Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Disability assist dogs in public places - Experiences from trainers and handlers in Aotearoa New Zealand

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master

in

Public Health

at Massey University, Palmerston North,

Aotearoa New Zealand.

Bronwyn Sarah McManus

2021

Abstract

Disability assist dogs are trained to support people with a variety of impairments. Aside from performing tasks that benefit their handlers, their presence is considered a catalyst for social interactions. Previous studies have consistently reported the positive benefits of such interactions, which increase disabled handlers' quality of life. However, there is limited research and literature that has explored the enabling and disabling impacts on the dog/handler team of expected and unexpected interactions with members of the public. These repeated, prolonged or unwanted interactions may create further barriers for disabled people to participate and gain full inclusion in community life. This research aimed to explore the experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in terms of the types of interactions they had with members of the Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) public and how these interactions were perceived, interpreted, and managed. A qualitative method, guided by an interpretive approach and social constructionism, was utilised to collect data via semi-structured interviews with six handlers and six trainers of disability assist dogs. Data were analysed using thematic analysis with the social model of disability as the theoretical base. Four themes were identified: (1) every day a new experience, (2) enabling interactions, (3) disabling interactions, and (4) role of ambassador. Findings indicated that handlers regularly faced a complex range of unique interactions due to various reasons such as the public's ambivalence or lack of knowledge and understanding of the dog's role and right of access to public places. While handlers may face friendly comments about the dog and its role, these encounters could also involve long conversations, invasive personal questions, interference with their dogs, and denied access into businesses, cafes, restaurants, and public transport. These findings underpin the need to provide more education to the public on the etiquette of engaging with handlers and their disability assist dogs and more support for businesses to

understand the legal rights of handlers. Through more education and support to change societal attitudes and remove structural barriers, disabled people using disability assist dogs will be able to independently participate in community life and be fully included without hindrance.

Dedication

To my late Husband, Professor Michael McManus (1957 - 2015).

Michael, in 1980 you introduced me to the world of academia and scientific research. In 2014 you heard my first mutterings of undertaking a research thesis but sadly did not see the completed thesis. I often wonder what the outcome would have been if you were here to guide and advise me.

XXVIII

With them the seeds of Wisdom did I sow,

And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;

And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd-

"I came like Water and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and why not knowing

Nor whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing;

And out of it, as Wind along the waste,

I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.

(Omar Khayyam & FitzGerald, 2009, pp. 49-50).

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. (Tennyson, 1981, p. 539)

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I am indebted to my participants for willingly sharing their experiences.

Thanks to my supervisors Dr Gretchen Good and Dr Polly Yeung, for their support throughout and for remaining enthusiastic when I began to doubt myself.

To my children, William and Catherine, your belief that I could complete this task is immeasurable. One day, we will make that overseas trip together, albeit Stewart Island, not Spain.

Special thanks to my friends, family and colleagues, who listened endlessly, edited with care, convinced, and encouraged me to complete my research. You have all contributed to this work in many and various ways, and your ongoing encouragement was so very much appreciated.

A big hug to my dogs that waited patiently each day for their walk, and did not mind when it did not happen. Thanks to my other companion animals that kept me company and sane.

Finally, thanks to the guide dogs that many years ago sparked my interest in this topic.

Table of Contents

Abstract....................i

Dedication.................... iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents....................v

List of Tables viii

Chapter 1 - Introduction 1

Background of the Study 1

Research Aims and Methods 3

Positioning of the Researcher 4

Background Characteristics and Terminologies Associated with Disability Assist Dogs....................4

Animal-Assisted Intervention, Therapy and Activities 10

Overview of Thesis....................11

Chapter 2 - Literature Review 13

Theoretical Models of Disability....................13

The Social Model of Disability 14

Animals and Social Engagement....................20

The Context of Disability Assist Dogs in New Zealand 29

Summary....................31

Chapter 3 - Methods and Methodologies 32

Study Design....................32

Study Participants....................34

Data Analysis....................37

Trustworthiness 39
Ethical Considerations 41
Summary 43
Chapter 4 - Findings 44
Characteristics of Participants 44
Theme One: Every Day a New Experience 45
Theme Two: Enabling Interactions 53
Theme Three: Disabling Interactions 58
Theme Four: Roles of Brand Ambassador and Educator 64
Summary 69
Chapter 5 - Implications of Findings 70
Knowledge of Disability and Disability Assist Dogs 70
Limited Knowledge and Understanding of the Complexity of Disability 73
The Dog and its Handler are a Team 79
Etiquette of Engaging with the Dog and its Handler or Trainer 81
Legal Rights of the Dog with its Handler or Trainer in Public Places 83
Summary 86
Chapter 6 - Conclusion and Recommendations 88
Summary of Key Findings 88
Limitations of the Study 89
Recommendations 90
Future Research 93
Conclusion 93
References 95
Appendix 1- Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval 115

Appendix 2 - First email to Managers. 116

Appendix 3 - Second Email to Managers 117

Appendix 4 - Consent Form 118

Appendix 5 - Information Sheet 119

Appendix 6 - Interview Sheet 122

List of Tables

Table 1. Example of coding transcript for enabling interactions…………………………..38

Table 2. Example of coding transcript for disabling interactions…………………………..38

Chapter 1 - Introduction

> We've had people blocking us and then putting their heads down, trying to make eye contact with the dog. Then, we have people running up to us saying, "Oh, I know I shouldn't touch the dog, but I can't resist," and then they touch [the dog]. The final thing is people often engage with the dog almost as if we are invisible.
>
> -Helen, parent handler of disability assist dog

Background of the Study

One of the core functions of disability support is providing appropriate resources to help disabled people live full and independent lives. Disability assist dogs are a form of assistance that is growing in popularity. Disabled people choose to use a disability assist dog for various reasons, such as reducing the impact of their impairment on their daily lives, increasing their independence, and accessing the community. The dog may assist, for example, with mobility; opening doors; pressing buttons; picking up items; alerting to sounds or with medical alerts, such as seizure or hypo- or hyper-glycaemia events; helping to keep a child safe by preventing the child from running off; or helping a child to walk safely as part of a parent/child/dog triad team. However, the above comment from Helen, a parent handler (a parent who controls the dog on behalf of their disabled child) and a participant in this study, indicated that although a disability assist dog may be of great practical assistance, accessing the community can be fraught with challenges because, at times, the dog becomes the primary focus of public attention. This extra attention from the public can distract the dog from its task and causes delays, stress, or embarrassment for the disabled person. Conversely, the dog may also create new opportunities for social engagement, assist in developing friendships, create a sense of inclusion, and change public perception of disabled people.

Previous research has established that the benefits to handlers of disability assist dogs include increased independence, assistance with time and energy conservation, and improved

quality of physical and emotional health (Burrow et al., 2008; Crowe et al., 2014; Whitmarsh, 2005). Other studies discuss how the presence of a dog promoted social engagement with the public as the dog created a common talking point, thus encouraging friendly interaction and conversation between the handler and members of the public (Bould et al., 2018; Eddy et al., 1988; Hall et al., 2017; Hart et al., 1987; Lane et al., 1998; Lundqvist et al., 2018; Shyne et al., 2012). Even though studies have highlighted the benefits of disability assist dogs, handlers have frequently reported on social media that issues arise when taking their dogs into a public space (Rain, 2017; Weinstein, 2017). National newspapers have reported that handlers of disability assist dogs face many challenges, such as being refused access onto public transport (Flahive & George, 2017), into motels (Biddle, 2017) and restaurants (Boult, 2018), as well as the problems associated with members of the public interfering with guide dogs (dogs that assist blind people) (Fallon, 2018). It also appears that the public is largely unaware that their well-intended, friendly approaches, especially without asking for permission first, distract the dog from its trained purpose. Repeated interactions and prolonged conversations can cause delays and be tiring for the adult handler, the disabled child who is part of the parent/dog/child triad, the trainer, or the dog (Harland, 1992; Milner, 2001; Spence, 2015; Whitmarsh, 2005). In NZ, the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) and the Human Rights Act (1993) were intended to protect people from such harassment and discrimination. However, it would seem from these news media stories that while disability assist dogs can benefit disabled people in practical, personal, social, and environmental contexts, members of the public are generally unaware of the impact of denied access on disabled people and that refusing access to a disability assist dog handler or trainer is illegal (Dog Control Amendment Act, 2006).

The social model of disability states that it is society that is disabling (Oliver & Barnes, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012), as society creates barriers that prevent people with impairment from having the same access to the physical and social environment as non-disabled people (UPIAS, 1976). In addition, social attitudes, physical barriers, and a lack of public knowledge of the supporting legislation continue to prevent people with impairment from having full and equal access to all aspects of society (Beatson, 2004; Oliver et al., 2012). Despite the importance of a disability assist dog to people with impairment, there remains a paucity of evidence on how encounters with the public are enabling and helpful, or disabling and unhelpful, thereby creating social barriers to participation and full inclusion. Therefore, there is a need to understand the interactions between users of disability assist dogs and the general public to identify barriers and encourage enabling practices.

Research Aims and Methods

This research aimed to explore the experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in terms of the types of interactions they had with members of the NZ public and how these interactions were perceived, interpreted, and managed. A qualitative approach, guided by an interpretive approach and social constructionism (Tracy, 2013), was employed to conduct semi-structured interviews with six disability assist dog handlers and six trainers to investigate their experiences. This study's conceptual framework was based on the social model of disability, which states that disability is socially constructed (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Thomas, 2014).

Positioning of the Researcher

As an occupational therapist, I have worked with disabled people throughout my career, most recently with people with visual impairment. I have volunteered with Riding for the Disabled and Special Olympics - equestrian. During this time, I have observed the therapeutic value of animals to disabled clients by seeing first-hand the role the animals play in providing practical support as aids to daily living and giving psycho-social and emotional support. Furthermore, animals have always been part of my life, and although I have no identified impairment, my animals have provided companionship that supported me through challenging life events. Therefore, both my personal and professional experiences provided some insight into the benefits of having animals in one's life.

As a novice researcher with a prior background in science, a qualitative approach was chosen to learn how to put aside my own assumptions and develop an analytical ear to listen and reflect deeply on the reported lived experiences of disabled handlers and trainers and their interactions with the public. I transcribed the interviews to develop my data analysis skills to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's experiences and start the data analysis process.

Background Characteristics and Terminologies Associated with Disability Assist Dogs

In accordance with the New Zealand Disability Strategy (2016) and the social model of disability, the term disabled people will be used in this study. Such terminology acknowledges that people are disabled by the physical, social and attitudinal barriers created by society and not by their impairment. When discussing problems in body structure or loss, the term people with impairment is used.

The terminology used to define dogs that are trained to assist disabled people varies within and between countries. The terms service dog and assistance dog are used most frequently and interchangeably in NZ and abroad. Assistance Dogs International (ADI), an organisation based in the United States (US), provides standardised training and certification protocol for dogs that assist disabled people. ADI states that assistance dog is a generic term covering guide, hearing and service dogs that are trained to undertake three or more tasks for disabled people (Assistance Dogs International, 2021). The term service dog includes but is not restricted to dogs that alert to a medical crisis and dogs that assist people with physical and mental health impairment.

NZ legislation adopted the term disability assist dog rather than assistance dog as several training organisations already used the term assistance dog in their name. Even though disability assist dog is the legal term, assistance and service dog continue to be used by those in the field. For the purpose of this study, the term disability assist dog is used to maintain consistency with NZ legislation as it clearly defines which dogs are approved to assist disabled people.

At the time of this study, NZ has six disability assist dog training organisations certified under the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006). Subsequently, K9 Medical Detection New Zealand gained certification in 2019, bringing the current total to seven. Below is a general description of the purpose of the dog. These descriptions include but are not limited to the skills listed, as the dog's skills and purpose may vary depending on the handler's need. The dogs are always under the control of the handler or trainer.

- **Hearing Dogs for Deaf People New Zealand:** Provide dogs specifically trained to alert hearing-impaired people to sounds such as fire and other alarms, doorbells, telephones, baby alarms or text messages. The dog is trained to paw the handler gently to alert them to a sound.
- **Mobility Assistance Dogs Trust:** Specialise in training dogs to assist people living with physical impairment. The dog may assist with picking up items, opening doors, bracing, and supporting a handler with impaired balance.
- **New Zealand Epilepsy Assist Dogs Trust:** Provide dogs to assist people with severe epilepsy. The dog keeps the person safe during and after a seizure. It can alert others that the person might need assistance. Some dogs can detect an impending seizure.
- **Blind Foundation Guide Dogs: S**pecialise in training dogs to assist people with vision impairment to be independently mobile. The dog is taught routes to places handlers regularly go, such as shops, bus/train stops or workplace. The dog guides handlers, for example, around obstacles and stops at points such as kerbs.
- **Assistance Dogs New Zealand Trust:** Train dogs for people with impairment such as autism, Down syndrome, diabetes, and Alzheimer's, enabling handlers to become independent and safe both at home and in the community. The dog may alert to low or high blood sugar levels, anchor a child to prevent them from running away, provide deep therapeutic pressure, or keep a person with Alzheimer's safe at home and in the community.

- **Perfect Partners Assistance Dogs Trust:** Specialise in providing dogs for people other organisations do not support, for example, those with impairment such as autism, neurological disorders, psychiatric disorders, and seizure disorders.
- **K9 Medical Detection New Zealand:** Use dogs trained to detect cancer and other diseases.[1] These dogs are trained to work with their trainer in controlled clinical environments, assisting in detecting cancer and other diseases. When not working in the clinical environment, they live with their trainer. The agency is also certified to train dogs for handlers who require a dog that can detect the onset of a medical event, such as a seizure, heart palpitations, hypo- or hyper-glycaemia.

The Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) states that any disability assist dog trained by the organisations mentioned above has legal access to public places when working with their handler or trainer. Therefore, the dog team cannot be denied access to any place the general public can access, such as buses, trains, taxis, rental cars, aeroplanes, cafes, restaurants, food halls, shops, shopping malls, supermarkets, town centres, cinemas, concerts, theatres, tourist places, hotels, motels, hospitals, public parks, and gardens. This legal right of access does not extend to private property such as private homes, Maraes, or churches, but access is open to negotiation. The Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) also states that if the person in charge of a business provides a justifiable reason to exclude the dog, access may be denied, but it does not define “justifiable reason”. This lack of definition leaves an opening in certain circumstances for negotiation between businesses and handlers or trainers.

[1] This organisation was registered under the Dog Control Act on 21 March 2019. Data collection was concluded before this date; therefore participants were not recruited from this agency.

