce introduced us, explained the complaint and our presence, asked if we could see the dog, and the owner agreed. We approached the dog and saw a wooden shelter, food bowl, and a water bowl that lay overturned. The dog stopped barking and stood looking at us, panting heavily. Bryce started a conversation with the owner, asking how often they walk, feed and water the dog. Bryce explained that it is important to spend time with the dog to develop a bond and suggested that a harness instead of a collar might be more comfortable for the dog. Bryce then noted that the shelter had no bedding and that the dog currently had no water access since the water bowl was knocked over. The owner responded that they would dig a hole for the water bowl so it does not tip over and also agreed to add some straw on the floor of the shelter. Bryce then “issued an order”: a form that they gave the owner that established the mandate for the owner to complete these tasks. The mandated actions were established by Bryce checking the boxes on the form next to: *“provide access to clean potable drinking water at all times”* and *“provide shelter that ensures protection from heat, cold and dampness appropriate to the protective outer coat and condition of the animal”*. Bryce gave the owner one week to complete the tasks and told them that they could text photos to provide the evidence that the order had been followed.

On the way to the next call, Bryce explained: *“We have to be clear about what we want people to do and give them chances to alleviate distress”*. Giving people chances to alleviate “distress” is required by the PCA Act, section 11:

*“If an authorized agent (ie officer) is of the opinion that an animal is in distress and the person responsible for the animal (a) does not promptly take steps that will relieve its distress, or (b) cannot be found immediately and informed of the animal’s distress, the authorized agent may, in accordance with sections 13 and 14, take any action that the authorized agent considers necessary to relieve the animal’s distress”*.

Hence, in this situation, where the owner was home and compliant with Bryce’s guidance, Bryce needs to document the “chances” (the time to remediate) that have been given and that a process has been followed (eg posting, attending, issuing orders). Adhering to this process must be documented in order for the BCSPCA to intervene further. It provides the BCSPCA with “evidence” that is needed to take any next steps, should the owner fail to follow the order which could potentially lead to removal of the animal. When an animal is seized the owner can formally appeal the removal, thus moving the case to court proceedings to have the animal returned. The evidence of the process taken prior to the seizure and the “chances” that have been given contribute to the court decision whether or not to return the animal to its owner. In the case above, where Bryce had issued an order, a few hours later, Bryce received a photo from the owner that showed a large bucket in the ground filled with water, and a thick layer of straw in the doghouse. *“This is great”* Bryce said while looking at the photos. Bryce texted the

owner to let them know they will visit again in a few days to “finalize” the complaint, which includes confirming completion of the tasks and then writing in the database that the owner had followed the directions and no further action is required.

Bryce’s interaction with this owner, like Lee’s questions to the caller, is organized around the legal term “distress”. In this case, Bryce can tick boxes on the BCSPCA order form which is used to “issue the order”. It is a text in which the legal definition of “distress” is embedded. A copy of the text is given to the owner. Later, Bryce documented the case in the shelter database, briefly noting that they “issued an order” and would follow up in the coming days. After the follow-up visit, if the process “worked” to elicit the owner’s compliance, Bryce would change the call status to “finalized” in the database and type “no further action required”, officially closing the file. In this case the caller’s original concerns about the dog being tethered outside and running hard to the end of the tether when barking at cars and people, as well as other concerns Bryce raised with the owner (spending time with the dog, using a harness), are different from the concerns captured in the official order to provide water and adequate shelter. This reveals a tension between what is actually happening (a social animal tethered alone and displaying anxious behaviours) and the official account of the situation (“distress” alleviated through the provision of adequate shelter and water).

In the examples above Casey and Bryce are following work processes oriented toward collecting and documenting evidence of the actions they take with people. This is work they complete to comply with the authorized process necessary to obtain a search warrant or testify

in court appeals and proceedings, should the case not be “finalized” following the officers’ initial visits (attending) and “posts” (leaving doorknob tag notes on the door).

The process of attending and posting was also what happened in Henry’s case. However, in Henry’s case, in 2015 when Henry was 1.5 years old, officers obtained a search warrant from a judge after “attending” and “posting” three times and not hearing from the owner. A search warrant is a legal order issued by a judge or justice of the peace that authorizes officers to search a person or premises for evidence of an offense. In order to obtain a search warrant officers appointed as Special Provincial Constables complete the *Information to Obtain A Search Warrant (ITO)* (copied below) as outlined in *Schedule A* of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation* under the *PCA Act*. The *PCA Act* gives Special Provincial Constables the authority to enforce the law and they are officially appointed as Constables under the *BC Police Act*. Animal Protection Officers are appointed by the BCSPCA and follow the same work processes as Constables but are authorized differently. They cannot obtain warrants or remove animals from properties. Therefore, if an Animal Protection Officer needs a search warrant they have to work with a Special Provincial Constable to prepare the ITO document. In BC the ITO text prepared by the Special Provincial Constable is submitted to a judge or justice of the peace for approval. In the ITO (copied below with my underlining for emphasis), the officers must document that they have “reasonable grounds” to believe that “an animal is in distress” at a property or that an “offense has been committed” and they are requesting authority to enter the property to conduct a search that will “afford evidence of that offense”. Section 24 of the

PCA Act describes what constitutes an offense, for example, causing or permitting an animal to be in distress.

*“The informant (ie officer) says that the informant has reasonable grounds to believe that —*

*[check as applicable]*

*[ ] an animal is in distress in/at .....*

*[specify premises, vehicle, aircraft, vessel] (the “premises”);*

*[ ] an offence under section 24 of the Act has been committed,*

*namely.....*

*[describe the offence in respect of which the search is to be made],*

*and that there are in/at .....*

*[specify premises, vehicle, aircraft, vessel] (the “premises”) things,*

*including.....*

*[describe things to be searched for] (the “things described”), that will afford evidence of that offence.*

*GROUND FOR BELIEF ARE:.....”*

The documentary processes used by officers to complete the ITO function as the preliminary evidence. It is amassed from the BCSPCA database (with the details about the original complaint from the caller) and from the handwritten notebooks that officers complete following visits to the property. To do this documentary work they must “work up” the case into “grounds for belief” of “an animal in distress” and present a clear chronological record of

the dates and times of each attempt (“attending” and “posting”) to contact the owner. To obtain a warrant they must establish that the owner has been given ample direction and time to address the animals’ conditions and that reasonable grounds exist that warrant further investigation.

In Henry’s case, in addition to providing opportunities for the owner to respond to “posts”, officers also “issued orders” and followed-up with the owner to ensure they completed the tasks mandated through the order. The tasks in 2014 included, for example, “keeping the dogs free of ticks and fleas” and in 2015 “keeping the property clean and free of injurious objects”. Unlike the case above, where the owner promptly sent a photo of the completed remediation and Officer Bryce finalized the order writing “no further action required” in the database, Henry’s case was less clear cut. In 2014, the order was finalized because there was “insufficient evidence to proceed”. In 2015, the order was issued after officers obtained a search warrant due to no communication from the owner after three instances of officers “attending” and “posting”. In this case, the order was finalized because the “dogs appear to be in adequate condition from afar”. Thus, for Henry, it is not clear whether the owner completed the mandated tasks for flea control (2014) or cleaned the property (2015). Perhaps the officers also had to evaluate whether they had “sufficient evidence” to continue their investigation in 2014, and they evidently considered that the animals were in “adequate condition” from afar and hence may not be in “distress” as it is legally defined, in 2015.

The closure (finalizing) of these orders shows that officers, while in a position to advocate for animals, are constrained in their capacity to act on the animals’ behalf. The time

that officers must invest in “attending” and “posting”, and the work of amassing the evidence necessary to obtain a warrant and justify seizing animals, privileges the rights of property and privacy over investigating concerns about animals. There is a strict legal process that officers must follow to establish evidence of “distress” or prove that animals are in “distress” in order for a judge or a justice of the peace to be convinced to provide a search warrant. This constraint creates tensions especially for animals that are living in deprived situations (eg lack of freedom, lack of social contact) that are not addressed by the current legal processes based on the legal definition of “distress”. It is likely that deprivations experienced by Henry in his early life (unsanitary living conditions, lack of social contact with humans) had consequences for his later behavioural problems as discussed in the previous chapter.

#### **5.4 Responding to concerns that are not covered by the law**

Through my observations of officers, it became clear that they had concerns about animals that went beyond the legal definition of “distress”. One day as Officer Morgan and I prepared to attend calls, we met some other officers in the office. An officer brought up a call in the database about a large-breed puppy that was four months old. They explained that this is the fifth time they received a complaint from a member of the public about the puppy. The puppy spends most of its time alone on an outdoor patio and the most recent call was from someone concerned about the puppy being alone. Officers had previously “attended” and “posted” and “issued” and “finalized” orders to ensure the provision of water and shelter for the animal.

In their informal discussion at the outset of their shift, the officers considered how to proceed and acknowledged that the situation does not clearly fall under the legal definition of “distress”. The discussion revealed the knowledge they have about animal growth and development, and the risks for a young dog if early intervention cannot be made. One officer expressed concern that the puppy is in a critical time to develop social skills to be able to live successfully in a community where there are people, children, animals, bicycles, cars, etc. A lack of social skills could result in the animal developing fearful or anxious behaviours and it may be difficult for the animal to adjust to new environments and stimuli, perhaps running away or harming a person or animal in the future.

Although the case had officially been “finalized”, the receipt of a new complaint provided the officers with the authority to reconsider how to act on behalf of the puppy. The officers, concerned about the dog and the potential for future problems, decided to take a different approach. In this regard their work was strategic. It was based on their cumulative experience and knowledge about prior cases and the law. A decision was made to speak with the owner, discuss the dog’s social development and see if the owner might feel it best to relinquish the dog to the shelter. This sort of “soft” approach involves a critically important set of knowledge and skills that the officers applied when responding to concerns not covered by the law.

In this and similar situations, officers are using various fields of knowledge to guide their decisions and actions. One field is organized around the legal definition of “distress”. Another is grounded in their knowledge about dog behaviour and social development, their concern that



this dog might not be developing important social skills, and their knowledge that this failure can have later consequences for the dog and people. Another field of knowledge is less obvious: the knowledge they have about how to proceed in each specific case. This includes knowledge about context related to the owners' prior responses, the veracity of the new complaint, and the interpersonal skills they possess that are critical to securing a voluntary "relinquishment". While the dog is not technically in "distress" as defined by the law, officers see the potential behavioural problems that this dog could develop and are thinking about what other actions they can take to help the animal. There is tension between these knowledge-based practices because on the one hand officers are concerned about the dog and on the other hand they understand that the actions they can take for the dog are constrained by property and privacy law. This is an example of how animal protection officers must balance different forms of knowledge in their everyday work.

The knowledge that officers and shelter staff develop about the importance of early social development is activated at the outset of a "case". When they read the intake forms about the animal's background officers understand the clear links between animals with behavioural problems and the lack of early, positive interactions with people and other animals. Such knowledge would often lead staff to broadly categorize these animals they encountered in their daily work as animals that "were not socialized properly". Additionally, social media posts on Facebook and Instagram featuring dogs available for adoption sometimes included information about the dog's background, for example a post about a dog named Max:

*“Max has spent his life outdoors on a tether. Because he hasn’t been exposed to much Max can be excitable and will need an experienced and patient guardian to show him that the world isn’t such a scary place. Could Max be the right dog for you?”*

The post, created by BCSPCA correspondence and news staff, describes a dog that lived in a deprived situation with limited exposure to people and perhaps other stimuli. This situation is similar to the callers’ concerns about a tethered dog that operator Lee responded to, described earlier. This situation is also similar to the efforts to find an adopter for Henry (discussed in the previous chapter) whereby the website characterized the ideal adopter as “experienced and understanding”. Staff come to recognize such similarities and patterns and do additional work aimed at helping dogs like Max find an “experienced and patient guardian”. The word choice “guardian” and not “owner” is intentional as it shifts the focus from a relationship based on property and ownership to one based on support and care. As in the previous discussion about the words “reactive” and “aggressive”, here we see that staff have knowledge about how certain words influence feelings about the relationship that the BCSPCA promotes between animals and people. This is part of the work that staff do to advocate for animals after they are removed from deprived situations.

## **5.5 Discussion**

These data show that the interests of animals like Henry living in deprived situations, and the concerns that operators, officers and members of the public have for these animals, are

at odds with the authorized institutional practices guided especially by the legal definition of “distress”. When Henry and the dogs he lived with were young, although they were investigated by animal protection officers, investigations did not lead to their removal from the environment. The misalignment of these interests and concerns comes with a cost to animals that live in deprived situations. These animals may develop behavioural problems that are difficult to rehabilitate in a shelter. For Henry, this meant a complicated set of work processes designed to secure his adoption and the (somewhat predictable) path towards his eventual euthanasia. Moreover, the work processes towards Henry’s outcome were a source of stress for frontline shelter staff, officers, and the organization. The misalignment of interests and concerns comes with a cost to operators and officers as they face constraints in their work when determining when and how they can take action to protect animals and, in some cases, officers work hard to be strategic and creative as they develop other (legal) ways they can respond to concerns.

The in-depth examination of the actual work of officers and operators, and of the constraints they face, differs from approaches used in the small amount of research that exists on this topic which tends to categorize, interpret or conceptualize what officers and operators do. For example, the important work of Arluke (2004) categorized animal protection officers as either “animal-inclined” or “police-oriented” based on their “style” of enforcement and used the concept of “humane realism” to describe how officers begin their careers idealistically, then become cynical, and eventually develop a realistic attitude, accepting that they cannot help in all cases but can make some positive contributions (Arluke 2004). Some of Arluke’s (2004)

description of how dispatchers (ie operators) listen for “key words” that signal cruelty and ask callers to provide details about the situation the animal is in (eg whether the animal looks ill, whether food is available) is similar to IE’s focus on work. Additionally, Arluke (2006) discussed officers’ efforts to educate people to be “more responsible animal owners” in situations that do not constitute abuse or cruelty but where animals need some support. However, while Arluke theorizes and conceptualizes such activity, this chapter stays focused on the knowledge and actions of staff. It explicates the work operators do, the questions they ask, their efforts to apply the law in the interests of animals and the “soft” approaches they sometimes use while they also become proficient at the process of entering information into the database, completing ITOs and other administrative tasks.

A few other studies have used different approaches to study animal protection officers. Stull and Holcomb (2014) developed a survey for USA animal protection agencies and identified that obtaining funding and finding space to house animals were constraints in dealing with horse abuse and neglect investigations. Morton *et al* (2020) analyzed the literature to describe theorized causes of the “enforcement gap” (ie disparities between written goals in the law and enforcement outcomes) across state and territorial animal protection laws in Australia. They focused on broad gaps such as differences in the definition of legal terms (eg animal, harm) and reliance on public complaints.

A few studies have used approaches that align somewhat more with the social ontology of IE and its focus on work processes. Coulter and Campbell (2020) conducted interviews and document analysis to create a map of animal protection law enforcement in Manitoba, Canada,

which is publicly funded. Finally, Holmberg (2014) interviewed animal welfare officers and analyzed how they make judgements about hoarding situations using visual (eg photographs), olfactory (eg ammonia levels) and auditory (eg dogs barking) information.

The findings of this chapter make it clear that tensions arise over dogs that lack regular social contact with humans and other dogs, or lack physical or mental stimulation, but are not in “distress” as defined in the *PCA Act*. The legal definition of “distress” is mostly focused on animals’ physiological health. The work of frontline shelter staff in shelters, however, is focused on a much broader concept of animal “welfare” – work that is ultimately organized around establishing safe and companionable homes for animals and that leads to safe and predictable animal behaviour.

This broader set of concerns is well established among frontline shelter staff, officers and animal protection organizations. For example, USA and Canadian shelter guidelines discuss the importance of what the guidelines call “enrichment” such as interactive chewing or scratching toys, puzzles for mental stimulation and physical activity. (But note how the language of “enrichment” suggests that these activities go beyond what is considered basic care). The guidelines also discuss the importance of “socialization” (ie exposure to new stimuli such as noises, objects, humans, other animals) and the importance of daily handling by people to prevent puppies and kittens from developing fearful and anxious behaviours later in life (Newbury *et al* 2010; Attard *et al* 2013). Animals that do not receive proper socialization for behavioural development are recognized as more likely to develop behavioural problems (eg Cutler *et al* 2017 for dogs; McCune 1995 for cats). As an extreme example, dogs from hoarding

situations (where the number of animals exceeds the owner's ability to provide a clean and healthy (both physically and mentally) environment for animals) typically do not receive proper socialization and tend to be more fearful toward other dogs and strangers (McMillan *et al* 2016). Animals so deprived may ultimately end up in shelters where, as explicated in the previous chapter, staff face challenges in their efforts to socialize animals and to provide "behavioural modification". Hence, deprivation is a concern that has consequences for animals and may lead to animals developing behaviours that, as in Henry's case, results in eventual euthanasia following a circuitous and time-consuming legal process. The current social organization of animal protection work results in officers who lack authority to intervene meaningfully before problems develop. This is an area where policies, procedures and legal authority might usefully be reviewed and revised.

Officers are particularly constrained in their work by the term "distress" in the *PCA Act*. "Distress" is cited in most provincial and territorial animal protection laws (Fraser *et al* 2018) and this is a feature of animal protection law that limits and standardizes when officers, within a given jurisdiction, can take meaningful actions on behalf of animals.

The definition of "distress" differs across jurisdictions and has broadened over time in some provinces (Fraser *et al* 2018). For example, in BC's *PCA Act* in 1997, an animal was considered to be in "distress" if it was:

- (a) *deprived of adequate food, water, shelter, ventilation, space, care of veterinary treatment,*
- (b) *injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or*

*(c) abused or neglected.*

In 2012, the definition was expanded to include deprivation of light and exercise, being “kept in conditions that are unsanitary” and being “not protected from excessive heat or cold”.

Other provinces have expanded the definition even further. For example, in Nova Scotia’s *Animal Protection Act* in 2010, an animal was considered to be in “distress” if it was:

- (a) in need of adequate care, food, water or shelter or in need of reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold; or*
- (b) injured, sick, in pain, or suffering undue hardship, privation or neglect.*

In 2013, this definition was expanded to include “*deprived of adequate ventilation, space, veterinary care or medical treatment*” and “*abused*”. And in 2015 the definition was expanded further to include “*suffering undue ... anxiety*”, “*kept in conditions that are unsanitary or that will significantly impair the animal’s health or well-being over time*”, “*kept in conditions that contravene the standards of care prescribed by the regulations*” and “*abandoned by its owner or by a person in charge of the animal in a manner that causes, or is likely to cause, distress resulting from any or all of the factors listed in this subsection*”. The reference to conditions “*that will significantly impair the animal’s health or well-being over time*” could conceivably allow officers to take early action in cases of social deprivation such as Henry’s early environment.

Despite the broadening of the definition of “distress” in BC, the constraints created by the term prevented officers from dealing with certain concerns where members of the public expected the BCSPCA to intervene. Given that the term “distress” guided operator and officer

work in BC, future research could observe such work in different jurisdictions to understand how different definitions of the term organize what officers can and cannot do. Does, for example, Nova Scotia's broader definition of "distress" allow officers in that province to intervene earlier for animals raised without appropriate social contact? With such knowledge, legislation might be altered to better protect animals in situations that can lead to future harm.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter explicates how legal regulations and processes constrain when and how operators and officers can take actions for animals. In cases where the legal definition of "distress" is met, officers can issue orders to owners and the "distress" may be alleviated. In cases where the legal definition of "distress" is not met, animals may continue living in a deprived situation that could have consequences for their future mental and physical health. The socially organized practices explicated in this chapter direct officers and operators to spend their time determining whether calls of concern have "grounds" for investigation, "posting" and "attending" at properties and also "issuing orders" when "distress" is identified. These practices are organized in a way that cannot include animals living in deprived situations, such as Henry, when multiple intervention attempts over two years did not result in his removal from the property. This ultimately led to Henry being euthanized due to serious behavioural problems that became more severe during his lengthy stay in the shelter – a situation that proved distressing for all those involved after Henry came to the attention of frontline sheltering and protection work.



## **Chapter 6: The everyday work of providing “alternative measures” to keep people and animals together**

### **6.1 Introduction**

“Keeping people and animals together” is a phrase that has recently become part of North American animal sheltering and protection discourse. The phrase is commonly used to describe initiatives that aim to help people provide care for their animals so that animals can remain with their owners and avoid being removed to a shelter. In these cases, people are not knowingly neglecting or abusing their animals but require some form of support, perhaps because they have little income, are elderly or have physical or mental health problems. The terms “One Health”, “One Welfare” and the “human-animal bond” are also applied to such initiatives that promote the connection between human, animal and environmental health or welfare. Well-known initiatives in the USA include the Pets for Life (PFL) program of the Humane Society of the United States, and the Human Animal Support Services (HASS) program of American Pets Alive! animal sheltering and protection organization. PFL uses outreach and collaboration with existing shelters, community organizations and veterinary clinics to improve access to veterinary services (HSUS 2021b). HASS provides toolkits for animal shelters and animal rescues to promote partnership-building with social service agencies, case management in shelters and animal fostering (HASS 2021).

In BC, Canada, charitable organizations like the BCSPCA and others (eg Community Veterinary Outreach, Vancouver Humane Society, Paws for Hope) all offer services aimed at

keeping people and animals together. Services include free or low-cost veterinary care and sterilization, pet food banks, supply donation and emergency animal boarding. Metrics about the use of these services are reported in strategic plan reports (eg BCSPCA 2020), magazines (Animal Sense 2018), organization webpages and peer-reviewed publications (Jordan & Lem 2014; Panning *et al* 2016; also see Decker Sparks *et al* 2018; reviews by LaVallee *et al* 2017; Baker *et al* 2018). Publicity aimed to build donations for these services often includes quantitative information about, for instance, the total number of cats and dogs sterilized or the amount of free pet food distributed annually, sometimes with accompanying “success stories” about people and animals who have received help from the organizations. However, the actual work that animal protection officers and other individuals do to achieve such outcomes is rarely described in detail.

The aim of this chapter is to explore some of the actual work activities of animal protection officers as they engage in the work designed to “keep people and animals together”. Keeping people and animals together, although an institutional goal, is complex to achieve because it requires officers to respond to animals in situations that do not meet the legal definition of “distress” in the *PCA Act* but involve people and animals that require some form of support. I begin this chapter with an ethnographic account of a cat and their owner who received support from an officer in the form of “alternative measures” – that is, forms of support intended to solve problems so owners can keep their animals and avoid animal removal. In this case, however, the “alternative measures” did not resolve the problem identified by the officer. I use this account as an entry point to explore a series of tensions that

arise in the everyday work that animal protection staff do when they provide “alternative measures” to keep people and animals together.

#### **6.1.1 Ethnographic account**

The account below is based on an observation of the work that an animal protection officer did with a person and their cat living in a supportive housing building. Supportive housing is subsidized and is available for low-income, disabled, elderly and other individuals in need of support. Some supportive housing is categorized as single-room occupancy (SROs) which are buildings made up of small individual rooms with shared washrooms and kitchens (BC Housing 2021). The account describes what officers do when investigating calls about people and animals living in this type of housing. Frequently, as in the account below, the animal is not in “distress” (as legally defined), but the animal and person require support. In such cases, officers are organized to provide “alternative measures” so that the animal can remain with their owner instead of being removed and taken to a shelter.