All of the training organisations work under strict guidelines to ensure that the dogs meet the certification requirements set down by the Department of Internal Affairs (2019). These guidelines state that to become accredited, the organisation must apply, in writing, to the Department of Internal Affairs providing evidence for accreditation. The certification confirms that the organisation can train the dogs to a standard such that they behave appropriately and safely in public places. Certification also ensures the handler is competent to control the dog.

When working, the dog must always be under the control of the handler or trainer. It must not solicit attention from the public, be distracted by people, animals, food or other items, and toilet on command in an appropriate place (Assistance Dogs International, 2021). The dog undergoes one to two years of intensive training to learn all the commands required and how to behave appropriately in a public place. It is a misconception that the dog can problem solve. For example, a Guide Dog is trained to stop at the kerb and wait for a command from its handler before crossing the road. The handler or trainer listens for traffic and decides when to cross, not the dog. While it is working, any interference with the dog may distract it from its task putting the handler's safety at risk or inadvertently teaching the dog inappropriate behaviour such as always stopping when approached by a member of the public.

Dogs are required to have particular characteristics to be suitable as a disability assist dog. Traits such as sociability, low aggression towards people and other animals, ability to work closely with its handler, follow instructions or alert to scent, noise or obstacles are required of the dog (Duffy & Serpell, 2012; Wilsson & Sundgren, 1997). To ensure the dogs have the required characteristics, some organisations have their own breeding programmes.

Those without a breeding programme carefully assess their potential trainee dogs for the appropriate traits before starting training. All dogs are continually assessed throughout training, with approximately 50% of potential dogs becoming fully certified. Larger breeds such as Labradors, Golden Retrievers and Poodles usually have suitable traits and size to assist adults or children with physical, medical, neurological, or vision impairment. In contrast, smaller dogs such as terriers, spaniels or toy dogs are more suited to assist people with hearing impairment.

The Disability Assist Dog Trainer

In this study, the term "trainer" refers to a person qualified to train a disability assist dog to the required standard, teach the handler how to work with the dog and provide the dog/handler team with ongoing support. Blind Foundation Guide Dogs separate this role into two: a dog trainer and a human instructor. The instructor works with the handler and dog as a team. In other organisations, this is a combined, dual role. For simplicity, the generic term trainer is used throughout this thesis, with no distinction being made between trainer and instructor.

The Disability Assist Dog Handler

The term "handler" is used throughout this thesis to refer to the person responsible for the dog's welfare and is in charge of the dog when working either in the home or out in a public place. If the disabled person is under the age of 16 or unable to control and care for the dog independently, the person's parent or guardian is the handler and, in this study, is called a "parent handler". An "adult handler" is an adult who independently uses a disability assist dog and is fully responsible for its care and well-being. To be eligible for a disability assist

dog, the potential handler or a child must have their impairment diagnosed by a medical practitioner and have confirmation that they would benefit from using a disability assist dog. These dogs cost between $NZ20,000 and $30,000 to train, and as the NZ training organisations are all charities without government funding, four of the smaller organisations ask handlers to contribute towards the training costs. Handlers engage in a range of fundraising activities to fund the training cost.

Animal-Assisted Intervention, Therapy and Activities

In addition to the above training organisations, other animal-based programmes offer specialised services in areas relating to animal-assisted interventions, animal-assisted therapy, animal-assisted activities, and animals for emotional support (Kruger & Serpell, 2010). In NZ, Canine Friends Pet Therapy and St John Outreach Therapy Pets are two organisations offering dogs for animal-assisted therapy. These dogs are companion animals owned by private individuals which are assessed and trained for the programmes these agencies offer. Owners and their animals may be invited into rest homes, hospitals, hospices, and schools to offer companionship and emotional support, or therapists can use dogs as part of therapy or other programmes offered by the organisation. Unlike disability assist dogs, animal-assisted intervention dogs used in therapy programmes are not certified under the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006); therefore, they do not have the same rights covering access to public places. This study has been limited to disability assist dogs with public access rights and does not include dogs without public access rights such as animal-assisted interventions therapy or activities.

Overview of Thesis

Chapter One – Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic and provides an overview of the research, followed by a brief description of the research aims and methods, the positioning of the researcher, and key terminologies relating to the research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter begins with an outline of the models of disability on which this study is based. Following this, the premise that companion animals offer psycho-social benefits such as being "social lubricants" or "icebreakers" in initiating social contact between the owner and the public is discussed. The next section leads into the literature that examines how the provision of a disability assist dog, primarily provided to mitigate impairment, also impacts disabled handlers' and trainers' social interactions with the public. The final section covers the limited NZ literature on disability assist dogs.

Chapter Three – Methods and Methodologies

This chapter provides the reasoning behind the choice of a qualitative method of study. Social constructionism and the social model of disability were used to underpin this study. The sampling process, data collection, data analysis using thematic analysis, and ethical consideration are explained.

Chapter Four – Findings

This chapter presents the findings relating to experiences derived from the participants relating to the interactions with the public and how they were managed. Analysis of the interview data resulted in four themes.

Chapter Five – Implications of Findings

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the themes, which were established in the previous chapter. It provides a critical discussion and interpretation of the findings, along with supporting literature and research evidence.

Chapter Six – Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary and interpretation of the key findings from the research, outlines the limitation of the current study, and provides recommendations for future policy and research opportunities.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The introductory chapter provided an overview of disability assist dogs, their right of public access, and some of the benefits and disadvantages such access created for disabled handlers and trainers. This chapter offers a critical review of the literature. It first provides a review of the models of disability that underpin the theoretical base for this study. This is followed by an examination of the role of companion animals, in particular companion dogs, in initiating beneficial social interactions for both non-disabled and disabled people. This socialising effect lays the foundation to introduce the important role of disability assist dogs as social catalysts for disabled people helping them overcome some of the stigma and discrimination they faced when in the public environment. The final section presents the role of disability assist dogs in the NZ context and identifies gaps in the literature which has informed the purpose of this study.

Theoretical Models of Disability

The Medical Model of Disability

According to Oliver (2004), the medical model viewed disability as a personal tragedy or disaster where an individual was a victim trapped within a dysfunctional body. A disabled person was regarded as socially inferior and a burden on society as they could not contribute to the workforce or care for themselves (Barnes & Mercer, 2006). The medical and allied health professionals were the experts who "fixed" the body with the intention of returning it to as close to typical function as possible. Little consideration was given to the social, emotional, economic, and other needs of the disabled person. Instead, they were expected to comply with treatment from the experts and cope with disabling environments (Haegele &

Hodge, 2016; Hogan, 2019; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Pfeiffer, 2001). Those unable to be fully re/habilitated (fixed) were confined to a restricted lifestyle limited by their inability to access the inaccessible environment and their dependence on others for assistance (Pfeiffer, 2001; Smith, 2008). Disability activists and advocates have argued that many were institutionalised where they were "cared for" and isolated from the rest of society. Up until the 1960s, disabled people were very much an oppressed and socially isolated group due to these physical, social, and attitudinal barriers of the medical model (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Finkelstein, 2004; Oliver & Barnes, 1998). Disabled people and disability activists began to rebel against such discrimination and began working towards the removal of structural barriers and social inequalities, aiming for equal access for all (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, Finkelstein, 2004; Pfeiffer, 2001; Oliver & Barnes, 1998).

Rather than focus on the individual, disabled people and disability activists began to address the social and political aspects of disability. This resulted in the development of an alternative model - the social model of disability that refocused the belief that disability is a condition of personal tragedy to the argument that disability is a social issue. Significant change empowered disabled people to instigate resistance against the medical model, invoke policy changes, and identify and remove structural, political, and social barriers.

The Social Model of Disability

During the 1970s, people with impairment, particularly those with physical impairment, formed groups to address the discrimination and oppression they faced. In England, two fundamental disability movements, the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) and the Disability Alliance (DA), produced a document, *The*

Fundamental Principles of Disability (1976). The fundamental principles the groups agreed to were:

> disability is a situation caused by social conditions, which requires for its elimination, (a) that no one aspect such as incomes, mobility or institutions is treated in isolation, (b) that disabled people should, with the advice and help of others, assume control over their own lives, and (c) that professionals, experts and others who seek to help must be committed to promoting such control by disabled people. (UPIAS, 1976, p. 3)

The document also distinguished between impairment and disability.

> In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. (UPIAS, 1976, p. 3)

As the above quotes demonstrate, these principles have significantly reframed the meaning of disability and impairment, separating them into two separate concepts. Impairment is a condition of the person, whereas disability is a social construction.

In England, other disability activist groups emerged during the same period, such as the Liberation Network of People with Disabilities, British Council of Organised Disabled People and Disabled People International, along with academic courses promoting disability studies and politics (Shakespeare, 2014). Michael Oliver, an academic and advocate for the rights of people with impairment, developed the social model while preparing a postgraduate course for social workers and other health professionals. He wanted a model that applied the fundamental principles of disability to practise. Oliver suggested that professionals need to apply their interventions to social barriers and not to people with impairment (Oliver, 2004).

Oliver (2004) stated that he "invented the term 'the social model of disability', though not the ideas behind it" (p. 19). The ideas for the model came from the work of UPIAS and other groups and their definitions of impairment and disability. Oliver used these ideas to reject the medical or individual model moving away from the concept of treating impairment towards encouraging society to change, enabling people with impairment to have equal access to all aspects of society and the environment.

A key feature of the social model is the separation of impairment and disability into two separate issues (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). By separating the two, a person was no longer a victim of or defined by their impairment. Instead, they were a person with an impairment excluded from society by disabling attitudes and the physical environment (Oliver et al., 2012). Therefore, the focus was no longer on trying to make the person "fit" into society but instead, it was society that needed to accommodate the person.

The drive for social change for people with impairment occurred not only in England but also around the world. In North America, disabled people aligned with other minority groups discriminated against by their race, religion, beliefs, or economic and social status. In NZ and other countries, a similar change occurred. Disabled people became politically active, and the social model concepts were used to demand political, social, and economic change. Internationally, legislation and policies (Americans with Disabilities, 1990; Equality Act, 2010, UK; New Zealand Disability and Public Health Act, 2000; UN Convention of the Rights of Disabled People, 2006) were developed and implemented with the aim of protecting the rights of disabled people and to set new

standards that accommodated equal access for all (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Neufeld, 2005; Pfeiffer, 2001; Quinn, 2005; Shakespeare, 2014).

Over the same period, the field of disability studies became an academic discipline enabling the concepts around disability to be studied at the undergraduate level and researched at postgraduate level; thus, providing research to back the drive for social change (Barnes, 2014). In both the academic and political arenas, the social model was, and still is, rigorously debated, with academics, disability activists and people with impairment arguing strongly for and against the model (Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Shakespeare, 2014). Many regarded the social model as dualist, ignoring the fact that a person could be disabled by their impairment (Thomas, 2004). Shakespeare (2012) argued impairment and disability could not be separated as there is a dynamic relationship between both depending on the person's health, well-being, and other factors such as social support (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001).

Since its inception, alternatives to the social model of disability have been proposed. Shakespeare (2004) argued that a new model of disability is needed that acknowledges the complexities of impairment, stating: "not everyone experiences disabling barriers or oppression, because many impairment are not subject to social stigma, and many people, despite their impairment, are not socially excluded or discriminated against." (p. 20). Shakespeare and Watson (2001) proposed the social theory of embodiment that acknowledged that impairment and disability are not dichotomous but are on a complex continuum.

Other definitions of disability are based on the researcher's academic discipline, whether from a political, sociological, economic, medical, psychological, or educational

perspective (Mitra, 2006). The capability approach, for example, looks at disability from an economic perspective and a person's capacity to function, as poverty and impairment are closely linked (Mitra, 2006). Levitt (2017) proposed the active model of disability. He argues that other models do not consider the effectiveness of the actions of people with impairment in their ability to seek support from others, use assistive technology or self-help. This model is proposed to support the social model as it is the combined actions of disabled people and society that leads to inclusion. No matter what aspect of disability a model or approach considers, the vital point is that it reduces or removes the disabling factors inhibiting disabled people from living a full and equal life.

In response to the academic debate and criticism of the social model, Oliver (2004) stated that he considered that the social model was not a theory, model or paradigm, but a tool or starting point (Tregaskis, 2002) to bring about a positive change in the lives of people with impairment. The social model of disability initiated significant political and environmental changes in the lives of people with impairment by identifying that disability is created by social attitudes and inaccessible environments (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). While some may regard Oliver's social model as outdated, its primary purpose remains true to the ideals of UPIAS (1976), which stated that society creates disabling environments and attitudes which prevent people with impairment from having full and equal access to society.

Even though the social model of disability and other social models have brought about a change in political and environmental barriers, attitudinal barriers continue to exist, not only towards disabled people but also to their assistive tools or devices. Research has argued that assistive technology can attract extra attention making it more stigmatising when the general public is not familiar with it (Emiliani, 2006; Mills, 2017). While the use of guide

dogs to assist people with vision impairment is well established in NZ, disability assist dogs for people with impairment other than vision loss are a relatively new phenomenon. Coupled with the fact that in NZ companion dogs are not allowed in the vast majority of public locations and facilities, it can be argued that the use of disability assist dogs in public places will generate extra attention. In addition, unlike other types of assistive technology that is device or tool-based, such as a wheelchair, white cane or hearing aid, a disability assist dog is a sentient being. Hence, this difference will contribute to some significant implications for the disabled handler's social experiences, adding to stigma and misconceptions associated with their use (Mills, 2017).

To date, no research has been identified that uses the social model lens concerning the experiences of NZ disability assist dog handlers and their interactions with the public. In this sense, the social model is being used in Oliver's initial concept that it is a tool (Oliver, 2004). In this study, the social model is used to identify how society creates enabling and disabling interactions with the disability assist dog handlers and how the handlers manage these interactions.

The following section discusses how companion animals, in particular, dogs, can be a link between people, encouraging enabling and occasionally disabling social interactions. The unique nature of using a living being such as a dog as an assistive tool means that relationships can be formed between animals and people, thus promoting social engagement, unlike other inanimate tools or devices used to assist people with impairment.

Animals and Social Engagement

Companion Animals

Seminal work by Mugford and M'Comisky (1975), Messent (1983), Hunt et al. (1992), Gunter (1999), and McNicholas and Collis (2000) has established that the presence of an animal in both the home and community creates a social catalyst for interactions between people. Mugford and M'Comisky (1995) coined the terms "ice breaker" and "social lubricant" to describe this socialising effect. These terms continue to be used today to describe how an animal's presence creates a common point of interest between people that encourages conversation, initially about animals, that often lead to other topics, the development of friendships, and a sense of social and community inclusion.