*I joined Officer Morgan on a ride-along to respond to a call about an elderly tenant with an elderly cat in supportive housing. As we approached the building, Morgan explained that they know the building manager; they were here last week for a similar concern with a different tenant. When we arrived, Morgan rang the doorbell and explained to the manager that we were there to respond to a call about a cat. The manager opened the door and greeted us, sharing their concern about the cat that had seemed lethargic when they checked in on the tenant earlier that week.*

*We went to the tenant's room and found the door slightly ajar. Morgan knocked and asked if we could come in. The tenant agreed and as we pushed the door open we saw a cat lying just inside, next to some cat kibble and a glass of water. The tenant was sitting in a chair smoking a cigarette; there were ash trays with piles of cigarettes scattered around the small room; one of the stove burners was on high, and the windows were closed. On a warm summer day, it was very warm and difficult to breathe. Morgan first pointed to the stove and asked if the tenant was cooking, to which the tenant replied "No, why?" "Your stove is on!" said Morgan. "Oh!" the tenant replied but remained seated, "I guess I just forgot it. Can you shut it off?" Morgan turned the stove off and asked the tenant how their cat was doing, petting the dozing cat. The tenant looked at the cat and replied, "I've had him since he was a kitten. I remember he was the smallest of the litter and that's why I picked him". Morgan asked the tenant how the cat has been eating and drinking and if they have taken the cat to the veterinarian lately, to which the tenant responded no, it is difficult without a carrier to transport the cat. Morgan said, "No problem, I think I have a carrier in my truck!" We left the room and went to the truck, picked out a cat carrier and some cat food. Once we were back in the room, Morgan gave the carrier and food to the tenant and told them to take their cat to the free veterinary clinic happening in a few days in the area. Morgan then asked if the tenant would like a reminder and they responded, "Sure! I'll take the cat there because I have this carrier!" Morgan, somewhat jokingly said, "Hey! That's the carrier I just brought*

*you!” The tenant looked confused. Before we left, Morgan asked if the tenant had someone to help them bring the cat to the clinic; the tenant replied yes. As we left the building, we thanked the manager and drove to the next call. Morgan explained that the work we did focuses on providing support to people so they can keep their animals.*

*A few weeks later, I joined Morgan for another ride-along. We returned to the same building to respond to a different call. Morgan saw the manager and asked how the cat from the previous week was doing. The manager looked down and shared that the tenant did not take the cat to the veterinary clinic and the cat died. Morgan was disappointed, and later explained to me that the manager probably “wanted us to do more for the cat”.*

### **6.1.2 Frame for the chapter problematic**

This account of animal protection officer work (talking with people about their animals, providing support in the form of food and carriers, referring people to free veterinary clinics, talking with building managers, making multiple visits about similar concerns) is likely familiar to frontline shelter staff, officers and others involved in work that is focused on keeping people and animals together. The account generates questions about the work that officers do in situations where an animal is not in “distress”, as defined by the law, but where conditions are seriously sub-optimal and the owner requires support to improve the animal’s well-being. It describes the work Morgan does to keep the cat with the owner while also attending to the

cat's physical health. It also generates questions about how officers make decisions about animals in their work with people and pets who live in supportive housing. It generates questions about people who are experiencing cognitive decline who have and are responsible for animals. It provides clues about the interactions officers have with people in supportive housing as well as with human social services staff who provide the people with other services such as housing, food and health care. It notes that in these complex and demanding situations, improving the welfare of the animals can be tenuous and difficult to secure.

While this chapter identifies work processes and social relations involved in provide “alternative measures”, it does not fully explicate how this work is being organized. Even this preliminary analysis, however, suggests that the growing discourse on the benefits of keeping people and animals together may result in unforeseen issues for owners, animals and animal sheltering and protection staff that are not yet well understood. I begin with a description of the work involved in delivering the BCSPCA's approach that is referred to in texts as “alternative measures”. I then explore how tensions can arise for animals when the provision of “alternative measures” does not resolve the problem identified by the officer.

## **6.2 Providing “alternative measures” for people and animals**

Providing “alternative measures” is a phrase used by administrators, officers and frontline shelter staff to discuss work activities that aim to support keeping people and animals together. Such measures involve strategies and decisions made to improve an animal's living conditions that are not covered by the *PCA Act*. As described earlier, the *PCA Act* establishes

standards and processes that organize what officers are empowered to do for an animal who meets the criteria for “distress”. The “alternative measures” described in this chapter refer to remedial work that is intended to avoid activating the legal processes and sanctions of the *PCA Act*. Work performed by officers (and sometimes other frontline shelter staff and volunteers) includes giving pet supplies to people in need, referring people to free or low-cost veterinary clinics (including the BCSPCA’s own free clinic) and offering “compassionate” or “emergency” boarding of animals in instances when owners fall ill, flee from violence, lose housing temporarily or face other difficult circumstances.

In a virtual focus group, officers reported that their efforts to support owners in improving the welfare of their animals is not new. They described how they have always tried to provide “alternative measures” whenever possible. They explained that now, the informal work is being pulled into the official work processes of the BCSPCA. Now there are forms to be completed which are used to generate metrics. Their work is being directed toward the ideas circulating in animal sheltering and protection discourse about “One Health”, “One Welfare” and the “human-animal bond”. The recently created “Alternative Measures Program Animal Protection Officer request” form is one of the texts that is institutionalizing the trend toward alternative approaches in animal protection. When officers encounter a situation that invokes their understandings of “One Health”, “One Welfare” or the “human-animal bond”, they fill in the form with information about the animals’ owner, whether the owner has been investigated before, whether they believe the owner can resolve the issues with the support provided, and the type of assistance (eg financial, veterinary procedure) required. The form was created so

that in the future, the “alternative measures” support provided to people and their animals can be recorded and officially tracked within the institution.

Providing “alternative measures” is also connected to one of the main goals of the BCSPCA 2019-2023 strategic plan which states:

*“People facing barriers to providing good physical and behavioural care for their animals are supported, thereby improving animal welfare, and reducing the need for them to give up their animal”.*

Indeed, the following section of the account shows how Officer Morgan works to achieve this goal:

*From account: Morgan asks the tenant if they have taken the cat to the veterinarian lately, to which the tenant responds no, it is difficult without a carrier to transport the cat. Morgan says, “No problem, I think I have a carrier in my truck!” We leave the room and go to the truck, pick out a cat carrier and some cat food.*

When Morgan “attended” this call, they noted that the cat was not in “distress” as legally defined but determined that the animal should receive a check-up from a veterinarian and so provided an “alternative measure” so that the person could transport the cat to the veterinary clinic. Morgan’s work involves assessing the animal, considering options (eg animal removal, issuing an order, providing practical resources to support the person and animal) and then making a decision about what to do. Morgan’s decision to provide an “alternative measure” aligns with the BCSPCA strategic plan to keep the person and their animal together, thus reducing any need for animal removal. This illustrates how the strategic institutional goal



of providing “alternative measures” enters officer work alongside the *PCA Act* and how the mandate directs the actions officers take.

In many cases, “alternative measures” achieve positive outcomes for the organization and officers. Supporting a person to keep their animal saves time and financial resources as officers do not need to organize the removal of the animal – a process that includes talking to frontline shelter staff to find an available kennel in a shelter, finding a veterinarian to examine the animal, possibly applying for a warrant, and possibly recruiting other officers to help to remove the animal(s). Additionally, the work involved with supporting a person to keep their animal through the provision of “alternative measures” (eg subsidized or free sterilization, emergency boarding, free veterinary care and pet supplies) is broadly categorized into metrics and positive organizational outcomes that show work is being done for animals and their owners in the community (eg BCSPCA 2021e). Such metrics include, for example, tracking the number of animals receiving food bank services (BCSPCA 2021f).

Further, providing “alternative measures” generates improvements in sheltering work and for animal owners and animals. Reducing the number of animals brought into shelters decreases the demands on frontline shelter staff. Animal owners are able to keep their animals in a familiar environment instead of a potentially stressful shelter. In a virtual focus group, Officer Drew explained:

*“A lot of times we get animals and you know, you’re going to get told to just bring them straight to a vet clinic for euthanasia – a lot of time for aggression purposes or what have you. ... But for someone who is homeless or of low income it’s not for a*

*lack of care that an animal is going without something, and their animal can still likely have a very good life with them. It's also maybe an animal that wouldn't be successful in our shelters. So it's not only saving us a lot of money it's also saving that animal's life and keeping it where it is happy".*

Drew's comment in the focus group aligns with what I observed Morgan doing with the tenant and the cat. The work involves assessing an animal's situation and deciding which actions to take, either to apply the *PCA Act* or provide the owner with resources to care for their animal. The animal's physical and behavioural health in the shelter, and whether the animal would be "successful" in the shelter, are real concerns for officers. Officers are also aware of the challenges faced by shelters in working with animals with problem behaviours and consider these challenges when making decisions about animals in the field. Drew's comment above also shows that Drew is empathetic towards both people and animals in these situations, acknowledging that being "homeless or of low income" does not result in a "lack of care for an animal".

The data show that officers such as Drew also recognize the high demand for shelter resources and that keeping an animal with their owner saves the organization money. After Drew brought up this point, Officer Regan recounted a recent discussion with an administrator who reiterated that the cost of animal removal is greater than the cost of providing support to people so they can provide better care for their animal. Therefore, the economics of sheltering animals enters officers' work in a more formal way as a form of accountability to the BCSPCA

budget. All these interests being activated in officers' work suggest important threads for further analysis.

Another work activity that is considered an "alternative measure" is offering "compassionate" or "emergency" boarding of animals. Officers (and sometimes frontline shelter staff) offer this option to individuals who are facing difficult circumstances (eg illness, violence, being temporarily without housing). Frontline shelter staff provide free boarding (kennel space, daily care, feeding, walking, basic veterinary care) for these animals. This is a new category of animal in the shelter. Whereas animals being "sheltered" have been legally "surrendered" or "seized", animals being "boarded" remain the property of the owner. Frontline shelter staff perform the same medical intake process for these animals to monitor and respond to infectious diseases but the animals are not available for adoption. Because they are housed within the general shelter population, shelter staff must designate the status of these animals with signs clipped onto kennels. As well, there is a need for frequent explanations to the public that they are not available for adoption. Staff sometimes take additional precautions (housing animals in more secure and less front-facing shelter areas) if the animals' owners require additional protection, for example if they are fleeing violence or are in protective custody themselves. Emergency boarding is usually offered for two weeks but can be extended on a case-by-case basis.

Officers' work of providing "alternative measures", like their work applying legal criteria for "distress", relies on discretion and judgement. Officer Morgan explained (my underline for emphasis):

*“Technically, some calls could be a cruelty (ie “distress”), but we figure it out and do a compassionate boarding so we don’t have to go in and seize the animal. Someone puts it in as a cruelty [call], but we go in there as alternative measures”.*

In this case, there is discretionary work involved in responding to a report of “cruelty” (from the public). The public’s expectations of the BCSPCA (and the organization’s reliance on charitable donations) is part of the complexity of an officer’s decision-making process. This enters the actual work involved to “figure it out”. Morgan elaborated that a decision to bring an animal in for compassionate boarding involves first gaining consent from owners to board their animal in the shelter, telephoning frontline shelter staff to find an available kennel, removing the animal from their current location and transporting it to the shelter. Frontline shelter staff as well as volunteers are also involved as they provide intake examinations and daily care for the animals in the shelter. Finally, officers stay in contact with the owner and frontline shelter staff to provide updates about when, and sometimes if, the animal can be returned to their owner. This engages the officers in “social work” that focuses as much on the person and their changing circumstances as it does on the animal who is temporarily living in the shelter.