Dogs are the second most common pet in NZ (44% of households have cats and 28% dogs) (NZ Companion Animal Council Inc., 2016). They are regularly seen in the public environment, and the dog's presence acts as a robust social catalyst offering a safe and familiar conversation topic (Robins et al., 1991). In a quantitative study, McNicholas and Collis (2000) reported it was the dog's presence, age or breed, rather than the dog's appearance or the handler's presence that influenced interactions. Puppies gained more attention than older dogs, as did breeds such as Labradors which were perceived as friendly and approachable (Wells, 2004). Furthermore, a person's perception of a dog was also influenced by negative and positive media reports about different breeds (Wells et al., 2012). These studies reinforce the earlier findings that a dog is a robust social catalyst for social interaction.

In urban environments, the presence of companion animals, in particular dogs, encouraged more interactions between neighbours and promoted the development of trusting relationships, and increased involvement in the community; thus, animals became a link between human health and social capital (Wood et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2017). Pet ownership contributed to the formation of friendships and social support within the neighbourhood (Wood et al., 2017), and similar to previous studies, in Wood's et al. (2015) study, participants reported their companion animal was an ice breaker creating a reason for stopping for a conversation, with regular meeting often leading to the development of friendships.

Dog walking rather than dog ownership contributed significantly to people getting out and into their neighbourhood (Antonacopoulos & Pychyl, 2014; Curl et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2015). Dog walkers who conversed with others had decreased loneliness and a greater sense of community and social engagement. Interestingly, the conversing dog walkers were more likely to be single, divorced, widowed and walked their dog more frequently. They reported their dog was a means of getting to know their neighbours and talking to people to whom they would not usually talk. On the other hand, non-conversant dog walkers reported they used their dog walking as a time for solitude and reflection (Antonacopoulos & Pychyl, 2014). However, a limitation of this study was a lack of data about individuals prior to obtaining a dog; therefore, it is unknown why a person obtained a dog or how lonely they felt before getting their dog. The social catalyst effect of dog walking also influenced life satisfaction, as getting out in the community and socialising with others positively impacted people's physical and mental health (Curl et al., 2020). Overall, research has provided some convincing evidence that dog walking positively impacts people's physical and mental well-being as it encourages social interaction with others for those who seek such interactions.

The social catalyst effect of companion dogs also influences social engagement between non-disabled and disabled people. Intellectually disabled people living in group or supported homes benefited from walking with a dog and its handler in their local community, which resulted in increased social engagement in the form of convivial greetings. They also benefited from being recognised and spoken to by shop staff and neighbours in their community. The dog's presence also reduced the number of disrespectful encounters and encouraged a more significant number of friendly, socially appropriate, and inclusive behaviours by the public (Bould et al., 2018).

In a university campus setting, a person sitting in a wheelchair received significantly more interactions with passers-by when accompanied by either a disability assist dog or companion dog. Interestingly, there was a slightly less but not statistically significant number of interactions with the disability assist dog, suggesting that people may understand that they should not interact with these dogs (Shyne et al., 2012).

These two studies reinforce previous research that a dog's presence, whether it be a companion dog or one identified as a disability assist dog, acts as a social catalyst between people.

While a significant amount of research has shown positive interactions and benefits with companion dogs, the literature is sparse on negative interactions. When negative accounts were illustrated, most were about challenges related to practical issues of pet ownership, such as animals not being allowed in rental properties, cost of dog feeding and maintaining dog health or lack of space to house and exercise a dog (Burrows & Adams,

2008; O'Haire, 2010; Smyth & Slevin, 2010). Public health issues such as zoonoses, allergies to dogs, dog bites (Wells, 2004), barking, and littering (Wood et al. 2005) were also problems. Other issues reported were people being frightened of dogs (Burrows & Adams, 2008; Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008) or children with autism not liking dogs, or treating the dog disrespectfully (Byström and Lundqvist Persson, 2015).

Disability Assist Dogs

The use of disability assist dogs is a rising trend. These dogs are specifically trained to assist people with a diverse range of impairments, including mobility, cognitive, psychiatric, neurological, sensory impairment, and others such as medical conditions (Ascarelli 2010; Eddy et al., 1988; Ensminger 2010; Hill et al., 2014; Mader et al., 1989; Winkle et al., 2012). Disabled handlers using disability assist dogs showed improvements such as increased self-esteem and independence, and reduced social isolation and loneliness (Davis et al., 2004; Magus, 2014; Mills, 2017; Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008). Psycho-social factors, such as loneliness, depression, feeling safe or secure, contentment, self-esteem, and independence were examined by Valentine et al. (1993) in a small mixed-methods study involving mobility and hearing-impaired handlers. Participants reported they felt safer, less lonely, more assertive, had increased self-esteem, and felt more independent with their dog. Social interaction with strangers also improved.

These studies have established that aside from enhancing physical functioning for disabled people, disability assist dogs can have the same ice breaker effect found in companion animal studies (Shyne et al., 2012). Participants received more friendly acknowledgements from members of the public when they were with their dog compared to

when the dog was not present (Hall et al., 2017). For example, disability assist dog handlers who use wheelchairs reported feeling more comfortable in social interactions because their dogs allowed strangers to see them as individuals, and helped increase contact and conversation (Eddy et al., 1988; Lane et al., 1998; Winkle et al., 2012). For disabled people who endured the stigma of social isolation and othering, this socialising effect was particularly beneficial (Bould et al., 2018; Daruwalla & Darcy, 2016; Dragan, 2016; Hersh, 2013; Mills, 2017; Pérez-Garín et al., 2018). Participants reported that prior to obtaining their disability assist dog they were ignored or avoided by members of the public, but with the dog, passers-by smiled more frequently and approached them to enquire about the dog (Eddy et al., 1988; Lane et al., 1998; Winkle et al., 2012). The limited existing research on the social experience of disability assist dog handlers tends to report positive effects, particularly on social interaction. However, they have not addressed how increased attention towards disability assist dogs may interfere with a dog's ability to do its job, or how focusing on the dog rather than the person can present as discourteous and unpleasant.

The socialising effect of disability assist dogs was not restricted to handlers with mobility impairment but also included those who had hearing (Guest et al., 2006; Hart et al., 1996) and vision impairment (Stefens & Reinhold, 1998). In Hart et al.'s (1996) small retrospective quantitative study, people with hearing impairment reported benefiting from the dog's presence as it made their impairment more visible. Once neighbours and members of the community were more aware of their impairment, there was an increase in friendly interactions. Participants reported that social interactions had also increased with both the hearing and Deaf communities. A dog's presence eased the awkwardness some people experienced when communicating with people with hearing impairment. By acting as a social

catalyst or ice breaker the dog contributed to reducing the handler's feelings of depression and stress (Guest et al., 2006).

Similarly, 88% of visually impaired handlers in Stefens and Reinhold's (1998) quantitative study stated that the guide dog's presence made it easier to get to know people. For 80% of participants, the dog was the topic of conversation. Participants in Miner's (2001) qualitative study of the lived experiences of eight guide dog handlers reported the dog was an ice breaker and changed public perception of them as they were now seen as a competent dog handler rather than a disabled person in need of pity or assistance. In Whitmarsh's (2005) quantitative study, 25% of participants reported that people were friendlier, and nearly 10% reported people offered more help to the handler. Interestingly, only 3% of potential handlers stated they applied for a guide dog to assist with socialisation and making new friends. Thus, the social lubricant effect of disability assist dog is an unanticipated but welcomed benefit. Practical disadvantages to guide dog ownership included, finding places for the dog to relieve itself or to rest, or the dog's inappropriate behaviour. At times, the increased social attention the dog brought was unwanted by the handler, in which case, the white cane became the preferred mobility aid (Whitmarsh, 2005).

A review of the literature by Sachs-Ericsson, Hansen and Fitzgerald (2002) reported a lack of substantive quantitative evidence to provide conclusive evidence of the benefits of disability assist dogs. The authors suggested the need for longitudinal, matched comparison groups and the use of standardised measures to provide more conclusive evidence. In a systematic review of disability assist dog literature, Winkle et al. (2012) called for more rigorous studies with larger samples, more in-depth descriptions of the intervention and training, and greater statistical analysis including the use of standardised outcome measures.

Audrestch et al.'s (2015) review of disability assist dog studies argued that although the literature highlights the benefits provided by dogs, the lack of rigorous research hindered the recognition of these benefits in social policy, and because training organisations are frequently used to generate participants, there is a risk of bias. Therefore, independently funded quantitative studies undertaken by researchers across a range of disciplines were recommended. Such studies would provide social policymakers with facts and figures able to quantify the complex ways disability assist dogs provide social, physical, and psychological advantages to disabled people. Such data would support the need to enforce the legal rights of disability assist dog handlers and trainers to provide unimpeded access to the public environment.

Researchers have begun to address the issues raised by Audrestch et al. (2015) by using quality of life outcome measures to compare potential handlers (on a waitlist for a dog) and those with a dog. In studies by Hall et al. (2017) and Lundqvist et al. (2018), the quality of life ratings improved once the handler had worked with a fully trained dog. Participants showed significant improvements in the areas of independence, health, learning, and work. Physically disabled handlers scored higher in areas of socialisation and recreation than handlers with hearing impairment. These results were consistent with earlier studies (Rintala et al., 2008; Valentine et al., 1993) on a similar cohort, with the authors concluding that participants with a physical impairment may face more feelings of stigma and social exclusion than those with a less visible impairment such as a hearing impairment.

A large mixed-method study by Rodriguez et al. (2020a) surveyed both potential (n=57) and existing (n=97) handlers with physical and chronic disabilities. Standardised health measures such as the Paediatric Quality of Life Inventory (Varni et al., 2001), the

Patient-Reported Outcomes Measuring Information System (Cella et al., 2010), and the Monash Dog Owner's Relationship Scale (Dwyer et al., 2006) were used to gather quantitative data. When controlled for demographic variables, the data supported previous studies that disability assist dogs significantly improve handler's psycho-social well-being in the areas of work/school function, social and emotional health. This study provides robust and invaluable quantitative data to support that disability assist dogs improve the overall quality of life of handlers and as Audrestch et al. (2015) suggested, this data is succinct enough for policymakers to understand.

With the benefits of disability assist dogs well established in the literature, a recent study (Rodriguez et al., 2020b) examined the anticipated disadvantages of disability assist dog ownership by potential handlers and those experienced by handlers with dogs. This study identified that issues fell into four categories: dog care; public education and access; life style adjustments; and dog behaviour. Dog care issues were mostly practical related to feeding, exercise, toileting, medical expenses, and coat shedding. With regard to public education and access, participants reported issues, such as unwanted attention and interference with the dog, lack of public knowledge about the dogs and how to interact, impairment becoming identifiable, and being known as the person with the dog. Life style adjustments related to having a dog with you 24 hours a day, planning outings and incorporating the dog and its needs into your daily life, and other people and pets adjusting to the dog's presence. Several dog behaviour issues were identified, such as hyperactivity, stubbornness, distractibility, and the need for ongoing training to maintain and to teach new skills. These issues were similar to those identified by Whitmarsh, 2005. It is important for the professionals recommending and assessing potential handlers to be realistic about these issues and the impact they may have on the handler.

In the above study, experienced handlers reported discrimination based on a lack of public knowledge, about access rights, that there is a range of disability assist dogs other than guide and hearing dogs, and etiquette when engaging with the dog or handler. In comparison, potential handlers were less aware of such issues. Similar findings were reported by Gravrok et al. (2019) and Gravrok et al. (2020) when examining the experiences of first-time handlers. Many of the challenges faced by first-time handlers, such as dog behaviour and interference from the public, were outside the handler's control. Those supporting the disabled person, such as family, carers, or day programme staff, inadvertently created daily challenges by completing tasks the dog was trained to do. Participants also reported that when in the community, public interference with their dog was a greater challenge than denied access. These results illustrate how often well-intended actions and a lack of knowledge inadvertently disempower disabled people by reducing their independence, access to the public environment, and the benefits the dogs are trained to provide.

Lack of knowledge about disability assist dogs roles and issues faced by handlers was not only limited to potential handlers, families, caregivers and support staff, but also included rehabilitation professionals responsible for assessing a potential handler's suitability for a disability assist dog. Rehabilitation professionals with general theoretical knowledge about the benefits of the dogs to a disabled person might lack experience and understanding of the practicalities of daily use of the dogs (Lamontagne et al., 2020). In comparison, handlers reported having specific practical knowledge and understanding of the challenges they may face (Lamontagne et al., 2020). This difference in the level of knowledge highlights the gap between theory and practise. A health professional is involved in assessing a person's ability to use an assistive aid, but lacks expertise or practical experience of how the disabled person uses it. This study supports the findings of previous research that many of the challenges

faced by disabled handlers are outside their control, as they are created by disabling attitudes, lack of knowledge about disability assist dogs, and appropriate engagement with disabled people.

The following section provides background on NZ based research related to disability assist dogs. It concludes with gaps in the literature.

The Context of Disability Assist Dogs in New Zealand

Research on the social experiences of disability assist dog handlers is increasing internationally; yet remains at its infancy level. When this current study was conducted, no identified research in NZ had examined how these social experiences impacted upon dog handlers with different disability types. Most NZ based evidence consisted of limited published research in peer-reviewed journals and some grey literature such as unpublished theses, focusing on Guide Dogs and Mobility Dogs®. Harland's (1992) unpublished Master's thesis provided a rich, qualitative description of eight participants' lived experiences of Guide Dog ownership. Results identified benefits and challenges of being a disability assist dog handler, such as dealing with public interactions (wanted/unwanted) and the lack of public knowledge on the appropriate treatment of the handler and the Guide Dog. Lloyd's (2004) doctoral thesis and subsequent publications examined the effectiveness of using a Guide Dog as a mobility aid and the use of Guide Dogs from the handler's perspective (Lloyd et al., 2008a; Lloyd et al., 2008b; Lloyd et al., 2009). Similar to previous research that mentioned positive benefits such as companionship, greater ease, and enjoyment of travel with the dog assisting with access issues, negative issues were also mentioned. Handlers reported challenging situations and discrimination in social situations, where the dog was not welcome

(private homes); crowded or cramped place such as pubs, concerts; public transport with limited room for the dog; places with too many dogs where the dogs were either distracted or aggressive towards other dogs; and denied access to hotels and public transport.

A very small number of studies had a focus on Mobility Dogs®. Spence's (2015) doctoral thesis concluded that companion dogs could enhance the quality of life, particularly through psycho-social benefits. For these reasons, it may be appropriate to grant companion dogs that have passed the public access test and have been suitably trained the same public access rights as disability assist dogs. Spence (2015) also identified the need for public education on the etiquette of engaging with Mobility Dogs®. Mudge et al.'s (2017) study identified the Impact on Participation and Autonomy (IPA) (Cardol et al., 1999) as an appropriate standardised outcome measure to assess the services of Mobility Dogs®, as this measure would provide Mobility Dogs® and other organisations with a means of identifying and comparing the long-term real and potential benefits of disability assist dogs.