In order to conduct the work of keeping people and their animals together officers also do work to prepare for the day’s calls. They regularly stock their trucks with supplies, including dog, cat and rat food, treats, bowls and dishes, collars, harnesses and leashes, animal carriers, beds, blankets, towels, toys, dog waste bags, cat litter and personal protective equipment. The officers gather these things from a room in shelters where donations are stored. Most of these supplies are donated by the public but some are purchased by the BCSPCA. During ride-alongs,

officers investigate concerns received about animals (looking for evidence of “distress” as discussed in chapter five) but the core part of the work is talking to people about their animals and offering them supplies and referrals to clinics. Additionally, officers sometimes return to properties with supplies they did not have during initial visits (eg a large kennel for rats). Further, officers have developed knowledge about other animal rescue organizations (eg for elderly animals, breed-specific rescues) and they learn about the various social services (eg food banks, child protection services, mental health agencies) that they may contact in some situations. When I asked officers how they knew about these community resources, they explained that they learned by “word of mouth” and “on the job” including talking with other officers during training and gaining experiences through work on cases over time. This form of learning attests to the heretofore informality of this component of officers’ work.

In summary, providing “alternative measures” has been a part of officer work that is now being more formally linked to the institutional goal of keeping people and animals together. In its institutionalized form it contributes to economic savings that are achieved when seizure and sheltering are averted. Activating “alternative measures” is work that requires officers to assess animals and their circumstances and then use discretion to decide on a course of action. In particular, when the legal criteria for “distress” are not met, or when particular circumstances accompany the “distress”, officers can activate different solutions to address animal welfare.

The situations that the “alternative measures” target can be enormously complex. For example, the ethnographic account at the outset of this chapter described an elderly person

with some physical limitations, cognitive decline and living in a single-room accommodation setting where, it seems, the building manager is a conduit to the BCSPCA. In the account, Morgan, whose official role and responsibilities included only the elderly cat (not the owner) identified that the cat should see a veterinarian and provided equipment (cat carrier) and clinic information to facilitate that outcome. However, the owner needed more resources for the veterinary visit to happen, and despite Morgan's efforts, the clinic visit was not realized. Perhaps there was also public transit to navigate. Perhaps the owner's health was not conducive to putting the cat into the carrier and making the trip to the clinic. Despite Morgan's intervention, the cat died and the officer, supportive-housing manager and owner were disappointed. Such outcomes are a source of tension for officers. Thus, while "alternative measures" provide considerable latitude for action, the desired outcome may be uncertain and hard to secure. Although the "alternative measures" strategy allows Morgan to side-step the legal constraints of the *PCA Act*, now there are other, very different constraints that make this form of animal protection work difficult.

### **6.3 Providing "alternative measures" on repeat occasions**

The difficulties officers face with animal owners in supportive housing or other precarious situations are more complex when officers make repeated visits to follow-up with animals and humans. As I accompanied officers on ride-alongs we sometimes visited supportive housing and other properties for the same issue, or a similar issue with a different tenant. In a virtual focus group, Officer Drew gave an example of repeatedly providing "alternative

measures” but over time saw that their actions actually misaligned with their intention to improve the living conditions of animals:

*“I have someone out in the country that I’ve been dealing with for close to three years now. Every year I show up it’s the exact same concerns. And we’ve offered alternative measure after alternative measure after alternative measure. We brought bales of straw for the doghouse, door flaps, dog food, dog bowls, enrichment; you name it, we’ve brought it. We were bordering on getting a warrant last week to remove their new dog because they replaced their dog that died with a new dog in the exact same situation. I was telling a new administrator about the case and they asked me, “what kind of alternative measures can you offer?” And I said, “At this point the only thing I can offer is physical labour!” [Laughs]. That’s where we’re at. Me walking their dog, moving their doghouse. That’s all we have left. We’ve now proven beyond a doubt that we have tried everything. We have tried to help them. But they’re not doing the leg work as well. So even if it backfires and the alternative measures don’t work at least now we’ve solidified the case. And if we need to go for a warrant, we have tried everything, absolutely everything”.*

Drew’s description of the work they have done to provide “alternative measures” illuminates several points. With the increasing emphasis on “alternative measures”, Drew is held to new accountabilities by the administrator; providing “alternative measures” has become part of the institutional goal that officers are directed to demonstrate they have tried as they work on cases. Drew understands that providing “alternative measures” is now

*required*. There are work processes that must be followed when the owner is in a socially precarious situation. This new layer of assessing the owners' circumstances makes the work even more complex than the already nuanced and complex job of enforcing animal protection law. The discretion and strategies that the officers apply are being transformed from ad hoc, informal activities to being more securely tied to institutionalized processes.

Moreover, documenting the provision (and failure, in this case) of "alternative measures" is seen as building a "solid case" if the situation does not improve for the animal. In chapter five, I described the work processes of gathering evidence and the associated texts involved with "attending" and "posting". This is familiar work officers undertake to establish that the processes necessary for legal proceedings have been followed. The process involves giving "warnings" and giving the owner chances to comply. In cases where alternative measures are implemented, such processes are harder to enact. In the situation that Drew describes – regularly offering supportive measures that result in only short-lived improvements – the intervention circumvents the processes of "attending" and "posting" by providing education and support. However, now there is a new dog being brought into the unchanged conditions that are seen as a risk to the animal's welfare. Thus, Drew understands that although their efforts have not improved the animal's situation their work could be used to build a case for animal removal.

In a virtual focus group with administrators, participants agreed that providing "alternative measures" and keeping people and animals together is an important institutional goal but they were also concerned that this goal causes problems for animals in situations



where there is marked vulnerability for both owner and animal. When discussing “alternative measures”, one administrator said:

*“There needs to be more research on the animal and their experience – their welfare – especially now with this big push to keep families together, help people keep their animals. [This] is great, but I don’t think there is enough research on ... what is the animal’s experience? I do see some people trying to help the person, but then they are faced with barriers and obstacles in their life that maybe at this point in their life they can’t care for the animal. So it’s a better option to rehome or do something else”.*

Here the administrator acknowledges a core challenge of providing “alternative measures”: officers must assess situations and make decisions about which actions to take, whether they activate their authority under the PCA Act or whether they invoke the increasingly institutionalized systems for “alternative measures”. New tensions seem to arise for some of the animals in these situations. As with “orange” dogs, the variety of factors involved means that animals’ physical or mental health needs may not be met.

#### **6.4 Interactions with human social services staff**

*From account: Morgan is also disappointed, and later explains to me that the manager probably “wanted us to do more for the cat”.*

Providing “alternative measures” requires officers to coordinate their work with frontline staff in human social service agencies, for example supportive housing staff and social

workers. This work is also part of the BCSPCA 2019-2023 Strategic Plan (my underline for emphasis):

*“Collaborate with law enforcement, prosecution and social service agencies to grow their interest in considering vulnerable animals, and partner to reduce animal distress in the community”.*

On numerous occasions I observed the actual, time-consuming work being done by officers who were attempting to “collaborate” and “partner” with human social services, especially (in the situations I observed) in supportive housing. The work of responding to calls that involved SRO housing requires officers to explain the nature of the complaint to the tenants who own the animals. Much of the officers’ work that I observed was built on the skill of listening empathetically to tenant’s responses. Officers enthusiastically greeted the tenants’ animals, complimenting and petting them, while asking owners if the animal could have a treat. They then asked questions about how tenants cared for, fed, played with and walked animals while also answering questions tenants had about their animals related to the animals’ physical and behavioural needs.

Establishing relationships with many members of the SRO community was a key work process during these visits. During visits to SROs we were often approached by tenants and other individuals not involved with the call, but who, upon seeing officers or their trucks with the BCSPCA logo, talked to them about problems they saw with animals in the community. Given that officers made frequent visits to supportive housing buildings, they developed relationships with managers by listening to their questions and talking to them about their work

as officers, explaining and often clarifying the BCSPCA's legal mandate: to help animals in "distress". The work (and associated tensions) of establishing "distress" arose differently in the SRO settings: as Officer Drew stated earlier, being "homeless or of low income" did not automatically result in a "lack of care for an animal".

Establishing relationships with members of the SRO community, however, could be challenging. For example, after visiting a supportive housing building with Officer Casey, Casey explained that they had visited the same building several times in the last few weeks for similar calls (my underline for emphasis):

*"There is a misunderstanding about what we, the SPCA, can and cannot do. They [supportive housing staff] call us and want us to be the "bad guy" and threaten to take people's animals away. But we cannot do this if the animals are not in distress".*

In the SRO contexts, officers and frontline animal shelter staff often spoke of "misunderstandings", "miscommunications" or "a lack of communication". These problems were sometimes amplified when their work involved contact with human social service workers. For example, I observed frontline animal shelter staff "intake" approximately 40 rats of different ages that a person relinquished from a single supportive housing room. The shelter staff had to quickly find shelter and foster-housing for the rats. As well, it stretched the staff's resources to provide physical examinations, clean, feed and water the animals daily and make euthanasia decisions for some of the ill rats. When this happened, shelter staff told me they were frustrated about the large influx of animals, some in poor condition. They were critical of the supportive housing staff. They could not understand why the supportive housing staff did

not communicate with them sooner about the situation. In another example during a virtual focus group with shelter staff, staff member Robin expressed their frustration with a social worker who was working with a person who had a few unsterilized cats. Over time, the cats produced several litters of kittens. The social worker wanted the BCSPCA's help to convince the person to relinquish some of their cats. Robin explained:

*"When I saw photos", [sigh] clearly this had become an animal hoarding situation, but the social worker did not think it was. We took in some of the cats, fixed [sterilized] the cats and had to euthanize some of them. We were able to help in the end but I had to be really honest with the social worker. I don't think they knew what animal hoarding was".*

These "misunderstandings" and "miscommunications" can result in poor outcomes for animals living in deprived situations or, as in the cases above, hoarding situations where an animal's physical and mental health are likely poor. The misunderstandings are also frustrating for frontline shelter staff and officers interacting with frontline staff in human social services. Future IE research could investigate how these miscommunications arise between animal protection and human social service staff working under different institutional procedures and ruling relations, and what steps might improve such communication.

## **6.5 Discussion**

Within animal protection work, the provision of "alternative measures" is promoted as a way to keep people and animals together, but the actual work that officers do to activate this

aspiration is complex and poorly understood. In this chapter I have provided ethnographic data to describe the demanding and nuanced work of officers trying to provide “alternative measures” in an urban context involving human poverty and disability. This is not intended as a complete IE analysis of the social organization of this work. Figure 3 maps the work represented here and identifies additional questions that require further attention. However, even this preliminary study suggests that the growing discourse on keeping people and animals together may result in unforeseen issues for owners, animals and animal sheltering and protection staff that are not yet well understood.

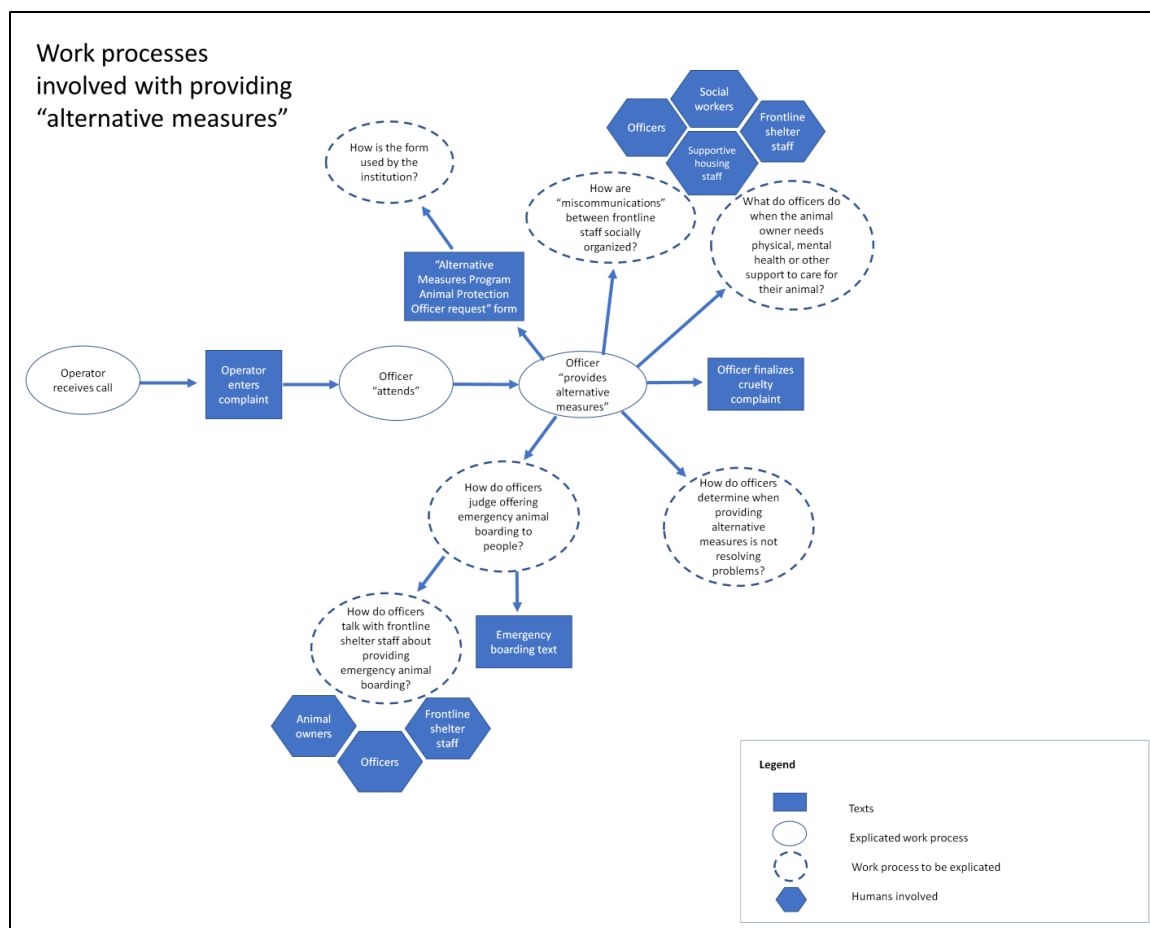


Figure 3 Map of explicated work processes and work processes that require further IE inquiry to understand the social organization of providing "alternative measures".

There is very little research on the physical and mental health of animals living with people who have minimal or no housing, and the scarce work that has been done reports somewhat different results. Williams and Hogg (2016) assessed the physical health and behaviour of 100 dogs; the study found comparable health outcomes for dogs owned by people who had a home and those owned by people not living in a home. Scanlon *et al* (2021) assessed 21 dogs owned by people with minimal or no housing and found nine dogs were overweight and 13 had behavioural problems (usually becoming anxious when left alone). French *et al*

(2021) reported 38% of cats and dogs owned by people facing housing vulnerability were overweight or obese, although they report that this figure is similar to the prevalence of overweight animals in private veterinary practices. The limited literature thus suggests that no broad generalizations can be made about the health and welfare of animals cared for by people with precarious housing. Hence, officers dealing with such situations need to assess them case by case.

Observations in this chapter provide examples of officers trying to assess the physical and mental health of animals living with owners in precarious housing. This work of officers is guided by both the *PCA Act* and the increasingly institutionalized BCSPCA mandate to provide “alternative measures” so that animals do not need to be brought into a shelter. The officers’ decision-making included considering the animal’s current situation, what their life would be like in the shelter, and what forms of support might improve the animals’ physical and mental health. Future research is needed to assess the success of different forms of intervention in the wide range of circumstances that officers encounter.

The research literature on “keeping people and animals together”, and publications that draw on the concepts of “One Health” and “One Welfare”, typically encourage what is referred to as “multi-agency collaboration”. This is a conceptual term that is expected to promote cooperation between animal and human social service agencies but overlooks the institutional ruling relations (eg regulatory frameworks) within which such work happens. For example, two review articles explored low-cost and free veterinary services and noted that the concept of “One Health” is used to describe activities that promote collaboration between disciplines and

organizations working at the intersection of human, animal and environmental health (LaVallee *et al* 2017; Baker *et al* 2018); however, the empirical ground of such “collaborations” is not investigated. “One Welfare” and “One Health” are discussed in the context of working with low-income communities or homeless populations (Spencer *et al* 2017; Hawes *et al* 2020; Scanlon *et al* 2021; Kerman *et al* 2020; Rauktis *et al* 2021), but most of these papers are aspirational and do not interrogate the institutional regulations and practices that make such work easy or more difficult. Similarly, research about animal hoarding frequently encourages “multi-agency approaches” to deal with the problem (Patronek 1999; Reinisch 2008; Castrodale *et al* 2010; Lockwood 2018; Elliott *et al* 2019; Strong *et al* 2019; Snowden *et al* 2020). What this collaboration and work actually involves, at an everyday level, needs to be explored in detail.

Indeed, collaboration between animal and human social services is bound to be complex, and when the welfare of people is considered alongside the welfare of animals tensions and difficulties will likely arise. Frontline staff in human social services must navigate and follow their own matrix of institutional processes and regulatory texts (eg Public Health and Safety Rules, Fire Codes, Residential Tenancy Agreements) while supporting people who may be elderly, of low income, disabled, or have mental or physical health problems. Moreover, the interests of the animals can be in competition with the interests of their human owners who also need support. A useful line of future IE research would be to adopt the standpoint of supportive housing managers, social workers or other frontline staff in human social services to understand the institutional processes and ruling relations that they must follow, and to determine when, how and if animals enter into this work. Such research could investigate



potential conflicts and areas for cooperation that arise from the different ruling relations that organize animal protection and human social services. Research could also examine how animal protection officers do the work of collaborating with human social services and identify challenges they face and resources from their own institution that could support them.

Literature about people living with animals in precarious housing typically attempts to understand how people “experience” living in these situations. Most research categorizes the benefits and drawbacks of animal ownership for such people (see reviews by Kerman *et al* 2019 and Cleary *et al* 2020). Some research quantifies individuals’ experiences using existing scales about animal attachment, for example the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (eg Singer *et al* 1995; Yang *et al* 2020; Rauktis *et al* 2021), the Animal Empathy scale and the Companion Animal Bonding scale (Taylor *et al* 2004), and the Commitment to Pets scale (Rauktis *et al* 2021). Other efforts to quantify the issues focus on depression, substance use and loneliness using standardized scales (eg Rhoades *et al* 2015; Lem *et al* 2016). Irvine *et al* (2012) and Irvine (2013) applied sociological theories to understand how having an animal influences how precariously housed people construct their identity. Much of the literature on this topic makes use of standardized scales and interpretation of people’s experiences, but such approaches overlook what can be discovered by empirical observations.

Finally, when Officer Morgan left the elderly tenant and the cat, an important unknown is the obstacles that prevented the tenant from using the support provided. For example, when officers refer people to low-cost and free veterinary clinics, what actual, material challenges may impede their ability to access such services? To answer such questions future research,

such as participatory IE following Nichols *et al* (2017), could take the standpoint of people living in supportive housing, to observe the work they undertake to access services for their animals and how they do or do not make use of the “alternative measures” that are provided.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The BCSPCA, like many animal sheltering and protection organizations in North America, has made “keeping people and animals together” a priority. The research literature also encourages collaboration between animal and human social service agencies to support people and animals living in challenging situations. Very little research, however, has investigated the actual work that frontline staff and officers do to achieve such priorities. This chapter described, ethnographically, examples of how such work is currently happening, the concerns that arise, and how “alternative measures” do not always resolve problems for animals and people.

Officer work aimed at keeping people and animals together is challenging because officers must assess animals in a wide variety of situations and decide among very different options such as issuing orders, removing animals or providing “alternative measures”. The work also requires officers to interact with frontline human social services staff who are presumably being organized by different institutional processes focused on supporting people. Indeed, officers were sometimes frustrated by what they considered “miscommunications” with human social services staff. Future work could explore how the work of animal and human social services staff intersects and examine the ruling relations and regulatory texts that organize the

different types of service work. Future work could also observe the actual work that the people living in supportive housing do when they are provided with “alternative measures” to better understand the effects of these measures.

## **Chapter 7: General discussion and conclusion**

This thesis explored how the institution of animal sheltering and protection in BC, Canada, organizes what happens to animals. I used IE to approach this inquiry and employed ethnographic methods of participant observation, interviews, document analysis and focus groups to gain an in-depth understanding of the work that frontline shelter staff, officers and operators do every day with animals that come to be involved with this institution. I began inquiry from the standpoint of animals to understand how what happened to them was being organized; their welfare was the primary interest of the research. In two chapters, I told the story of a dog named Henry to provide an entry point into the work processes and ruling relations that organize the work accomplished in shelters and in the work of officers and call centre operators. What happened to Henry, as well as the work of providing “alternative measures” described in chapter six, provides a window into the organization of animal sheltering and protection in BC today and explicates tensions that arise in this work. This final chapter summarizes thesis findings, discusses thesis strengths and limitations, connects this thesis with other IE studies and provides ideas for future research.

The research in this thesis was motivated by my interest in improving the lives of the animals that come to be involved with animal sheltering and protection. Although this thesis focused on a series of tensions and research problematics that arose in sheltering and protection work it is not a critique or criticism. My interests align closely with those of the BCSPCA whose mission is “to protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in BC” (BCSPCA 2021c). Naturally, in a complex institution that has evolved during more

than a century and is governed by a combination of legal instruments, staff and elected board members, certain tensions and limitations are bound to arise. Further, this research and the discoveries presented in this thesis are intended to help identify such tensions and conflicts that will not only be interesting to people throughout the organization but can also be used to propose ideas for further discussion and inquiry that could be done collaboratively with the organization to find possible solutions that will help more animals.

## **7.1 Chapter summary and contributions**

IE is an approach that aims to discover what is actually happening in the everyday world and thus provides insights that cannot be captured by other research approaches. What is distinctive to this method of inquiry is that, unlike other qualitative approaches, the research explicitly focuses on the social world of actual events rather than building upon or developing conceptual categories or theories. Thus, the use of IE in this thesis contributes a new way of approaching and studying animal sheltering and protection.

In chapter three I reviewed the research literature about frontline shelter staff and officers, the relinquishment of animals to shelters, and animals' LOS in shelters. I conducted this review using an IE lens which focused on understanding how previous researchers have approached topics by applying established themes, conceptual frameworks, theories, and methods. Knowledge about animal sheltering and protection in this research literature is organized and built on concepts like compassion fatigue and euthanasia-related stress; its methods often use standardized scales, and information often comes from shelter database

records such as the categories recorded for why people relinquish their animals. I also conducted focus groups with shelter personnel to present review findings and asked them to discuss challenges they encounter in their work that are not represented in the literature. The inclusion of focus groups with the people who do the work (ie practitioners) helped me to see how aspects of their work can be “covered over” (Rankin 2017a) by the use of theories and concepts, for example the work processes and texts involved with animal relinquishment. The approach used in this thesis began not in existing ways of researching or studying animal sheltering and protection but instead by observing the actual work practices frontline shelter staff, operators and officers do in their work with animals.

In chapter four I started from the standpoint of a dog named Henry and described how what happened to him in the shelter was organized. Henry, an “orange” dog with behavioural problems, faced a complicated pathway to adoption and had an extended stay of 60 days in the shelter before being euthanized, an outcome presumably not in the interests of Henry’s well-being and not desired by frontline shelter staff, or by the organization. Frontline shelter staff conduct behavioural assessments for dogs, but this process seemed to be connected more to finding appropriate adopters and institutional accountability. Further, frontline shelter staff were challenged to find time to do “behavioural modification” with Henry and other “orange” animals. Their limited time was instead more directed toward monitoring populations of animals within the shelter, providing basic care for animals and anticipating the arrival of animals from the community – work guided by the shelter management approach Capacity for Care (C4C).