Both the international and limited NZ research highlight a significant and similar issue: the lack of research on social experiences and discrimination toward disability assist dog handlers. For this reason, it is unknown how prevalent disabling or enabling interactions are for handlers, and how handlers manage societal attitudes towards their presence in the public environment. Consequently, there is a need to acquire better knowledge and understanding of the interactions between the public and disability assist dog handlers and trainers and adequately inform the public on etiquette and legal right of access when encountering someone with a disability assist dog. Although most of the research purports that the use of disability assist dogs, such as Guide Dogs and Mobility Dogs®, can increase social acknowledge, resulting in enhanced social interaction, they tend to assume no adverse

effects on the handlers (Mills, 2017). The current research is novel in that it explores the views of NZ disability assist dog handlers and trainers on their experiences, expectations, and drawbacks, particularly regarding public interaction, unwanted attention, discrimination, and access. The lack of existing research highlights that it is crucial to consider both positive and negative aspects of disability assist dog ownership.

Summary

In this chapter, the key international literature relating to the medical and social models of disability, and the social catalyst effect of companion and disability assist dogs was reviewed. The limited NZ based research identifying the benefits and drawbacks of utilising disability assist dogs was also reviewed. This identified that an in-depth qualitative study was required to identify both the enabling and disabling issues NZ handlers and trainers face when in public places with their disability assist dog. The following chapter describes the methodology used for this qualitative study.

Chapter 3 - Methods and Methodologies

This chapter describes the qualitative interpretive methodology that underpins the research and the methods used. The chapter is divided into six sections starting with study design, followed by a description of the participants, the method of data collection, and data analysis. Finally, it ends with a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Study Design

A qualitative approach was employed for this study to provide a voice for disability assist dog handlers and trainers and their diverse experiences of interacting with the public. While the use of a quantitative approach could provide numerical data on the type and frequency of interactions (Tracey, 2013), a qualitative approach was deemed more appropriate for this study. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to perform a more in-depth analysis of handlers' and trainers' experiences, views, and feelings, especially how interactions with the public have impacted their daily lives. In addition, it enabled an exploration of how handlers and trainers manage these interactions. Investigating these diverse interactions provided critical insights and, in turn, provided useful information to address the issues of lack of knowledge of the public on appropriate ways to interact with handlers and trainers as well as inform the public of the legal right of access of the dog when with its handler or trainer.

An interpretive paradigm (also known as constructionist) seeks to understand the world from the participant's viewpoint (Tracy, 2103). This perspective is primarily used to understand how people perceive, seek meaning, interpret, and understand their physical,

emotional and spiritual world (Green & Thorogood, 2009). It adheres to the belief that knowledge and reality are socially constructed based upon society's cultural, religious, political, and social norms (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Patton, 2002). Knowledge and reality are not fixed, and over time change in social attitudes and beliefs occurs as new knowledge and understanding are incorporated with existing knowledge (Padgett, 2012; Tolley, 2016).

An interpretive paradigm was chosen for this study to explore the socially constructed ideas and attitudes of the public as perceived by disability assist dog handlers and trainers in NZ society. The social model of disability fits within this paradigm as it is based upon the concept that disability is socially constructed (Thomas, 2014). As such, it highlights how society creates disabling barriers based upon rules, attitudes and beliefs, resulting in the exclusion of people with impairment from everyday activities and environments. It also highlights how society can remove these barriers through legislation and change in social attitude, leading to creating inclusive and enabling environments (Barnes & Mercer 2010). NZ legislation and Government strategies for disabled people are based upon this social model, which provides legislation and policies to remove disabling barriers. This legislation and policy have begun to address physical barriers, such as access to building or signage, but more importantly, research indicates that disabling social attitudes have yet to change to enable disabled people to have free and equal access to all environments (Dargan 2016; Mills, 2017; Stace & Sullivan, 2011).

The researcher's professional background, discussions with supervisors, and a review of the literature influenced the choice of semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the method for gathering data. This interview style required the researcher to listen with empathy and understanding and, ultimately, allowed the participant to tell their story in their own words

(Johnson, 2002). A semi-structured interview style was used to enable the interview to be guided by, but not limited to, the researcher's questions (Brinkman, 2018), thereby allowing the interviewee to discuss important points. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to explore the topic in greater depth or bring the interview back on topic (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Face-to-face interviewing was the preferred method as it provided a more natural, conversational style of information gathering; allowing for non-verbal cues to be read and used to guide the interview, thus accommodating impairment such as hearing loss and creating a balance of power between the interviewer and the interviewee (Shuy, 2002).

Study Participants

Recruitment of participants commenced once ethics approval was obtained from Massey University's Human Ethics Committee: Southern A. Approval was received on 1st June 2017 (Appendix 1). For this study, eligible participants were NZ disability assist dog trainers, adult handlers, and non-disabled parents of disabled children who handled the dog on behalf of their children in a triad team (parent handlers). The participants worked with their dogs regularly in a public place. The Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) gives equal public access rights to both handlers and trainers working with a certified disability assist dog in a public place. Adult handlers, parent handlers and trainers were included to provide multiple perspectives as the study's emphasis was on the interactions between the public and the disability assist dog team.

For the recruitment of handlers, the inclusion criteria were: (1) aged over 16 years; (2) their disability assist dog lived with them and was trained and certified by one of the six

disability assist dog training organisations; and (3) actively worked with a disability assist dog in public places. Parent handlers were also included in this group.

For the recruitment of the trainers, the inclusion criteria were: (1) be a qualified trainer of a disability assist dog; (2) worked for one of the six NZ disability assist dog training organisations; and (3) they regularly worked with a disability assist dog in public places.

Recruitment of potential participants was first initiated by telephoning the managers or CEOs of the six disability assist dog training organisations to initiate contact to ascertain their interest in the research and discuss any concerns. The telephone call was followed by an email (Appendix 2), which formally introduced the purpose of the research, requested the manger's assistance with recruiting potential participants, and requested the managers to provide written permission confirming their willingness to assist the researcher. Upon receiving the manager's reply to agree to participate and support the research, a second email (Appendix 3), addressed to potential participants, with an attached consent form and information sheet (Appendix 4 and 5), was sent to the managers to ask them to forward the information to all of their handlers and trainers. During the interview process, it became apparent that selection bias (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) had occurred, as rather than sending the invitation email to all handlers, the managers sent it to a few selected handlers. Potential participants were asked to contact the researcher directly if they were interested in participating. Participants were offered alternative formats (i.e. Braille, large print, EZ read format) for any written information and, if required, arrangements would be made for a sign language translator, but no such requests were received.

All six of the disability assist dog training organisations approached agreed to be involved in the study. The data collection process started in June 2017 and concluded during

September 2017. A total of 12 participants, six trainers and six handlers, agreed to participate and completed the interviews.

Data Collection

Data was gathered from two face-to-face interviews and 10 telephone interviews. The face-to-face interviews took place in a mutually agreed time and private location. Telephone interviews for participants who were geographically distant from the researcher occurred at a mutually agreed time. The researcher was in a private place with the telephone on loudspeaker, which enabled audio recording. Participants were asked to ensure they were in a comfortable place that they had adequate privacy for the interview.

At the start of the interview, the researcher introduced herself, disclosed her background, interest in the topic, and reconfirmed the participants' consent, rights and responsibilities. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The participants' real names were only known to the researcher, and pseudonyms were used in any written documentation to ensure confidentiality. Since the sample pool of handlers and trainers in NZ was small (approximately 400 in total with some organisations having only 10 - 20 members) and members of the organisation were known to each other, limited demographic information was taken to maintain anonymity. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and utilised a semi-structured format, starting with the general request, "Could you please tell me about an experience/interaction with the public when you were out with your dog?" A list of open-ended questions (Appendix 6) prepared by the researcher, in consultation with the supervisor and literature (Galletta & Cross, 2013), was

used to guide the interview and prompt further information around a particular area. Notes were taken by the researcher during the interview to identify points to clarify or expand upon, to provide reflections on the interview, and address a new topic in the following interview. Participants were offered a written copy of their interview for review after transcription, but no one accepted the offer.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method of analysis allows for the identification of patterns within the data. The first stage of analysis was familiarisation with the data. It involved transcription of the audiotapes and was undertaken by the researcher as soon as possible after the interview. This process involved repeatedly listening to the recording and reading the transcript to provide an accurate verbatim account of the events described. In doing so, the researcher was immersed in the data from the beginning of the process, enabling the initial identification of patterns and meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Tracy, 2013).

The second stage involved generating initial codes. Each transcript was repeatedly read to identify concepts relevant to the topic. Relevant sections of text were highlighted and coded for in the margin, noting the interaction features such as what and where interaction happened, emotional response, where it occurred, and phrases used. Sections of text may have one or more codes recorded alongside them. Codes were grouped using theme maps to place related codes into meaningful groups. Codes were initially data-driven using an inductive approach, grouping the types of interactions participants described and the places in which they occurred.

Table 1. Example of coding transcript for enabling interactions.

Data extract	Margin comment
"Generally very positive often having a dog is an ice breaker. So people will say 'Oh what a nice dog or what's your dog's name' and that begins just a you know umm few minutes of social interaction which is really good for [son]." Heather, parent handler	1. positive, good 2. ice breaker 3. questions asked by the public 4. social interaction

Further analysis involved a deductive approach, using the next three stages of searching, reviewing and defining and naming themes. A deductive approach involved coding based on a suggested methodology, and the prior reading of the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Tracy, 2013) resulted in coding for interactions relating to how the different interactions either created disabling barriers or encouraged inclusion in society.

Table 2. Example of coding transcript for disabling interactions

Data extract	Margin comment
I had to explain to her in front of everybody and then had to deal with him saying; you need to get the dog off the bus; dogs aren't allowed on buses. You know and the dog in its coat and got its passport and everything umm and we only had to go a couple of stops; it was meant to be a small exercise.	1. stressful, distressed 2. upset 3. lots to deal with 4. reacting on the spot 5. driver unhelpful

The data was finally grouped under four themes - every day a new experience; enabling interactions; disabling interactions; the role of ambassador and educator.

Trustworthiness

Tracy’s (2010) eight criteria for qualitative research were used to guide this study's trustworthiness. These criteria expand upon the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability initially proposed by Guba (1981). In particular, for this study, the areas of a worthy topic, rigour, credibility, and sincerity were addressed.

This study addressed the current issues faced by handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs when in public places in NZ. The limited NZ based literature and the recent increase in media reports on issues faced by disability assist dog handlers indicated this was an appropriate time to examine the issues faced by handler and trainers in the NZ setting, thus making it an interesting and worthy topic that could identify recommendations that could improve engagement with the public

Rigour is described as the strength of the research design and selection of appropriate methods to answer the research question (Cypress, 2017). In this study, rigour was ensured by using the theoretical constructs of an interpretive methodology, the social model of disability, and thematic analysis to analyse the data to provide dense data (Tracy, 2010). Using an interpretive methodology and the social model of disability has firmly placed this research in the paradigm that knowledge and disability are socially constructed. Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step process was used for data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that their six-step method provides an accepted data analysis method for a novice researcher, allowing for in-depth analysis of the data to identify themes and hidden meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tracy 2013).

The density of data was ensured by interviewing 12 participants from all six NZ disability assist dog organisations. Previous studies (see Audrestch et al., 2015; Sach-Ericson et al., 2002, for review) gathered data related to one type of disability assist dog or undertook comparative studies, for example, comparing data from mobility and hearing assistance dogs. This study was not restricted to a specific type of dog, disabled handler or trainer but instead was inclusive of all NZ disability assist dogs, handlers and trainers, thus providing diverse data. Density was also addressed by prompting participants to recall all their experiences with the public to the point of saturation, where no new information was obtained (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This enabled the participants to describe a wide range of experiences of importance to them.

Credibility was addressed by careful consideration of participants' diversity, thick description (Guba, 1981; Tracy, 2013), and repeatedly examining the data (Patton, 2002). As stated above, the recruitment of participants was not restricted to one training organisation in NZ but instead included all six. Trainers, adult handlers, and parent handlers of the dogs were included. The participants came from various settings, including larger cities, provincial towns, and a smaller rural community. This range of participants provided diversity and multiple voices (Tracey, 2013). A thick description was provided by repeatedly searching for the hidden meaning or tacit knowledge in the data. Throughout the study, field notes were taken after each interview highlighting thoughts and impressions and noting new information that could be incorporated into the next interview. Regular meetings were held throughout the study with the researcher's supervisors to guide the development, discuss methods and theory, address any bias or preferences of the researcher, and cover any issues not already addressed that may be relevant to the maintenance of quality research.

Tracy (2013) stated that sincerity "means that good qualitative research is genuine and vulnerable" (p. 233). Therefore, the researcher was constantly self-reflexive and transparent, thus willing to disclose personal involvement and motivation on the topic, level of experience, strengths and weaknesses. The researcher's role was to gather and interpret the participant's experience and produce an accurate narrative of how they experienced the phenomena (Fossey et al., 2002). Therefore, the researcher used empathy and self-reflexivity to gain the participants' trust and acceptance and build rapport (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2013). In this study, the researcher was self-reflexive by openly disclosing to participants her interest in the topic as well as her professional and research experience. The researcher's own beliefs fit within the social constructionist paradigm in that society's attitudes towards handlers, trainers, and disability assist dogs are based on socially constructed knowledge and social beliefs. Disclosure by the researcher involved identifying and reporting the challenges to the study design that occurred during the data gathering process. These challenges were disclosed in the writing of the thesis, along with other limitations to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Full ethics approval was gained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A (17/23) on 1st June 2017 (Appendix 1). Potential participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix 5) and consent form (Appendix 4), available in multiple formats, on the purpose of the research. Before the interview, participants were able to contact the researcher to ask questions and gain further information about the research. Informed consent was sought from participants, and they were informed that participation was voluntary. Face-to-face interviews took place in a private room chosen by the participants. Telephone interviews were conducted in a private room in the researcher's

home, and participants were responsible for finding a suitably private place for the telephone interview. In the information sheet, participants were advised they could withdraw from the research at any stage without question. All effort was made to conduct the interviews with empathy and understanding; and, if a participant were to become distressed when recalling events and required further support, they would have been advised to contact an appropriate support person or counselling services. An information sheet with contact details for Methodist Social Services was provided if their services were required. No participants indicated they needed such support. Participants signed and returned consent forms (Appendix 4) to the researcher prior to the interviews, and consent was reconfirmed verbally at the start of the interview.

Confidentiality was addressed by several means. Firstly, participants signed and returned a consent form before the interview. Pseudonyms were used in all written material and during any discussions with supervisors. Any identifying features such as place names, dog name, or other features were also removed from the written material. As the total population of disability assist dog trainers and handlers was small, demographic data describing the participants were kept to a minimum to avoid identifying any participants. Two trainers were known to the researcher; one was a past work colleague, and the other was contacted before the research started to discuss potential areas of research. The potential conflict of interest was mitigated by the researcher checking with the known participants that they were willing to engage in the research. Digital recordings and transcripts were stored securely in a locked cupboard in the researcher's private home when not in use. Digital recordings will be deleted on the completion of this thesis, and written data will be stored securely according to the Massey University Human Ethics guidelines. Upon completion of the thesis, a summary of the research outcomes will be sent to the participants.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative methods and methodologies used for data collection and analysis. Ethics approval was gained before the commencement of the study. Contact with participants was initiated through the managers of the six disability assist dog training organisations resulting in interviews with six trainers and six handlers. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis were utilised to analyse the data. Trustworthiness was addressed by using the criteria of worthy topic, rigour, credibility, and sincerity. The following chapter presents the four themes identified from analysing the data and a description of the study participants.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The current research focused on the experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in terms of the types of interactions that occurred with people in public places within NZ and how these interactions were perceived, interpreted, and managed. This chapter will provide an overall description of the study participants, followed by a discussion of the four key themes identified from the data analysis. The themes are: (1) every day a new experience; (2) enabling interactions; (3) disabling interactions; and (4) roles of brand ambassador and educator.

Characteristics of Participants

A total of 12 participants were interviewed in the research: six disability assist dog handlers and six disability assist dog trainers. All participants reported they worked their disability assist dog in public places on a regular basis. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. As the number of handlers and trainers of these dogs is very small in NZ (approximately 400 out of a population of five million), only general information about the participants is provided to protect their identities.

In the current study, the six trainers represented five of the six Assistance Dogs International (ADI) certified disability assist dog organisations in NZ. At the time of the study, one organisation did not have a trainer, and two trainers were from the same organisation. All trainers were experienced disability assist dog trainers. Of the six trainers interviewed, one trainer’s primary role was training the dogs, and another’s leading role was

instructing the handlers. The other four trainers had mixed roles, training dogs and instructing handlers. One trainer was also a disabled disability assist dog handler.

The six handlers represented five of the disability assist dog organisations. One handler from the sixth organisation was away during the interview period. On her return, it was not possible to arrange a suitable time for an interview. Three adult handlers identified that they had either vision impairment, physical impairment, or a medical condition. Two handlers were parent handlers, of whom each had a primary school-aged child with an intellectual/behavioural impairment. In this situation, the child had impairment, but until the child reached the age of 16 years and was capable of independently working the dog, a parent remained the handler and was responsible for controlling the dog and its care. The third parent was initially a parent handler, but now her child was an adult who was able to work the dog independently. They did not wish to participate in the research. This parent also had many years of experience with respite care of dogs and puppy walking. She shared her experiences of outings with her child and the dog and when out on her own with a disability assist dog. All the children lived with their parents.

Theme One: Every Day a New Experience

This theme describes the wide and complex range of every day interactions that occur between the participants and the public. Participants reported they encountered interactions with the public on nearly every outing. A wide range of interactions occurred, such as a smile, a brief conversation, a pat of the dog, through to invasive questioning, and refused access to businesses or onto public transport. The public initiated all interactions described by the participants, with most interactions being polite and respectful. Parent handlers or adult

handlers with invisible disabilities reported the public often asked them if they were training the dog.

Overall, participants reported that nearly all interactions were positive and friendly, with most of them being non-verbal. Heather, a parent handler, stated, "99% of the time we have had really positive [interactions]. People don't have any problems with the dog being there. They know that he is a service dog." Tony, a trainer, also confirmed this by saying, "I've never had any issues, any negative issues at all."

Participants were part of non-verbal interactions with members of the public, such as eye contact, a smile or a gesture. Henry, a parent handler, noted, "people will often look at [child and dog] together and smile. You occasionally get people nudging each other and pointing." As Henry observed, "you can see in people's faces that they would really love to ask you a question or say something, but they don't, and that's fine because it lets you carry on with what you are doing." Trainers also observed similar reactions. Teagan, a trainer, reported the public would pass-by "out of respect for you and that the dog is doing a job and [they] don't want to interrupt."

Participants reported that on nearly every outing, they were approached and spoken to by the public. They stated that it was the presence of the working disability assist dog with its jacket or harness on that drew the public to the dog/handler and dog/trainer team. As Henry, parent handler, said, "the dog draws the attention rather than the child with the disability." Holly discussed her observations and commented:

> The difference between when my dog has a jacket and not a jacket is immeasurable. They [people] almost become magnetised if [the dog has] got the service dog jacket

> on, which is ironic because it should be the opposite, but it's not. [It's] like a magnetic attraction, it's a special dog; therefore, I must interact with it.

In contrast, Teagan, a trainer, noticed, "you take that same dog down to the dog park or out for a walk…and you don't have a harness or coat on it, and nobody is even interested." Admittedly the jacketed dog in a public place where dogs are generally not seen will attract attention, whereas a dog without a jacket in a place where companion dogs are expected to be will not draw the same type of attention.

Handlers and trainers reacted differently to requests to stop and interact. Handlers were generally very obliging when asked to stop. Heather, a parent handler, described her reaction:

> I usually just say, yeah, absolutely you can pat the dog. Let's just get him sitting down first. So, we sit the dog down, and then I show them how to pat…to put their hand out so the dog can sniff their hand, to pat him on his chest rather than on his head. So it can be a way of educating children to stop and ask and pat.

On the other hand, trainers were less willing to stop as the constant interruption disrupted the dog's concentration and training. However, trainers knew that handlers would be constantly asked for a pat of the dog; therefore, it was essential to train the dog to cope with this type of interaction and know how to behave appropriately. Tasha, a trainer, explained:

> The dog is taken in hand, so he's doing something, so he knows that the interaction is allowed rather than just come in and have a free for all pat …[You don't want] the

dog to become a social butterfly that's just going up to every person wanting pats and it's hard for them [the dog] to differentiate it.

The public stopped the participants to ask them a wide range of questions. Participants reported being asked: "what is the name of your/why do you have a/dog"; "what does it do"; "what is wrong with you?" The public shared their dog-related stories, involvement with a particular disability assist dog organisation, or commented on the participant's dog handling skills. Holly, adult handler, said:

> People feel they have a right to comment on your interaction with your dog, and they're concerned about your dog, or they just want to talk about your dog. For example, I have a labradoodle, and people love talking to me about poodles, so I know all about every single poodle that has ever lived in [city] going back several generations.

It was not always convenient for participants to accommodate every request for a pat or answer every question. Participants expressed several reasons for not stopping. For some, there were days when they were in a hurry and did not have time. Heather, a parent handler, described how they coped when in a hurry:

> We just need to get in there, get what we needed and get out. So head down, no eye contact, do not make eye contact with anybody, do not smile…If we are in a hurry, then we need to be able to just get on with what we've got to do.

Other participants stated they were too tired to have any more interactions. Tasha, a trainer and handler, said that after about 20 interactions in one day, "I am really tired and just can't [stop any more]." They just wanted to get to where they were going. Holly, an adult

handler, said it was hard not to "snap" at people and be rude as "they [the public] don't realise they are the hundredth interaction [I have had] this month of the same kind." All participants were aware that they should remain polite and respectful, no matter if they were rushed, tired or not in the mood for another conversation about their dog or impairment. Participants reported remaining polite and respectful to maintain a level of social etiquette and because they were aware that they represented disabled people and disability assist dogs in general. They did not wish to attract any negative attention to the groups they represented.

Some questions became quite personal and invasive of a participants' privacy. People wanted to know why they needed the dog or asked about their impairment or medical condition. Henry, a parent handler, stated, "quite often people will say, 'what's wrong with your daughter?' You really feel like saying there's nothing wrong with us." Helen, a parent handler, described the impact invasive questions had on her. She said:

> You don't want to make a scene in front of your child, and you don't want to reveal to the world what's wrong with your child…You feel a bit invaded like your life is laid bare in front of everyone.

The public appeared to lack awareness of how invasive and depersonalising such questions were. It was as though their need for information was more significant than the handler's privacy.

Participants also encountered inappropriate offers of support. Two handlers reported that people had offered to pray for them. Holly, an adult handler, reported, "I do take offence to people coming up to me and saying can I pray for you and your dog." Tasha, a trainer and handler, reported she was told, "I need[ed] to be prayed for. [I was] given… a number for me to call so someone would pray for me." Participants found such behaviour from the public

inappropriate but again felt the need to accommodate the encounter politely. As mentioned above, the participants were aware they represented the combined group of disabled people and disability assist dogs.

In some interactions, the public displayed a lack of respect and self-control around the dog/handler or dog/trainer team as they would call out to the dog, try to distract it, or rush up and pat it without asking the participants' permission. Helen, a parent handler, stated that frequently parents called out to her dog. She said, "just this week, everywhere I go where there are young mums with toddlers, they all go 'Look at the puppy [and call] doggie, doggie, doggie.' They are calling out, and the dog's doing its best to ignore them." Teagan, a trainer, said: "People would come up and just start patting the dog. [They] say, 'Oh we know we're not supposed to pat the dog, but I just couldn't resist; it's so cute'." Sometimes people would try to surreptitiously sneak a pat of the dog as they passed by. For example, Hanna, an adult handler, said:

> My Mum and I would call it drive-by petting. It's when they are just parallel, and they would stick their hand out. I'm not touching, but it's just there, and it's just grazing past. It's like; you are still petting the dog.

Such interactions were challenging to manage as they were often spontaneous, very distracting for the dog, and very invasive of the participants' privacy.

Finally, the most difficult interactions occurred when business personnel or transport staff refused participants access to shopping malls, shops, cafés and restaurants, on to public transport, or into other public places. Gaining access depended upon two factors; the participant's willingness or ability to explain their right of public access and the related law and secondly, the willingness of members of the public and those with some sort of authority

within a business to accept the explanation. Frequently, handlers had difficultly gaining access, and when they did gain access after some discussion with staff or a manager, the incident continued to have consequences for the participants and staff involved. Heather, a parent handler, described what happened for her at a major hardware store:

> We were stopped at the door and [told we] weren't allowed to have the dog in there. In the end, I just pulled out a copy of the…law saying he [dog] can be in there. They wanted us to have a guy go around with us to make sure the dog doesn't crash [into] things. The guy was so apologetic; [he said] "I'm so sorry I'm so embarrassed I know you're allowed in here."

Hanna, an adult handler, had an issue with the driver refusing access when boarding a bus with her dog. She said:

> We have the law card that has the law on it. He refused to look at the law; he contacted the depot, and the depot is like "dogs can't be on [the bus]." He was border-line trying to kick us off the bus. Over the loudspeaker [the driver was] talking to the person at the other end saying dogs are filthy and disgusting.

Eventually, Hanna boarded the bus but had endured the embarrassment of holding up the bus and having passengers listen to the incident. Helen, a parent handler, had a similar bus experience, but her incident was with a passenger, not the driver. She said once she was on board the bus:

> I get a little tap on my shoulder, and I turned round and there's this guy in his 30s. He goes, dogs aren't allowed on the bus. I said, "Oh, this one is; it's a working dog." He proceeded to have this big argument with me about dogs not being allowed on the bus. Other people were asking him to let it go and leave [us] alone. He just persisted the whole time.

The emotional impact of being forced to argue for the right of access did not end with the incident but affected the handler's willingness to use transport or enter a shop. Helen, a parent handler, stated that she was so distressed after the bus incident that she had not attempted to use a bus again. She was also concerned about how her daughter would manage such incidents in the future when she was able to be an independent handler. Hanna, an adult handler, commented that after her third denied access incident on a bus, "if I had another issue, I'm not going to be polite, I'm going to be rude." Hayley, an adult handler, commented that after gaining access to a restaurant, the service was so rude that she stated she would not return. Four handlers all reported taking further action after refused access onto transport by contacting transport management, sometimes more than once, resulting in an apology and a promise that staff will receive further education.

Trainers also experienced refused access but gaining access and educating staff was part of their job, and although frustrating, an incident did not have the same emotional impact as it had on handlers. Trainers reported that they would stand their ground; instead of leaving, they politely asked to see a manager. From experience, they were aware the issue was lack of staff education; therefore, it was most effective to bypass the frontline staff and speak to the manager directly. Teagan's statement described the type of reply frequently given by managers. "We're not quite sure why this has occurred. We completely accept all disability assist dogs in our mall. We're really, really sorry. We will call the security guys in now and do a briefing."

This theme has provided some insights into the range of every day interactions with the public, both handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs face. The intended purpose of a disability assist dog is to mitigate the impact of the disability for the handler, thus giving

handlers improved access to the broader community. As can be seen, by the participants' narratives, a disability assist dog's presence created a range of interactions that enabled and disabled independence, access, and engagement in the community. The next theme presents the impact enabling interactions had on the participants.

Theme Two: Enabling Interactions

The primary purpose of a disability assist dog for handlers was to mitigate the effects of impairment, but at the same time, the presence of the working dog attracted attention leading to engagement with the public. As illustrated in theme one, participants reported that most public interactions were positive enabling social interaction and conversation about the dog and its role. Some handlers reported that the dog's presence enabled interactions that helped develop social skills, confidence, assertiveness, and a sense of normality and inclusion.

Participants stated that the presence of their disability assist dog made conversations easier for the public to initiate. Several handlers used the terms ice breaker or social lubricant to describe the dog's effect on their engagement. Handlers commented that before obtaining their dog, they were overlooked by the public, but the dog's presence now encouraged social engagement. Questions such as "what is your dog's name?" or comments like "what a lovely dog" were conversation starters enabling further dialogue. Helen, a parent handler, described how the dog drew people to them, enabling conversation. She stated:

> We call [the dog] a social lubricant because what we have found is that people want to talk to us. People who would never otherwise ever engage with us in a conversation

> are coming towards us, often saying, "Oh wow that's a beautiful dog; what does it do?"

Sometimes they ask too many questions, but they are genuinely interested. Helen, parent handler, said, "It gives our daughter an opportunity to talk to them [public] and also for them to talk to her. So it is, kind of, opening up a social interaction for her that she might not otherwise have had." Parent handlers regarded these interactions as valuable to their child as they provided the opportunity to develop social skills. Heather, a parent handler, acknowledged the value of such engagement for her child by saying, "often having a dog is an ice breaker, so people will say 'Oh what a nice dog' or 'What's your dog's name' and that begins just a few minutes of social interaction which is really good for [my child]."