This first chapter that used Henry as a point of departure provides a detailed description of the actual work that frontline shelter staff do every day. The ontological focus on actual, material conditions provides an in-depth analysis that exposes *what it is* about shelter work that may cause stress and frustration for workers. In the existing literature, the stress and frustration experienced by staff have often been conceptualized as “compassion fatigue”, or euthanasia-related stress (Arluke 1991; White & Shawhan 1996; Rogelberg *et al* 2007b, Schneider & Roberts 2016; Levitt & Gezinski 2020). During this study, sheltering and protection personnel would remark that the animals they encounter today in shelters are “harder” animals with behavioural and medical problems that need to be treated before adoption. This chapter reveals tensions for animals with such problems and for people who care for these animals as they try to “fit in” behavioural modification work after they have completed tasks prioritized by the organization.

In chapter five I continued in the standpoint of animals and again used the exemplar of Henry’s case to describe what happened to him when he was a puppy and he and the other dogs in the same home were investigated by animal protection officers. I explicate how operators and officers accomplish their work by determining whether calls of concern have “grounds” for investigation, “posting” and “attending” at properties and also issuing orders when situations match the limited legal definition of animal “distress”. In Henry’s case, Henry and the other dogs were living in a deprived situation and were not removed from the property until years later. I use the map of Henry’s life to track and map how officers’ work is accomplished as they juggle the *PCA Act* with laws pertaining to personal property and privacy.

I detail how concerns that members of the public, operators and officers have, for example about dogs living in socially deprived situations, may not always meet the “grounds” for investigation. In such situations officers think creatively about how they can respond to these concerns.

Overall chapter five provides an in-depth view of operator and officer work and how the legal definition of the term “distress”, as well as personal property and privacy laws, sometimes constrain staff as they advocate for animals living in deprived situations. There is very little existing research about officers and operators, and most researchers approach the study of animal protection officers using theories and interpretations of their work (Arluke 2004; Coulter & Fitzgerald 2019; Coulter & Campbell 2020). I attempted to show how the work processes that operators and officers do for animals are organized in ways that limit the possible interventions for animals. Officers think creatively about how they can respond to concerns that fall outside the law by using “soft” approaches, for example discussing with owners about whether they are able to provide adequate care for the animal or supporting owners so they can provide better care. In Henry’s case and others, this causes tension for operators and officers who advocate for animals, and for the animals themselves that continue to live in deprived situations. Moreover these animals, should they arrive in shelters, are likely to be in need of behavioural modification and would likely be categorized informally by staff as “harder” animals.

In chapter six I take the standpoint of a cat, living with their owner in supportive housing, who receives support from an officer in the form of “alternative measures”. I describe the work that officers do when they respond to calls about animals that may not be in



“distress” as it is legally defined but that, nonetheless, need support in order to continue living with their owner. Officer work involves assessing animals and people and deciding which course of action to take (issuing an order, removing animals, providing an “alternative measure”). Further, this work requires officers to interact with frontline human social services staff, adding further complexity because human social services staff are likely following different institutional processes that focus on supporting humans and may not include animals.

The research literature about keeping people and animals together commonly encourages “multi-agency collaboration” to achieve such goals (Patronek 1999; Reinisch 2008 on animal hoarding; Spencer *et al* 2017; Kerman *et al* 2020 on people without permanent housing, reviews by LaVallee *et al* 2017 and Baker *et al* 2018). The actual work involved with such programs and initiatives, however, is not described in the research literature. Chapter six included ethnographic observations showing that providing “alternative measures” to keep people and animals together does not always resolve problems animals may be facing. This chapter is not a complete IE analysis. It attempted to describe the actual work involved with this relatively new approach to sheltering and protection work and introduced tensions that can arise for frontline shelter staff, officers, animals and human social services staff in these situations. The chapter discovered specific work processes and intersecting frontline work that could be used as entry points into further investigation.

In this IE research, taking the standpoint of animals provided methodological and philosophical insights. It was not always easy to maintain this point of entry into institutional processes, however. IE studies typically take the standpoint of a group of humans, and

researchers can speak to them about their experiences as they are brought into institutional processes. In this thesis I avoided use of the word “experiences” because I did not attempt to understand the mental and affective states of animals, but instead focused on what happened to them in the institution where animal sheltering and protection is organized. This included observing animals but also observing frontline shelter staff and how they decided where to house animals in the shelter, the work of digitally posting information about animals for adoption, the practices of listening and talking to concerned members of the public about animals, the assessment work officers did to make decisions about an animal’s living situation and the work they did to talk to animal owners during investigations. Observations of these work processes, plus listening and talking to frontline shelter staff about their observations of and interactions with animals, are all data I included in taking the standpoint of animals.

I have grown to greatly respect the social ontology of IE and the “ontological shift” that researchers must make in order to conduct an IE study and maintain its focus on material happenings and how those are being organized. Making the ontological shift was not an easy process, however, and I often had to remind myself to avoid using “institutional language”. For example, an earlier version of chapter four included a section on the work of “managing animals”. Here I had adopted a blanket term used by shelter personnel whereas the actual work is a myriad of specific and targeted work processes, each with associated texts, procedures and training. Shifting away from using conceptual and abstract language to using concrete, empirical descriptions of work processes and explicating their social organization was a continual process. Further, some IE language is difficult to explain to people less familiar with

sociology or more broadly, qualitative research. On this point, I attempted to write this thesis using language that is accessible and by explaining technical IE terms as clearly as possible.

Finally, I often reflected on and was encouraged by the following quote by Smith:

*“It is important that institutional ethnography not become a sect, a group of insiders who know how to talk and write it, and insist on a kind of orthodoxy in its practice which puts in hazard its fundamental commitment to inquiry and discovery” (Smith 2006 p 1).*

Smith’s insistence that IE not become “a group of insiders”, as well as her insistence that IE be a sociology *for* people (and in this case, *for* animals) was a frequent source of motivation and a reminder of why I chose to use IE for this thesis.

## **7.2 Generalized ruling relations**

Smith writes that institutional ethnographies should not be seen as “solitary pursuits” because they can collectively build a picture of social relations and organization happening in Western society (Smith 1987 p 177, Smith 2005 p 51, p 219). This is not to say that everyday, material settings are necessarily similar; for example, shelters differ in rates of admission and adoption, human resources, in the locations of kennels in the shelter, and other variables. These differences will result in different human and animal experiences. However, there are some common “ruling relations” that exist *across* settings. For example, one feature of ruling relations is standardized activities (DeVault & McCoy 2006 p 18). In this thesis, I described standardized intake examinations and assessments that are completed for all animals when

they arrive in shelters. These examinations and assessments are used to categorize animals and these categories subsequently organize the everyday work activities that staff are able to do with animals as well as the decisions they make for animals. Such ruling relations “generalize beyond the particular instance” (Smith 2005 p 51); they govern and organize everyday work activities across settings.

Although this thesis took the standpoint of animals whereas institutional ethnographies typically take the standpoint of humans, this thesis builds on previous IE work in a number of ways. In chapter four, the tensions that arise between “orange” animals and institutional concerns over outcome measures and efficiency may be generalizable to other institutional settings that are also focused on outcome measures and efficiency (Smith 2005 p 51). Janz *et al* (2014) discussed the discovery of “generalized relations of governance” across frontline work happening in different sites (eg social service programs for people with disabilities, an emergency youth shelter, employment services for immigrants). Janz *et al*’s (2014) work was done by holding workshops with people working in these programs. The researchers found generalized relations of governance – for example the organization of frontline work focused on achieving measurable outcomes and accountability. Similarly chapter four described the work staff do with animals and how institutional priorities direct the work toward efficiently monitoring populations of animals and ensuring that average LOS (used in reporting and benchmarking across shelters) is low, whereas less priority is attached to working with individual animals.

Additional similarities are seen in IE projects focused on nursing work in hospitals that also explore LOS (Rankin & Campbell 2014). For instance, Rankin and Campbell (2014) used an account of discharging a patient as an entry point into the organization of patient flowthrough in hospital beds, and they discussed how nurses are held accountable for statistical outcomes like LOS which are standardized for a given procedure (eg shoulder surgery). Nurses also do the work of monitoring bed use, and struggle to move people around within hospitals to accommodate their needs and follow hospital requirements such as same-sex rooms. Similarly in chapter four, I attempted to show how frontline shelter staff were held accountable to measurable outcomes and were challenged by moving animals around within the shelter to accommodate their needs and to conform to standardized policies like stray-hold periods.

In chapters five and six, the work processes that happen when officers investigate concerns are like those described in past IE research on domestic violence and child protection work. For example, Pence (2001) explored the organization of the criminal justice system from the standpoint of women who enter this system from the moment they place a 911 emergency telephone call. From this entry point, women speak to dispatchers who follow written scripts that mediate the subsequent “steps” in the investigation (Pence 2001). Similarly in chapter five, I described how operators listen empathetically to concerns but record information needed for specific database fields and follow requirements in the *PCA Act*. In another case, de Montigny (1995) explored how social workers doing child protection work are organized to record and document signs of neglect and collect evidence (eg photos of a room in disarray, a child with a rash in a soiled diaper) to establish that a child has been neglected and is in need of protection

– evidence that will be sufficient in court (de Montigny 1995). Similarly in chapter five, animal protection officers also focused on collecting evidence and documenting intervention attempts (ie posting, attending, issuing orders) in case they may need a search warrant or to remove an animal. Another similarity is that tensions that arise for individuals, that is, women (Pence 2001), children (de Montigny 1995) and animals (this thesis) are organized by a system that may not always be able to fully address situations of deprivation or neglect.

### **7.3 Limitations**

While the discovery-driven approach of IE helped me to stay grounded in what was actually happening in animal sheltering and protection, it also resulted in a long list of potential analytical pathways to follow. It was not possible to follow each analytical pathway and so I had to select which areas of concern I wanted to focus on and analyze. There are other areas of concern (eg social relations between animal protection officers and municipal animal control, animal hoarding “interventions”) that arose that I was not able to analyze in this research.

This research was conducted in BC, Canada, and as such may not be fully transferable to other jurisdictions because important differences in culture, geography, legislation and language may exist. However, I attempted to identify ruling relations that may be similar across jurisdictions, for example use of the term “distress” in provincial animal protection law, the use of dog behavioural assessments in shelters and the application of C4C as a shelter management approach.

While a central aim of IE is to show how everyday work is being organized by institutional processes and identify tensions that arise in that work, determining solutions for tensions that arise is much more difficult. In chapters three to six, I provided several specific recommendations, ideas for future research and further inquiry into specific work processes. For example, the work of conducting behavioural assessments was identified as a source of tension. This is a specific work process accompanied by a specific assessment form and page in the digital shelter database. Shelter staff and administrators could discuss these work processes and texts, and potentially consider how behavioural assessments could continue providing helpful information for potential adopters but also help guide staff in providing behavioural modification. Other recommendations would be more difficult to accomplish, for example (chapter five) that laws be altered to more fully cover situations (eg social deprivation of animals) that are challenging for operators, officers and frontline shelter staff and concerning for animals. Even so, some steps might be taken as the BCSPCA advocates for early, positive reinforcement training of dogs through their AnimalKind training program (Makowska 2018; BCSPCA 2021g) and frequently leads advocacy campaigns to improve animal protection law.

#### **7.4 Future research**

My appreciation of IE as an approach to inquiry has led me to think of how its principles and procedures could be applied to future projects on the topic of this thesis as well as new topics.

Smith writes that IE should be *for* people; hence, finding solutions to the tensions identified in this study should be done with the people who are involved in this daily work. For example, findings of this thesis could be presented at a participatory workshop with BCSPCA personnel. A participatory workshop format, as opposed to a formal presentation, could centre the discussion with the people who made this project possible and keep the focus on the actualities of their work.

Following on from the discussion in chapter six about providing “alternative measures”, future work could take the standpoint of frontline staff working in human social services with people who have animals. Perhaps a participatory workshop could be held again, for example as was done by Janz *et al* (2014), where frontline human social services staff discussed generalized ruling relations (ie institutional processes) in their work and how these influence their involvement with animal owners and animal protection staff.

Future work could also take the standpoint of animal owners living in supportive housing to develop an understanding of the work they must do to access supports provided by “alternative measures”. These individuals could also be involved as research partners in the design and analysis of the project, for example hiring them as researchers or conducting document analysis with them as they may have had to complete forms in order to request and receive veterinary assistance for their animals. This and other approaches for community-based and participatory IE projects are discussed by Nichols *et al* (2017) based on their work with youth without permanent housing in Ontario.



Given that this research was conducted in one province, future IE work could replicate the approach in other jurisdictions. This could determine how different approaches to animal sheltering and protection, as well as different legislation and systems of enforcement, organize what happens to animals.

Finally, taking the standpoint of animals was difficult but could be applied to other settings where humans care for animals and are doing work that is organized by their institutional context. For example, IE could be applied to laboratories where animals are used for scientific research, to farms that follow industry, government or corporate farm animal welfare assurance programs, or to wildlife centres (eg zoos, aquariums, rehabilitation hospitals) that follow institutional standards of care.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Behavioural indicators of welfare form

#### BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF POOR WELFARE

BEHAVIOURS CAN INDICATE THAT A DOG IS EXPERIENCING STRESS ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE OTHER MEDICAL REASONS

Day since entry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
<b>FEAR &amp; ANXIETY</b>															
Fearful Behaviour															Dog adopts a low posture, trembling, withdraws from handler, freezing (may be accompanied by defensive aggression)
Hiding															Dog attempts to hide behind kennel furniture for prolonged periods. May be accompanied by others signs of fear
Lack Of Appetite															Dog eats less than 50% of its daily ration of food
Panting															Dog pants for reasons other than physical exertion or overheating
Escape Attempts															Dog attempts to escape from kennel in a forceful manner whenever the door is opened and at other times
Listless															Dog is slow and apathetic in its kennel
<b>FRUSTRATION</b>															
Paw Lifting															Dog lifts forepaw off the ground (not whilst sniffing or begging)
Bar / Cage Biting															Dog repeatedly bites and chews at the kennel bars or wire
Chewing Bedding															Dog chews its own bedding (blankets, bed etc)
Circling															Dog walks around in small circle repeatedly
Excessive Barking															Dog barks for prolonged periods in absence of a stimulus
Excessive Drinking															Dog drinks a large volume of water, in excess of what is normal
Self Licking / Chewing															Dog chews or licks its own body repeatedly (may be instigated by skin lesions or parasitic infection)
Play Bounce															Dog repeatedly displays a play bow (may be accompanied by barking)
Tail Chasing															Dog chases tail repeatedly
Wall Bouncing															Dog repeatedly jumps up and down against kennel walls
<b>DEPRESSION</b>															
Extremely Listless															Dog is extremely lethargic and apathetic
Unresponsive															Dog is unresponsive towards its environment and handlers
Lack Of Appetite															Dog eats less than 50% of its daily ration of food

#### BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF GOOD WELFARE

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PERSONAL PREFERENCES OF THE DOGS

<b>NORMAL BEHAVIOUR &amp; SIGNS OF PLEASURE</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Play															Dog engages in play with people, toys and / or other dogs
Positive Social Interactions															Dog displays positive behaviour with other dogs and handlers
Normal Elimination															Frequency and quality of urination and defecation is normal
Eats & Drinks Normally															Dog consumes adequate daily rations of food and water
Normal Sleep															Dog shows normal, age appropriate circadian rhythm (pattern) of sleep
Shows Normal Interest In Novelty															Dog displays appropriate behaviour towards novel, non-threatening stimuli

## **Appendix B Interview and naturalistic observation consent form**

### **Consent for Individuals Participating in:**

Understanding how animal welfare law enforcement shapes animals' lives: Individual interview and naturalistic observation

#### **I. STUDY TEAM**

##### **Principal Investigator:**

Prof. David Fraser, Professor, UBC/ Land and Food Systems, Animal Welfare [contact information removed]

##### **Co-Investigator(s):**

Katie Koralesky, PhD student, UBC/Land and Food Systems, Animal Welfare [contact information removed]

This project will fulfill partial requirements of the co-investigators PhD thesis.

#### **II. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE**

##### **Why are we doing this study?**

We are conducting this study to understand how the institution of animal welfare law enforcement and sheltering shapes what animals experience. We would like to understand this from the perspective of the animals that, for various reasons (e.g. neglect, abuse), come to be part of this institution.

##### **Why should you take part in this study?**

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are an individual that is involved in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement and we are interested in gaining insight into how the work you and your colleagues do is connected and shapes what happens to animals. This insight – including an understanding of the constraints created by the law and standard procedures – may allow us to improve the experience of the animals and of the individuals that work in this institution.

#### **III. STUDY PROCEDURES**

##### **What happens if you say “Yes, I want to be in the study”?**

A researcher (Katie Koralesky) will visit you at your work place to discuss your work and the policies and procedures that you use in your work. In the case that these interviews occur while you are working, the researcher (Katie Koralesky) will also observe the work you are doing. We anticipate discussions and observations will take approximately 1 hour. The researcher will record meetings by audio recording and the audio files will be saved on a password protected laptop. Any names said during the interview will be removed and the transcript from the meeting

will be kept in a password protected file or locked cabinet. You may be asked to discuss with the researcher on multiple occasions if you are involved with a number of different cases.

#### **IV. STUDY RESULTS**

The results of this study will be communicated to animal welfare law enforcement organizations through talks, conferences, and published articles. Results will also be published in academic journals.

Study participants will be sent a copy of the research findings.

#### **V. POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY**

##### **Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?**

We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. The study focuses on the work that you routinely do as someone who works in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement. Please let one of the study staff know if you have any concerns. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to.

#### **VI. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

##### **What are the benefits of participating?**

Human participants will have the benefit of systematically discussing their work and the policies that influence the work they do and how this shapes what happens to the animals. Any issues that we identify will allow us insight into challenges for the people that work with these animals in this institution. Therefore, our study could lead to recommendations that can improve work processes and policies.

Additionally, due to our decision to understand how the institution shapes the animals' lives, this study may potentially benefit the animals, now and in the future, that are in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement.

#### **VII. CONFIDENTIALITY**

##### **How will your privacy be maintained?**

Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be released without your consent unless required by law. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet, or if kept on an encrypted computer, in a password protected file. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Direct quotes may be used in published materials; however, these quotes will not be linked in any way to participants. When quotes are used, they will be linked to a unique alpha-numeric identifier that has been randomly generated for each participant.

#### **VIII. PAYMENT**

**Will you be paid for your time/ taking part in this research study?**

You will not be paid for the time you take to be in this study.

**IX. CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY**

**Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact one of the co-investigators of this study. Co-investigator names and telephone numbers are listed at the top of the first page of this form.

**X. CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS**

**Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**XI. PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE PAGE**

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason. We will redact your comments from the transcript but cannot remove your comments from the audio recordings.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

---

Participant Signature

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Date

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Printed Name of the Participant signing above

## **Appendix C Letter of invitation for virtual focus groups**

To Whom It May Concern,

PhD student Katie Koralesky, under the supervision of Dr. David Fraser is continuing her study about how animal welfare law enforcement and sheltering shapes animals' lives. You may have already met Katie and talked with her about your work. Katie recently wrote a literature review on animal sheltering and enforcement which focused on five different topics: animal welfare law, people working in animal welfare law enforcement and sheltering, length of stay for dogs, animal hoarding and people with minimal or no housing and their companion animals.

Katie is interested in sharing some of the main findings from the literature review with you. She would like to hear feedback on how well the literature reflects the work that you do every day. Katie is proposing three virtual focus groups (i.e. group interviews) with several 1) shelter staff, 2) Special Provincial Constables and 3) administrators. Virtual focus groups are permissible under UBC's Behavioural Research and Ethics Board and are recommended for replacing in-person research due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Katie will provide a secure Zoom link plus information and guidelines regarding participation and confidentiality for participants.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Katie (contact information below!)

[contact information removed]

## **Appendix D Consent form for virtual focus groups**

### **Consent for Individuals Participating in:**

Understanding how animal welfare law enforcement shapes animals' lives: Virtual focus groups

#### **XI. STUDY TEAM**

##### **Principal Investigator:**

Prof. David Fraser, Professor, UBC/ Land and Food Systems, Animal Welfare [contact information removed]

##### **Co-Investigator(s):**

Katie Koralesky, PhD student, UBC/Land and Food Systems, Animal Welfare [contact information removed]

This project will fulfill partial requirements of the co-investigators PhD thesis.

#### **II. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE**

##### **Why are we doing this study?**

We are conducting this study to understand how the institution of animal welfare law enforcement and sheltering shapes what animals experience. We would like to understand this from the perspective of the animals that, for various reasons (e.g. neglect, abuse), come to be part of this institution.

##### **Why should you take part in this study?**

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are an individual that is involved in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement and we are interested in gaining insight into how the work you and your colleagues do is connected and shapes what happens to animals. This insight – including an understanding of the constraints created by the law and standard procedures – may allow us to improve the experience of the animals and of the individuals that work in this institution.

#### **III. STUDY PROCEDURES**

##### **What happens if you say “Yes, I want to be in the study”?**

A researcher (Katie Koralesky) will send you a secure UBC licensed Zoom link to attend a virtual focus group. Katie will first present main findings from a literature review on five topics: animal welfare law, people working in animal welfare law enforcement and sheltering, length of stay for

dogs, animal hoarding and people with minimal or no housing and their companion animals. She will then ask for your feedback, input, thoughts and ideas about how this review reflects the work you do every day. We anticipate focus group discussions will take 1-1.5 hours of your time. The researcher will record the focus group by audio recording and the audio files will be saved on a password protected laptop. Any names said during the interview will be removed and the transcript from the meeting will be kept in a password protected file or locked cabinet.

#### **IV. STUDY RESULTS**

The results of this study will be communicated to animal welfare law enforcement organizations through talks, conferences, and published articles. Results will also be published in academic journals.

Study participants will be sent a copy of the research findings.

#### **V. POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY**

##### **Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?**

We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. The study focuses on the work that you routinely do as someone who works in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement. Please let one of the study staff know if you have any concerns. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to.

#### **VI. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

##### **What are the benefits of participating?**

Human participants will have the benefit of systematically discussing their work and the policies that influence the work they do and how this shapes what happens to the animals. Any issues that we identify will allow us insight into challenges for the people that work with these animals in this institution. Therefore, our study could lead to recommendations that can improve work processes and policies.

Additionally, due to our decision to understand how the institution shapes the animals' lives, this study may potentially benefit the animals, now and in the future, that are in the institution of animal welfare law enforcement.

#### **VII. CONFIDENTIALITY**

##### **How will your privacy be maintained?**

Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be released without your consent unless required by law. All documents will be identified only by



code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet, or if kept on an encrypted computer, in a password protected file. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Direct quotes may be used in published materials; however, these quotes will not be linked in any way to participants. When quotes are used, they will be linked to a unique alpha-numeric identifier that has been randomly generated for each participant.

We encourage participants not to discuss the content of the focus group to people outside the group; however, we can't control what participants do with the information discussed.

We will follow the Zoom Conferencing for Research resource provided by BREB. Specifically, we will not share the Zoom link on social media, not use a personal Zoom meeting space, restrict screen sharing to the host (Katie Koralesky) and use a waiting room and password for participants.

Participants may also protect their identity and increase the protection of their personal information if they do not use their actual name in Zoom. Participants can do this by using a nickname or turning off their camera.

## **VIII. PAYMENT**

### **Will you be paid for your time/ taking part in this research study?**

You will not be paid for the time you take to be in this study.