The social catalyst effect also occurred for adult handlers by creating opportunities for conversations and dispelling misconceptions about disability. Holly, an adult handler, used the term ice breaker to exemplify how the dog can break down some of the public's misconceptions of disabled people. Holly thought people were afraid to speak to someone using a wheelchair. She stated, "I often refer to my dog as a living ice breaker because people are afraid of talking to people in wheelchairs, but they love dogs," she concluded that the public thought, "if I'm responsible for a dog, I must be ok to talk to."

Hayley, an adult handler, described the impact of social attitudes toward disability when she replaced her long white cane with a Guide Dog. When asked about the difference between before and after getting her dog, she said:

> A whole lifetime of hiding the fact that you can't see properly, you're always tense. The cane, the cane was absolutely horrible - people avoided you like you had the plague and then things got worse for me [referring to her vision]...So getting a Guide

> Dog, the whole world seemed to open up…People would speak to you, approach you and talk to you; they would look at me. When I've got a dog, people just can't wait to speak to you, and they are so much nicer when you go into a shop [or] bank.

The ice breaker or social lubricant effect enabled social engagement opportunities that did not occur without the dog.

Trainers were aware that the presence of a disability assist dog would bring about greater social interaction with the public and that not all handlers would be comfortable with managing the increased attention. Teagan, a trainer, explained that assertiveness and being comfortable with saying no was a skill that needed to be taught and practised in a safe and supportive environment. Being assertive and polite enabled the handlers to take control of the situation, preventing their confidence from being undermined. Teagan said, "we have to work that through with them [handlers]. So you can be assertive [and] polite, and you can speak with a level of confidence and trust in yourself and what you are saying." Tanya, a trainer, noted that assertiveness came with practise. She said, "It is a confidence of maturity; it's the confidence of experience." Teagan emphasised that there was a need to remain polite by saying, "We are very clear to them [handlers] they have the right to their own privacy, but please bear in mind that you are representing the trust and service dogs in New Zealand." This statement highlights the complexity of interactions as, on the one hand, the handler is a private citizen, but on the other, they are a public figure representing disability assist dogs and disabled people.

Initially, each new interaction was challenging for handlers, but with experience and support from the trainers, handlers gradually gained confidence in their ability to manage different interactions. Teagan, a trainer, said that she would stay in the background when she

was out with a handler and their dog. She would encourage the handler to engage with the public and provide support when needed. She said, “we try and put it back [on them], so they are in control of it and give them the confidence they can follow through.” This support made each new interaction easier to manage as the handlers gained experience and developed their own way of engaging in or declining an interaction. Even with all the preparation, there will always be unexpected or new situations. As Helen, parent handler, said, “you put your big girl pants on and get ready for anything.”

To enable participants to keep interactions brief, avoid delay and give information, some organisations provided handlers with business cards or leaflets. One adult handler, Hanna, reported she printed her own cards. These cards contained background information about disability assist dogs and details of the organisation’s website enabling the public to seek further information in their own time. Hanna explained that questions made “conversations longer which was why I created the cards…If you want more info [rmation], here’s the website.” Hanna stated she found too many or long conversations stressful as they often lead to intrusive questions about her medical condition and need for the dog. The cards enabled her to provide information but keep the interactions brief, positive and informative, keeping her stress levels low, allowing her to continue with her activities with minimum interruption.

As the participants became a familiar sight in their local community, seeing the dog was no longer a novel experience, and most people were now aware not to disturb the dog when it was working. Hence the number of interactions decreased, which enabled the handler to go about their daily activities in a timely manner. As Tanya, a trainer, explained, “Once

they've [handler] settled into a community, a lot of that [increased social engagement] will settle down."

Familiarity with business staff enabled unhindered access to shops, cafes and restaurants. Henry, parent handler, described his experience in their small community "I don't think there is any shops we haven't been into. He's [the dog] been into all the cafes, our boat club…[where] there is a no dog policy, and we just walk on in and…there's never been any bother." Henry spoke with a sense of pride that they could go out as a family with a well-behaved dog that was accepted without question in their community. Heather, a parent handler, described her experience when giving her name for a booking at a local restaurant, "They go, 'Oh yes, and that will be one dog.' So they know the dog is coming, and they make sure they sit us somewhere it's convenient to have the dog."

Regular contact with retail staff enabled more personal service, making the experience more enjoyable. Hayley, an adult handler, explained that she shopped in places where the staff knew her and accepted her dog without question. She said, "I can walk in and they know you…They've got one counter and they say, 'what are you after?' 'I'm after a raincoat today', and they will actually leave the counter and take me back to that particular area." For Hayley, knowledgeable, friendly and helpful staff enabled her to enter the shop without interruption and receive personal service, making the outing an enjoyable experience.

Feeling safe or knowing that people would offer assistance as required was another benefit of familiarity. Heather, a parent handler, was reassured as she knew her adult child was safe when working independently with the dog. People would comment to her that they had seen her child with the dog. Heather said, "[child] was well known in [and] around the

local streets." Heather also commented that "people there are familiar with him…The times he has [been unwell] on the train, they either just sit with him till it's passed…or if they think he needs an ambulance, they just call the ambulance." For Heather, the presence of the dog created awareness for the public of her child's disability. Before her child received the dog, she would get calls from him after a medical event, but he could not state where he was, which created a frantic search. Now with the dog and being so well known in the community and on public transport, he is much safer, and Heather is less worried.

The theme of enabling interactions has identified that most interactions between the handlers and public were positive and enabled a social engagement denied to handlers before obtaining their dog. Familiarly in the community led to a sense of inclusion and acceptance. Although most interactions reported by the participants were described as positive and enabling, some interactions with members of the public were challenging, resulting in distress, inconvenience, and limited the handler's ability to engage fully in their daily activities. Some of these challenges are presented in the following section's theme **-** disabling interactions.

Theme Three: Disabling Interactions

Although participants reported that most interactions were positive and enabling, it was the disabling interactions they remembered and discussed in depth during the interviews. Disabling interactions were described as those when the public interacted with the dog without permission, tried to get the dog's attention, asked invasive questions, or engaged in prolonged conversations. The most disabling and challenging interactions for handlers to manage was denied access into shops, cafés, restaurants, or transport. All of these interactions

created significant barriers for disabled handlers, preventing them from going about their daily activities and, at times, had a significant impact on their wellbeing.

All participants described situations where the public would ignore their requests to leave the dog alone. People would say, “I know you shouldn’t pat her, but I can’t resist” (Holly, adult handler), or they would call out to the dog to get its attention. Distraction was difficult not only for the participant but also for the dog. Helen, a parent handler, said she experienced “people calling out or actually just running up and touching [the dog] and not asking.” In such situations, Helen acknowledged how difficult it was for the dog, saying: “she [the dog] likes attention, so she’s really torn between do I react to that or should I ignore. It makes her job really hard.” At the same time, there was an expectation that the dog would be well behaved and tolerant of the interaction. As Tanya, a trainer, said:

> If you just go up and pat a dog without any sort of introduction of the dog, the dog does amazingly well to put up with that. But the other part of that, of course, is if the dog didn’t, all hell would break loose.

When people touched the dog without asking, handlers reported that it was an invasion of their privacy and personal space. Handlers stated that the dog was an extension of themselves so touching the dog was the same as a stranger touching them, which was intrusive. Helen, parent handler, explained, “I often feel like when somebody touches [dog] it’s like somebody touching my child. Why are you touching, you haven’t asked me. It doesn’t belong to you. It’s quite an invasion.” Some participants reported that when bystanders just focused on the dog, they felt ignored as a person. Helen shared that “often people engage with the dog almost as if we are invisible.” Holly, an adult handler, stated, “when you’re interacting with the public, they don’t perceive you as a private citizen.” She

concluded that the public did not regard disabled people as private individuals; therefore, the public felt entitled to comment, criticise, touch them and their dog without respect or regard for the handler's privacy. Instead, the handler was objectified.

Even though a disability assist dog's purpose was to mitigate the impact of impairment and enable the handler to go about their daily lives with greater independence, the dog's presence created disabling situations when the shop, café, restaurant, or transport staff refused handlers and their dogs' access. Staff would state that no dogs were allowed on the premises. When handlers did assert their right of access and gain entry, they were sometimes made to feel unwelcome and received poor service. Hayley, a handler, said:

> [In] a restaurant, the person said to me. No. Sorry. You're not allowed pet dogs in here, and I stated it was not a pet dog; it was a Guide Dog. I will not go back to that restaurant because the atmosphere was very cold.

Hayley was an experienced handler who had the confidence to assert her rights but, new or young handlers who lacked confidence avoided confrontation. Heather, a parent handler, described how her teenage child was refused access to the local dairy. Heather said: "[My son] went up there with the dog and was told he couldn't have the dog in there and [he] came back home without whatever he had been asked to go up and get." He lacked the confidence to argue for the right of access and was unable to make a purchase. Heather addressed the issue on his behalf by going to the dairy and explaining to the staff about the legal access rights, and now there are no access issues.

Refused access to buses, trains, and taxis were common to many participants, and it caused significant problems for handlers as often there was no alternative transport; therefore,

they had to negotiate access. Hanna, an adult handler, and Heather, a parent handler, described situations where they were refused access onto public transport. The staff member concerned appeared to have limited knowledge of the access rights of disability assist dogs. Hanna reported, “A bus driver said, ‘It’s only Guide Dogs [that are allowed on]’, and I can’t have my pet on the bus. I said, ‘I’ve got the law right here if you want to look at it.’” Hanna stood her ground, and with support from companions accompanying her, she eventually gained access after the driver called the depot to check if the dog was allowed on the bus. Heather also described similar incidents when her adult child started using trains. She said, “initially, he used to have trouble on the trains with people telling him he couldn’t have the dog on the train; it was always the conductor.” In both situations, the staff member did not believe the handler even when evidence was provided, and it took the support and intervention of non-disabled people for the disabled handlers to be granted access that they already rightfully had.

To resolve the issues of access to public transport, both Hanna and Heather took further action of making a complaint to the management to get some resolution. Heather said, “it got resolved after a few letters were sent to the people - management…[in a] a senior role there, and he sorted it out well and truly.” Hanna’s mother also complained, resulting in getting “free bus rides out of that, which we weren’t expecting; we got a formal apology saying our policy is you can come on.” For Hanna, it was apparent that the staff were not informed about public access rights of disability assist dogs, as over the following months, she continued to be refused access. Hanna expressed her frustration by saying, “I told Mum today that if I had another issue, I’m not going to be polite, I’m going to be rude.” The lack of ongoing education from management to existing and new staff continues to create barriers for

disabled handlers resulting in unnecessary stress, frustration, and the need to fight constantly for the right of access.

Trainers reported they addressed access issues immediately as it was part of their role to address such barriers and ensure a smooth passage for the next handler or trainer. Trainers would discuss the legal right of access with the person directly, ask to speak to a manager, or as in Tasha's narrative, just ignored the request to leave. When Tasha, a trainer, was refused entry to a café, she ignored the request to leave and the threat to call the police and sat down she waited. She stated:

> I placed our order [and sat down]…after about 20 minutes, she came over and said I didn't realise that the dogs were that good I was expecting your dog to be wandering around, and I said thank you for the compliment.

Teagan, a trainer, said when asked to leave a shopping mall by a security guard, "I remained polite and calm about it. I just asked him if he could direct me to the management area of the mall." In this situation, Teagan stated the manager was aware of the access rights of disability assist dogs and was very apologetic as this information had not been passed on to the staff.

To avoid conflict and a distressing situation when access was denied, handlers indicated that they were advised by the disability assist dog organisation to obtain a name and contact details and politely leave. The handler was then asked to pass the information to the organisation so that either a trainer or CEO of the dog's training agency could contact the business to provide education on the handler's legal public access rights. Although this process was suggested to handlers, no handlers said they had followed it when access was denied. Instead, handlers reported they managed denied access themselves even though these situations were distressing. Teagan, a trainer, said they were aware of how distressing

disabling encounters were for handlers, so they thought this approach helped reduce the distress and embarrassment of such encounters for disabled handlers. She stated:

> The secondary stuff that goes on for them [handlers] such as anxiety that would cause them in situations to become really, really stressed out, which puts their health at risk…They just end up feeling like they should just hide or leave, and that's not nice.

Passing the issue onto the organisation to manage may reduce the handler's distress and embarrassment, but it does not necessarily make the next denied access situation any more manageable and does not empower the handler to address the issue. Hence, this action may decrease independence to access places handlers want to go and maintain dependence on non-disabled people to negotiate access on their behalf, thus counteracting the dog's initial purpose.

The theme of disabling interactions has described the issues of unwanted interactions and denied access for participants. It has identified that the publics' inability to follow social norms of engagement, their lack of knowledge of the legal access rights of disability assist dogs to public places, and their lack of respect for the disabled handler as a person created significant disabling barriers for handlers. The need for handlers to remain polite under all circumstances and diplomatically negotiate access was also disabling. The following theme of educator and brand ambassador roles highlights additional complexities of disability assist dog ownership where the handler is both a private and public citizen. Handlers had to negotiate a complex range of interactions with the public, provide education about the dog, and promote the disability assist dog brand.

Theme Four: Roles of Brand Ambassador and Educator

This theme discusses the roles of educator and brand ambassador. Being an educator and brand ambassador was part of the trainers' role for which they were trained. For handlers, these were additional, unexpected, and complex roles. The trainers and organisations provided some support, and some handlers cultivated their own ways of managing these additional roles.

Participants reported they were aware that when they were out in the community, they represented not only their organisation but also the other disability assist dog organisations. This study's results indicate that the public appeared to lack knowledge that Guide Dogs were not the only type of disability assist dog. Teagan, a trainer, stated:

> We are in a public education and the public limelight a lot…and we have to be mindful of that at all times, not just for ourselves but for everyone - Guide Dogs, Assistance Dogs, Hearing Dogs…No matter what brand we have on us we all, unfortunately, get put in the same category…People just don't understand the differences. A lot of us smaller organisations, new organisations, we still get mistaken as Guide Dogs.

The lack of understanding about the different types of disability assist dogs resulted in handlers and trainers feeling that they represented all of the disability assist dog organisations. Holly, a disabled handler, referred to this as being a "brand ambassador." The brand ambassador role places additional responsibilities onto the handlers. Tasha, a trainer, stated:

> We want people to think that the assistance dog owners are considerate members of society and that they do consider the needs of the public while also being able to go and do what they need to do, and what they want to do, and having their life with their

> dog. I do say to all of our clients that [they] are representing all assistance dogs in general.