## **IX. CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY**

### **Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact one of the co-investigators of this study. Co-investigator names and telephone numbers are listed at the top of the first page of this form.

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## **XI. PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE PAGE**

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- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

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Participant Signature

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Date

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Printed Name of the Participant signing above

## Appendix E Dog adoption application (page 1 and 2)

# BCSPCA

## DOG ADOPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

BCDL/ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/dd/yyyy)

### YOUR FAMILY

- Who are you adopting this dog for?  
☐ Myself ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of adults (18+ years) at home: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of children at home:  
\_\_\_\_\_ 0 – 7 years \_\_\_\_\_ 8 – 17 years
- Any visiting children? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Any allergies in the family? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- How busy is your family's schedule?  
☐ Very busy ☐ Busy ☐ Not busy
- How would you describe yourself?  
☐ Nervous ☐ Loud ☐ Calm ☐ Quiet
- Are you planning on the following in the next month?  
☐ Moving ☐ Holiday ☐ Change in schedule
- Where will your dog stay during holidays?  
☐ At home with care ☐ Boarding ☐ Other

### YOUR HOME

- What type of home do you live in?  
☐ Acreage ☐ House ☐ Apartment
- Do you: ☐ Own ☐ Rent
- Do you have your landlord's/strata's permission to have pets?  
☐ Yes ☐ No  
Please provide us with contact information for your landlord or a copy of your strata by-laws: \_\_\_\_\_

Checked by the BC SPCA ☐ Yes, please initial: \_\_\_\_\_

- On average, how many hours will your dog be alone on:

Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends \_\_\_\_\_

- Where will your dog stay during the day?  
☐ Loose in the house ☐ Crated inside ☐ Garage  
☐ Fenced kennel/run ☐ Fenced yard ☐ Loose outside  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Where will your dog stay during the night?  
☐ Loose in the house ☐ Crated inside ☐ Garage  
☐ Fenced kennel run ☐ Fenced yard ☐ Loose outside

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Shelter: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SB No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Pending

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Who will have the primary responsibility for this dog?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have you had dogs before? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- What happened to them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have you surrendered or given away a pet? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please provide the reason: \_\_\_\_\_
- How many hours of exercise can you give your dog?  
Weekdays \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends \_\_\_\_\_
- What would you enjoy doing with your dog?  
☐ On-leash walking ☐ Off-leash walking ☐ Off-leash parks  
☐ Jogging ☐ Cycling ☐ Other
- Approximately how much do you think your dog will cost you per year?  
Vet/medical \_\_\_\_\_ Food \_\_\_\_\_  
Boarding \_\_\_\_\_ Grooming \_\_\_\_\_

### YOUR PETS

- Are there other dogs in your household? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please list them:

Name	Breed	Age	Sex	Fixed?
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

- Do you have other pets in your household? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please list them:

Name	Type	Age	Sex	Fixed?
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

- Please provide the name and phone number of your vet:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## BC SPCA DOG ADOPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

### TELL US WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Sex:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> No preference		
Coat:	<input type="checkbox"/> Short	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Long	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-shedding	<input type="checkbox"/> No preference
Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Puppy	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> No preference	
Size:	<input type="checkbox"/> Small	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Large	<input type="checkbox"/> No preference	
Breed/Type/Colour:					

### PROBLEMS YOU ARE WILLING TO WORK ON

<input type="checkbox"/> Separation anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Excitability	<input type="checkbox"/> Mild aggression	<input type="checkbox"/> Obedience	<input type="checkbox"/> House training	<input type="checkbox"/> Fearfulness
<input type="checkbox"/> Reaction to other dogs	<input type="checkbox"/> Barking	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalization			
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not willing to work on any problems					
<input type="checkbox"/> I need more information to decide					

I WOULD LIKE MY DOG TO:	VERY IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Be friendly with children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be friendly with other dogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be friendly with cats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be friendly with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be friendly with visitors to the house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoy being groomed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoy being held	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoy being petted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be calm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be playful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be quiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never wake me up at night	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never show aggressive behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SOME DOGS WILL REQUIRE TRAINING	YES	NO	NOT SURE
I need a dog that is already trained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am first time dog owner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have obedience trained before	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have lots of experience and could handle a difficult dog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Under what circumstances would you return your dog?

<input type="checkbox"/> Moving	<input type="checkbox"/> Too costly	<input type="checkbox"/> New baby	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical reasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Not enough time
<input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour problem					

Comments:

Have all the members of your household met the dog? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever been convicted of neglect or cruelty to animals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you willing to have a BC SPCA representative do a home visit by appointment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, why?

**FALSIFIED INFORMATION WILL LEAD TO AUTOMATIC REJECTION OF THE APPLICATION. THE BC SPCA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REFUSE ANY APPLICANT.**

I understand that it is my responsibility to see and evaluate the dog for myself before agreeing to adoption. The adoption of a lifelong animal friend should not be impulsive, but rather a carefully thought out decision, which will ensure a loving, lasting relationship.

Applicant signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.  
THIS INFORMATION WILL HELP US MATCH YOU WITH THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOUR FAMILY.  
SPCA.BC.CA

REVISED 04/2013

## Appendix F Dog behavioural modification observation form

Date	Time	Staff Member(s) Initials	Location	What Went Well?	What Went Wrong/Suggest B Mod Plan Changes if Indicated	Overall 😊 or 😞

Comments:

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## Appendix G Daily observation form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Shelter Buddy # \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Initials	OBSERVATION	Urinate Y/N	Defecate Y/N

## Appendix H Behaviour modification form

### BCSPCA Behaviour Modification Form

Dog Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Shelter Buddy #: \_\_\_\_\_

Medications:	Y	N
Type/Dose:		
Date Started:		

Behavioural Diagnosis: Fearful of people,  
handling, and new environments

Date B. Mod Started: \_\_\_\_\_

Re-Assess Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Created By: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Type of B Mod

- **Desensitization and Counter-Conditioning**
- New Trick/Cue
- Relaxation/Tranquility
- Impulse Control
- On-Leash or Manners

#### Goal(s) of B Mod

1. Increase trust & handling comfort with people
2. Increase confidence and welfare

#### Approved Staff

1. Any dog staff
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### # Staff Required for B Mod

- 1

#### Preferred/Recommended Treats

- 

#### Location(s) for Treatment

- in kennel
- 

#### Safety Equipment Required

- none

#### Other Equipment Needed

-

### **Explain Behaviour Modification Treatment Plan**

Go into the dog's kennel and sit or kneel down. Allow them to approach you, and then feed (toss) high-value treats by hand. If they are hesitant to approach, try tossing 1 or 2 treats to begin the session.

It is important for dogs to have a choice – do not try to force an interaction if they seem uncomfortable.

As they grow more confident and are excited to see you, start increasing the intensity of the interactions by talking to them and moving your body around in a non-threatening manner. Finally, move on to DS/CC to gentle touch by offering them treats while gently touching them under their chin. Take frequent breaks so they learn: touching = treats and no touching = no treats.

### **Keep Going If**

- taking treats
- approaching you
- staying close to you with relaxed body language

### **Stop or Slow Down If**

- stops taking treats
- retreating or staying far away from you
- fearful body language – ears back, lip licking, etc.



## Appendix I Cat intake questionnaire (page 1 and 2)



### Cat Intake Questionnaire

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Cat	You
<b>Cat's Name:</b> _____ <b>Sex:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Neutered <input type="checkbox"/> Spayed <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <b>Age:</b> _____ Years _____ Months <b>Breed Type:</b> _____ <b>Coat Colour:</b> _____ <b>Coat Length:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Long <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Short <b>Is the cat vaccinated?:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, date of last vaccine? _____ <b>Any medical problems ?</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>No. of adults at home:</b> _____ adults 18+ years <b>No. of children at home:</b> _____ 0-7 years _____ 8-17 years <b>Type of Home:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> House <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment <input type="checkbox"/> Condo <b>Outside space:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yard <input type="checkbox"/> Patio <input type="checkbox"/> Balcony <input type="checkbox"/> None <b>No. of cats at home:</b> _____ <b>Do you let your cat outdoors:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> On balcony <input type="checkbox"/> In secure yard <input type="checkbox"/> In neighbourhood
<b>History</b> <b>Where is your cat from?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> SPCA <input type="checkbox"/> Rescue <input type="checkbox"/> Stray <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <b>Age of cat when acquired?</b> _____ Years _____ Months <b>Is he declawed?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Front only <input type="checkbox"/> All 4 paws <b>Lived with other animals?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Cat <input type="checkbox"/> Dog <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock <input type="checkbox"/> Bird <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry <input type="checkbox"/> Rodents	<b>Reason for giving up a cat</b> <b>Reasons:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Allergy <input type="checkbox"/> Too many cats <input type="checkbox"/> Moving <input type="checkbox"/> Baby <b>Behavioural Problems</b> (this will help us ensure your cat is matched in a home where he is least likely to have this problem again) <input type="checkbox"/> Spraying <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Peeing outside the litter <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive <input type="checkbox"/> Too active at night <input type="checkbox"/> Please explain, _____ _____
<b>Diet</b> <b>What do you feed your cat?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Kibble <input type="checkbox"/> Raw <input type="checkbox"/> Canned <input type="checkbox"/> Freshly Cooked <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ <b>No. times per day cat is fed:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Free Feed <b>Is his appetite</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Fussy <b>Favourite treats:</b> _____ <b>Favourite Food:</b> _____	<b>Housetraining</b> <b>Where does your cat urinate?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Litterbox <input type="checkbox"/> On floor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> On furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ <b>Where does your cat defecate?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Litterbox <input type="checkbox"/> On floor <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> On furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ <b>Type of litter?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Clumping <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ <b>Type of litter box?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Covered <input type="checkbox"/> Open <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____
<b>Escaping</b> <b>Does your cat try to escape through doors?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <b>Does your cat try to escape through windows?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <b>Has your cat ever escaped?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <b>What happened?</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>Scratching</b> <b>On which of the following does your cat scratch with his/her claws?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching post <input type="checkbox"/> Soft furnishings (sofa etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Carpets/rugs <input type="checkbox"/> Hard furniture (cabinets, doors etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Drapes <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____
<b>Staff notes:</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	

How AGGRESSIVE is your cat?	No aggression	Warning meow or growl	Scratches or bites that do not break skin	Scratches breaking skin	Bites breaking skin
When you pet him	1	2	3	4	5
When you pick him up	1	2	3	4	5
When you groom him	1	2	3	4	5
When examined by his veterinarian	1	2	3	4	5
Towards other cats in your home	1	2	3	4	5
Towards other cats outdoors	1	2	3	4	5

How VOCAL is your cat?	Never vocal	Rarely vocal	Occasionally vocal	Often vocal	Always vocal
With You	1	2	3	4	5
With Toys	1	2	3	4	5
With other cats in your home	1	2	3	4	5
By himself	1	2	3	4	5

How PLAYFUL is your cat?	Never playful	Rarely playful	Occasionally playful	Often playful	Always playful
With You	1	2	3	4	5
With Toys	1	2	3	4	5
With other cats in your home	1	2	3	4	5
By himself	1	2	3	4	5

How FEARFUL is your cat?	Never fearful	Rarely fearful	Occasionally fearful	Often fearful	Always fearful
With You	1	2	3	4	5
When at the vets	1	2	3	4	5
Towards visitors	1	2	3	4	5
With children	1	2	3	4	5
Towards loud noises (e.g. fireworks)	1	2	3	4	5

How FRIENDLY is your cat?	Never friendly	Rarely friendly	Occasionally friendly	Often friendly	Always friendly
With You	1	2	3	4	5
With strangers	1	2	3	4	5
With other cats	1	2	3	4	5
Towards kids	1	2	3	4	5
Towards dogs	1	2	3	4	5

THANKYOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE  
THIS INFORMATION WILL HELP US MAKE A GOOD MATCH FOR YOUR CAT