The brand ambassador's role resulted in participants having a sense of always having to be polite and respectful towards the public no matter how politely or disrespectfully they were treated in return.

Handlers reported that making a good impression was very important to them. Henry, a parent handler, said, “we’re really aware of the fact that our dog is from [organisation] and so anytime we’re out in public we are by extension representing that organisation, and we don’t want anybody to think badly of that organisation.” Hayley, an adult handler, expressed how it was not only the dog’s behaviour that was important but also her and her dog’s presentation. She said:

> I just feel when I go out with [my dog], I am promoting [the organisation], so I want to make sure he looks good, make sure that I’m tidy and not tatty because I just feel that it’s just so important.

Thus, by taking a disability assist dog into a public place, the participants felt the need to be well prepared, tidily dressed, and polite to ensure they portrayed the overall brand of disability assist dog positively and made a good impression. At the same time, the dog also needed to be clean, tidily groomed and very well behaved. As identified in theme three, being polite and respectful was, at times, difficult, but something participants felt obliged to maintain for the sake of the brand and impression their behaviour would have on other handlers. Being polite and respectful was also necessary; as Holly stated, “people will report you if you aren’t they’re quite willing to call the council and all sorts.”

Participants were aware that all the organisations were charities and dependent on donations from the public to assist with funding. Tanya, a trainer, acknowledged this dependence and stated: “we are, I think, more reliant on the generosity of individuals, small companies or individuals and fundraising and friends now. I think that we’re a lot more reliant on that to keep these charitable services going.” Henry, a parent handler, said: “our community really helped with a lot of the fundraising.” Reliance on public funding was another reason why maintaining the disability assist dog brand in a positive light, and always being polite was important.

The second role identified by participants was that of an educator. Again, this was a role that was part of the trainer’s professional role. They understood that it was necessary to continually educate businesses about the legal access rights of disability assist dogs and teach the public how to interact appropriately with the dog/ handler or dog/trainer team. Tasha, a trainer and handler, said, “I do it [educate] at every opportunity I can get. I just think that taking the opportunities in our local communities and spreading it from there is quite a big thing for me.” Trainers had the confidence and skill to manage difficult situations and stand their ground until the issue was resolved. As Tanya, a trainer, said, “hopefully, we made a smoother path for the next person that follows.”

Educating the public was a role that handlers undertook casually during an interaction and more formally when giving talks to different community groups. Most handlers accepted this role even though it was an extra, unexpected responsibility over and above the purpose of having their dog. Tina, a trainer, stated that during the handover period, “you teach the staff not to rush round the counter and say hello to [the dog].” For the handler, additional personal effort was required to prepare for the interactions. In new situations, some handlers prepared

staff. Hanna, an adult handler and student, provided her lecturers with written instructions on interacting with her and her dog to be shared with other students and staff, and she gave a talk to her class. The process was repeated at the start of each new semester:

> I had new teachers and new rooms. [I did] another courtesy meeting with my teachers…I went in and introduced myself and [dog] and what he would do because I think a lot of people don't understand the [high] level of [dog] behaviour that the standard is.

Heather, a parent handler, introduced her son and his dog to ambulance staff. Heather said, "I took him [dog] up to the local ambulance station and talked to them…They know that the dog has to go in the ambulance with them." Participants reported that introduction and education sessions were necessary to ensure handlers had easy access to frequently used places.

Providing education to the public required the handlers to be well prepared, have a good knowledge of disability assist dogs, and be confident to talk to the public. It was a skill that developed with age and experience. These roles required confidence, time, and energy for handlers, which disabled people and families with disabled children often did not have a lot to spare. In Holly's words, handlers needed to "be prepared, practised and polished" in their engagement with the public. Holly continued to say:

> I've learned quite a few strategies around how to deal with the public because you are sort of a brand ambassador, so you have to work quite hard to be polite and friendly because you better believe that people will report you if you aren't. They are quite willing to call the council and all sorts. So that's just a feature of public life when you have a disability.

Some participants engaged in formal talks to community groups and schools. Tasha, a trainer and handler, reported she talked to many organisations such as occupational therapy and social work students; youth groups, such as brownies, guides, and St John youth; interviewed for newspaper articles; and created webinars. Helen, a parent handler, reported she had spoken to several community groups but found children were the most attentive. She said, "I find the kids talk to each other and spread the word." Tanya, a trainer, stated she overheard children "telling the parents, no, you're not allowed to touch." Thus, educating children on the etiquette of interacting with a disability assist dog may be the most effective way of educating the public as children enjoy passing knowledge to others. Participants indicated a need for national education on disability assist dog roles and engagement etiquette through television, radio, newspapers, or magazines.

These results indicate a total imbalance in the dissemination of information with the responsibility for the education of the public and businesses remaining firmly in the hands of the handlers, trainers, and the disability assist dog organisations. Constantly engaging with individual members of the public resulted in a lot of time and effort on the part of disabled people, who, at times, have limited energy for such interactions. Businesses do not appear to be complying with their legal obligations or making an effort to inform their staff. If businesses did take up the education role, staff could be proud of being well informed and welcoming (Small et al., 2012), thus reducing the stress on disabled handlers who feel obligated to undertake the education role and defend their right of access.

Summary

This chapter introduced the participants and presented the results from analysing the interviews of six handlers and six trainers of disability assist dogs. Analysis of the data identified four themes: (1) every day a new experience; (2) enabling interactions; (3) disabling interactions; and (4) roles of brand ambassador and educator. These results presented the range of encounters participants experienced with the public and daily issues they faced. Although the dog’s role was to mitigate the impact of disability, the dog's presence created a complex mix of enabling and disabling interactions and brought new roles and issues for the handle to accommodate and address. The unwillingness of some members of the public to accept that the disabled handler knew their rights and that members of the public may be misinformed will continue to create significant disabling barriers to social participation for handlers. The following chapter discusses these themes in relation to the literature and theory base of social constructionism and the social model of disability.

Chapter 5 - Implications of Findings

> "I say to my clients you can't train every member of the public. You can only train your dog."
> - Tanya, trainer

This research explored the interactions between trainers and handlers of disability assist dogs and the public. It also examined how the handlers and trainers perceived, interpreted, and managed these interactions. This research was underpinned by the notion of social constructionism, in which knowledge is considered socially constructed through interactions between people, their culture, and beliefs. The social model of disability was used to identify how societal attitudes, culture, and beliefs can be both enabling and disabling for disabled people, thereby including or excluding them from participation in life activities and society. The previous chapter presented the data gathered from interviewing the 12 participants where four predominant themes - every day a new experience, enabling interactions, disabling interactions and brand ambassadorship - were identified. This chapter analyses the findings presented in chapter four in relation to the theory base and the current research.

Knowledge of Disability and Disability Assist Dogs

A social constructionist framework asserts that one's concept of reality and knowledge is created through interaction and communication with others and is developed over time through practice and experience (Tracey, 2013). Furthermore, knowledge and understanding of reality are influenced by the laws, culture, belief systems, and attitudes of a person's social group and individual experiences (Nelken, 2014). In a situation where something new is introduced to society, such as disability assist dogs, people may have limited knowledge

about this new entity. This new knowledge may support or conflict with existing knowledge and beliefs. Through communication and learning about this new entity, society gains knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the new element or concept.

The social model of disability uses a social constructionist framework to ascertain that it is societal attitudes towards disabled people and a lack of knowledge and understanding of disability that create barriers to disabled people's inclusion in society (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). Using the social model of disability as a lens, the results of this study indicated that public attitudes towards the presence of trainers and disabled handlers and their dogs in the public environment created complex and contested situations that are both enabling and disabling for disabled handlers.

In NZ, specially trained dogs to assist disabled people are relatively new, with the first training centre for Guide Dogs for visually impaired and blind people opening in 1973 (Catran & Hanse, 1992). Other organisations, such as the Mobility Assistance Dogs Trust, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People New Zealand, New Zealand Epilepsy Assist Dogs Trust, Assistance Dogs New Zealand, and Perfect Partners Assistance Dogs Trust, started to open and gain certification from 2000 onwards. The Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) requires that a disability assist dog be trained by one of the organisations mentioned above and have passed the public access test to gain certification that the dog is a legitimate disability assist dog. This certification requirement is crucial as it means it is illegal for a person to claim their companion dog is a disability assist dog. In other countries, such as the US, where there are no certification requirements, the lack of legislation enables people to wrongly claim their companion dog is a disability assist dog (Mills, 2017; Takayanagi & Yamamoto, 2018). The number of officially trained and certified disability assist dogs is extremely small in NZ, with

approximately 400 handlers in a population of just over five million people, with the largest number being in the Auckland area. Therefore, these dogs are not only a new type of assistive aid for disabled people, but they are also a relatively uncommon sight in public places due to their extremely small number. The results of this study suggest that the small number of these dogs means the public has limited exposure to them, resulting in a lack of awareness of the dog's role, purpose, and right of access.

To date, limited but important existing research on disability assist dogs is scarce and predominantly focused on quantifying how the dogs can improve a disabled person's quality of life and physical, psychological, and emotional well-being (Hall et al., 2017; Lundqvist et al., 2018; Spence, 2015; White et al., 2017; Whitmarsh, 2005). Some recent quantitative studies and a small number of qualitative papers using case studies and interviews as well as anecdotal evidence indicate there are broader issues (Burrows & Adams, 2008; Gravrok et al., 2019; Magnus, 2106; Rodriguez et al., 2020b; Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008), other than practical mitigation of impairment, for the disabled handlers when they enter the public domain. The focus of current research has remained on proving the dog's efficacy rather than some of the social issues the dog's presence produces. A finding of this study is that the apparent limitations in public knowledge and their reaction to the presence of a disability assist dog in a public place are significant factors that impact on handlers, yet these have not been adequately addressed. Although research has identified some of the issues, it appears that up until now, the handlers have not been asked how they would like the issue to be addressed.

Based on reports of their interactions with the public, participants in this study perceived some key issues. The public seem to have limited knowledge and understanding of:

disability, the close relationship between the dog and its handler, the purpose or role of the dog, of the etiquette of engaging with the dog and its handler or trainer, and of the legal rights of the dog when working with its handler or trainer in public places, especially, shops, food outlets, and public transport. The public's general lack of knowledge has impacted participants' ability to go about their daily activities, creating complex situations that were both enabling and disabling, depending on the context of the encounter. For handlers, no matter how well prepared or experienced they were, each encounter was unique and posed issues, with some being easier to manage than others. These encounters were influenced by, for example, time restraints, number and length of encounters, invasiveness of questions, and level of politeness or rudeness of the public.

Limited Knowledge and Understanding of the Complexity of Disability

Due to society's limited knowledge and understanding of disability, disabled handlers can be asked personal questions about their impairment because the presence of their dog makes their impairment visible. Disabled people regard such questioning as invasive, distressing, and discriminatory, whereas the public appeared, at times, to be oblivious to the inappropriateness of their behaviour. Such questioning implied that the disabled person was different; therefore, the disabled person was expected to explain their difference (Calder-Dawe et al., 2020). Interestingly, while disabled participants (without disability assist dogs) reported being asked by the public about their impairment and how they managed with their disability (Calder-Dawe et al., 2020), participants in this study reported they were first asked about the dog and its role, which inevitably lead to questions about their or their child's disability. Participants in both the current study and that of Calder-Dawe et al. (2020) acknowledged these questions were invasive, inappropriate, and, at times, unnecessary, such

that they had to develop strategies to manage these questions. Participants in Calder-Dawe et al.'s (2020) study also reported that they developed strategies to manage these interactions by doing things such as submitting, despite preferring not to. They answered the questions quickly to end the conversation, thus avoiding confrontation and enabling them to move on. Some of these experiences were echoed among the current research participants, and one of the common outcomes was how the participants found the personal and invasive nature of the questions always created some level of psychological and emotional distress.

In several studies (Harland, 1992; Mills, 2017; Miner, 2001; Sanders, 2000; Spence, 2015), some disabled handlers considered the public's attention and questions to be intrusive, which continued to align their status in the society as "other" and "abnormal". However, a small number of disabled and parent handlers in this current study stated that they chose to actively engage with the person to provide information about the dog and its role. Current disability literature reports mixed views, and some studies found that disseminating knowledge about disability to the public was placed firmly in the hands of the disabled people as though they were responsible for justifying their differences and helping people overcome their fears of disabled people (Calder-Dawe et al., 2020; Reeve, 2006, 2009, 2020). However, the disability assist dog and companion dog literature and the current study indicate that the dog's presence acted as a social lubricant, with the initial focus being on the dog. With the focus on the dog, disabled handlers had some control over the conversation, making it easier to keep the discussion on the dog rather than their disability, which, for some, was less confrontational.

The results of this study support the concept that the presence of a dog, whether it is a companion or a disability assist dog, acted as a social lubricant or ice breaker in initiating

conversations about dogs between strangers and disabled people**.** Existing research reports the presence of a dog with its handler resulted in a greater number of interactions compared to when the dog was not present (Camp, 2001; Eddy et al., 1988; Fairman & Huebner, 2001; Hart et al., 1987; McNicholas & Collis, 2000; Messent, 1983; Miner, 2001; Sanders, 2000; Steffens & Bergler, 1998). The dog acted as an ice breaker, providing a common point of interest and taking the focus away from the handler's disability (Onsager, 2011).

In this study, parent handlers reported the increased social attention benefited their child, enabling them to practice and develop social skills during these interactions, supporting similar findings of others (Burrows et al., 2008; Davis et al., 2004; Smyth & Slevin, 2010). These studies emphasise that the ice breaker effect of the disability assist dog assisted the child in overcoming perceived delays in social skills development. On the other hand, not all handlers, especially adult handlers, wanted or required support with their social skills. The increased social attention was not always welcomed by all participants on every occasion. When examined from the social model of disability viewpoint, the increased attention on the dog can be both enabling and disabling, depending on each handler's circumstances at the time of the interaction (Garvrok et al., 2020). Some research reports some adult handlers welcomed the social catalyst effect (Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008) while others found repeated encounters annoying and unwanted (Harland, 1992; Lloyd; 2004; Mills, 2017; Onsager, 2011).

This study has identified that the perceived lack of public awareness and knowledge meant the handler or trainer was usually the first point of contact for the public to gain new knowledge, and such interactions could be enabling or disabling. The complexity arose because every person experienced each interaction uniquely. For example, a disabled handler

and dog team may be short on time, low in energy, tired from previous interactions, or want their privacy. Due to their limited knowledge of appropriate interactions with the handler and dog team, the public may be unaware of the need to curb an enthusiasm to interact with a dog and avoid stigmatising disability by treating the person or the dog without appropriate respect. Engaging with strangers seemed to have created a dilemma for both handlers and trainers on managing the interaction and coping with the public's response. At the time of the encounter, handlers quickly needed to decide whether to follow social etiquette and politely engage with the public, decline the engagement, or just ignore the person wishing to interact. At the same time, they needed to manage their feelings of frustration and a sense of obligation to stop and provide education when they just wanted to get on with their outing. Furthermore, it was difficult for the handler to take control of the situation when the public chose to ignore their requests to stop interfering with the dog. Therefore, the handler developed strategies to address these issues. Thus, during a single outing, the dog's presence may create complex situations as it could quickly change from being an enabling solution to a disabling problem.

There is a sense that the general public in NZ seems to be more familiar with Guide Dogs for blind persons. As noted above, Guide Dogs (p. 72) were established approximately 20 years before the other dog training organisations. Through annual fundraising campaigns and being the biggest provider of disability assist dogs, Guide Dogs are relatively well known in NZ. Participants in this study narrated a unique situation in which their disability assist dogs were often mistaken as Guide Dogs despite having different colour jackets with labels on identifying them as an assistance, hearing, or mobility dog. As such, this situation reflected the continual misconception that disability is a homogenous group, and the public's reactions demonstrated a lack of awareness of the range of impairment that trained disability

assist dogs can support. The lack of awareness that dogs assisted a wide range of disabled people other than those who are vision impaired also resulted in handlers either being refused access as they were not a guide dog handler or being questioned about their disability and need for the dog. This study has highlighted the complexity of disability assist dog ownership as the handlers require a significant depth of knowledge to address society's limited pre-existing, albeit incorrect, knowledge of disability and disability assist dogs.

The results of the current study not only indicated a lack of public understanding of the diverse nature and definitions of disability but also showed another misconception articulated by the participants that the public seemed to think all impairments were visible. Parent handlers and those with invisible impairment reported they were asked if they were training a dog. The public seemed to characterise impairment as mainly visible, and if no impairment was obvious, the assumption was that they must be non-disabled and a dog trainer. Although parent handlers and adult handlers with invisible impairment did not seem to be bothered by the public assumption as reported in this study, a study of US service dog handlers identified that handlers with invisible impairment had their legitimacy to use a service dog challenged more frequently than those with visible impairment (Mills, 2017). Mills reported that American business owners were only allowed to ask disabled handlers two questions: "Is the dog a Service Dog required because of a disability?" and "What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?" (p. 6). Business personnel were also not allowed to ask for any documentation confirming the handler was disabled or that the dog was a trained service dog. In comparison, NZ does not have such legislation; instead, NZ's legislation is about the dog as the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) states that dogs can be trained only by certified organisations, and the dog must pass the public access test. The dogs have tags that verify they are disability assist dogs, and handlers may carry identification

cards. Businesses are expected to be aware of the dog's public access rights when accompanying its handler or trainer. There is no legislation regarding what people can or cannot ask a handler. Although legislation on disabled handlers' rights and their dogs differs between countries (Magnus, 2016; Schoenfeld-Tacher, et al., 2017; Takayanagi & Yamamoto, 2018), this study further highlights the point that disabled handlers repeatedly face ongoing societal, environmental, and structural barriers.

Aside from disability assist dogs being seen as the social lubricant or ice breaker between disabled handlers and members of the public, some participants in this study regarded upholding the roles of being an ambassador for the disability assist dog brand and educators to the public as essential roles for them to adopt. In these roles, handlers were cognisant that the public was the primary source of funding for the breeding, training, and placement of the dogs, and that any negative interactions may have an impact on funding and create a negative image of the organisation or even of disabled people. This finding is similar to Sanders' (2000) study where participants emphasised the importance of presenting a favourable profile and promoting the organisation from which their dog came. Therefore, handlers felt obliged to modify their behaviours and responses to the public to maintain a positive image of the brand, even when such encounters were inconvenient. The role of a brand ambassador and the importance of raising awareness and changing attitudes through education seemed to create a dilemma: not all handlers wanted to be a brand ambassador on every outing or with every person, adding to the burden and complexity of disability.

To address the lack of public knowledge and promote the brand of disability assist dogs as well as teach etiquette of interacting with the handler, trainer, or dog, participants in this study chose to speak to community and school groups. Public speaking is an effective

means to share knowledge and present information to a large group of people. Participants stated that addressing schools was effective as during subsequent outings, they overheard children assertively sharing their newly found knowledge with families and peers, reprimanding attempts to interfere with the dog. Therefore, addressing a larger audience is an effective way of providing education and creating new knowledge.

The Dog and its Handler are a Team

Gibson (2006) argues that the relationship between a disabled person and their assistive tool/device is fluid, and, depending on the situation, they move back and forth from two separate entities of person and tool/device to a single unit of a person with the tool/device. Winance (2019) identifies five stages that disabled people move through when using their wheelchairs as they transform from a separate entity to a single unit. Some participants remained at a stage where the wheelchair remained a separate item to be used as needed, whereas others formed a close relationship with their wheelchair such that it was a part or extension of them. Disabled handlers in this study reported a feeling that the dog was an extension of them. This new image was not one of dependence, but rather one of interdependence as the dog and the handler could function separately. When together, they depended on each other to make a new image (Oliver, 2016), highlighting the interconnectedness of the dog and the person. The formation of a single unit was not only a union of function but also a union of the dog and the person (Gibson, 2006; Sanders, 2000; Winance, 2019). Similar to Winance's (2019) study, any interference or touching of the dog without permission was equivalent to interfering with or touching the handler, which was an invasion of their private space, socially inappropriate, and denigrating.

In this study, trainers also had a close working relationship with the dog but not to the same depth as the handler. When viewed in relation to the stages proposed by Winance (2019), this relationship remained at an earlier stage when the dog and trainer were partially interdependent but remained as separate entities. The trainer-dog relationship was temporary as the dog was with the trainer for a short time to learn the skills required to be a disability assist dog, whereas the handler-dog relationship was permanent and much longer. To work effectively with the handler, the dog needs to quickly establish a close working relationship focused on the handler's needs. If the trainer develops a close relationship with the dog, this may disrupt the transfer of loyalty to the handler, preventing the team from working as a single entity. Trainers also experienced unwanted interaction between the public and the dog. Although there were no studies found on trainers' experiences with the public, a study by Chur-Hansen et al. (2015) reports that volunteer guide dog puppy raisers endured the stress of unwanted public interference with the dog as well as being ignored when they asked the person to stop.

In relation to Gibson's (2006) concept of the formation of the handler and dog into a single entity, this study's results indicated that some members of the public did not understand this close bond of a working relationship. Furthermore, as both handlers and trainers experienced similar unwanted interactions, these members of the public seemed to perceive only one half of the team - the dog. The handler or trainer at the other end of the lead felt totally invisible. When members of the public viewed the participant and the dog as two separate entities, the participant thereby became nothing more than an appendage to the dog (Sanders, 2000), objectifying the participant to be a nonperson with no emotions (Reeve, 2020; Stohr, 2018).

Another example of objectification regarding the participant and dog as separate entities occurred when people remembered the dog's name and not that of the handler. In this study, a handler reported they were identified as their dog's mother rather than by their own name, further confirming the handler was viewed as an appendage to the dog. The objectification and level of disregard described above not only applied for the handler but also for the trainer, further demonstrating that the public does not realise that the dog is part of a team and not a separate object.

Etiquette of Engaging with the Dog and its Handler or Trainer

The results of this study indicated that the public lacked knowledge of how to appropriately engage with a handler or trainer and their disability assist dog. Participants frequently reported people interacted with their dog without permission or regard for the dog's, the handler's or the trainer's needs. This issue was consistent with the results of both earlier (Harland, 1992; Lloyd, 2004) and more recent studies (Mills, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2020a & b; Spence, 2015). The persistence of this issue indicates that the public's lack of social etiquette and selfishness has yet to be adequately addressed and continues to be a significant disabling barrier for disabled handlers and interferes with the dog's training and work.

The biophilia hypothesis (Herzog, 2014; Wilson, 1994) provides insight into why the lack of etiquette is a barrier. This hypothesis argues that people have an innate urge to interact with nature and involves a complex set of learned rules that include emotional responses and social and cultural beliefs that evolve as humans develop their relationship with the natural environment. For some people, when a disability assist dog is present in an

urban environment, they are unable to control their innate, unconscious urge to interact with the dog, which overrides their conscious, learned socially appropriate form of engagement. Therefore, no matter how well-informed members of the public are on the etiquette of interacting with a disability assist dog, there will be someone who cannot resist the urge to interact with the dog while ignoring the handler's pleas. The public's innate drive to interact with the dog overrides any awareness of the participants' human rights to be treated with respect and dignity (Reeve, 2020; Stohr, 2018). All the handlers wanted was for the public to treat them with respect and ask first before touching the dog.

Despite finding inappropriate interactions, particularly disrespectful and discriminatory, participants in this study submitted to such behaviour because being a good brand ambassador and being respectful were put before their own needs. At the same time, participants stated that they wanted the public to ask first before touching their dog and treat their response with the level of socially acceptable behaviour afforded to any interaction with a stranger. The difficulty identified in this study was that the public initiated the interaction, so the participants were responsible for addressing any inappropriate or unwanted behaviour from the public. Participants wanted more public education on appropriate etiquette on interacting with them and their dog to address this persistent barrier. Mills (2017) suggests a need for an education campaign to inform the public that a disability assist dog is no different to any other medical assistance aid, such as a wheelchair, hearing aid, or white cane, which people do not touch without permission. This view is fully supported by the participants in this and other studies (Harland, 1992; Lloyd, 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2020a & b; Spence, 2015).

This study identified that trainers provided support to the handlers on interacting and educating the public during the hand-over period, but this brief period of support was unable to prepare them for every type of interaction they may face. For a parent handler in Gravrok et al.'s (2019) study, this interaction level caused them to return their dog within the first week post-handover. Participants in this study stated that the lack of general manners and polite social etiquette was frustrating and left them shocked at the public's attitude that they had the right to interfere with the dog without permission. Over time, handlers developed their own set of skills to address this issue, such as preparing brief statements of what to say to people, handing out information cards, gaining confidence with assertively addressing people, or avoiding eye contact as it may be seen as an invitation to interact.

Legal Rights of the Dog with its Handler or Trainer in Public Places

One of the most frequently encountered disabling issues all handlers and trainers faced was being denied access into businesses, such as shops, cafes, restaurants, accommodation, and tourist attractions, and onto public transport. Participants in this study reported denied access was directed at the dog and not the handler or trainer. Participants stated that staff said the dog was not allowed access for reasons, such as it was dirty, smelly, might steal food, frighten customers, or staff just did not want the dog on the premises but did not state a reason. Such discriminatory attitudes and behaviours demonstrated a lack of understanding by business staff that the dog with its handler or trainer had a legal right to access. These experiences have been documented in other studies concerning denied access to shops (Wiggett-Barnard & Steel, 2008), cafes or restaurants (Boult, 2018; Magnus, 2016), and accommodation (Small et al., 2012; Takayanagi & Yamamoto, 2018).

Even though the right of public access policy and the law varies among countries, studies in Sweden, Estonia, Germany, the US, and Japan (Magnus, 2016; Schoenfield-Tacher et al., 2017; Small et al., 2012; Takayanagi & Yamamoto, 2018) indicate that a lack of knowledge of the law or policy on the part of business personnel was a universal problem. The current study has shown that some business managers were aware of the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) and the access rights of people using disability assist dogs. In certain circumstances, business staff and personnel may have a legitimate gatekeeping role, and there was undeniably a need, on rare occasions, to deny a handler or trainer right of access to their businesses. For example, a dog's presence in a zoo or animal sanctuary may distress the dog or enclosed animals. In such cases, the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) does state that, "However, the person whom the dog is accompanying must comply with any reasonable conditions imposed by the occupier or person controlling the premises or place in relation to the entry or presence of the dog" (p.76). This point implies that the dog may not be allowed in certain places where it is deemed unsafe for the dog to be present, or the safety of others is at risk. In hospital settings, the dogs may be regarded as a vector for bacterial, viral, or other infections, and the dog's presence may not be appropriate (Pellegrino et al., 2016). Interestingly, a recent study on bacteria carried on dogs' paws, and people's shoes indicated that both carried a similar bacterial load (Vos et al., 2021). When in hospital, the handler is responsible for ensuring the dog's needs for exercise and toileting are met; therefore, a prolonged stay in the hospital may require others to care for the dog and bring it in to visit its handler. It is not the hospital staff's responsibility to care for the dog (Pellegrino et al., 2016). The vagueness of this clause in the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006) leaves negotiation open which may leave the less assertive handler unable to gain access where others may be more confident at arguing for right of access.

This study has further highlighted that businesses in the community still struggle to facilitate inclusive access to disabled people and their disability assist dogs. Participants reported that business managers had not ensured that their frontline staff knew the legitimate right of access, was aware of how to identify a disability assist dog, or realised that denying them access was illegal, discriminatory, and distressing. Existing research (Magnus, 2016; Mills, 2017; Small et al., 2012) emphasise that it is imperative that business staff and personnel fully understand the legitimate right of access to the handler or trainer when working with their disability assist dog. It is essential that staff are conversant with legitimate reasons for excluding the handler or trainer and their dog. When lack of knowledge was combined with a misuse of the gatekeeping role - namely denial of access - this created a power imbalance that placed disabled handlers in a position of continually needing to be prepared to defend their legal right of access or walk away from the situation (as recommended by the training organisations). To walk away from a situation meant the handler submitted to people’s discriminatory actions, resulting in them giving up their right to: access the community; use public transport or taxis; or attend social functions, a restaurant, a shop, an event, or an attraction of their choice. If the handler departed, leaving an unresolved situation due to the business personnel's inappropriate actions, then nothing had changed. The business personnel may continue to be ignorant that their actions were discriminatory, disabling, or potentially in breach of the handler’s human rights (Human Rights Act, 1993).

What has been apparent from this study is that although the NZ law protecting the rights of disabled people regarding access to public places has been in place for over 20 years, handlers in this study have reported ongoing issues and continue to be discriminated against and ostracised by disabling societal attitudes. Similar issues have been reported by

participants in existing studies (Fairman & Huebner, 2001; Gravrok et al., 2020; Harland, 1992; Mills, 2017; Spence, 2015). The sobering reality derived from the current research further illustrated that while the rights of disabled people have changed in a majority of areas, such as education, health, and employment, the use of tools/devices like disability assist dogs has shown minimal change. The limited level of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the access laws by business personnel has shown minimal progress towards accepting disabled people as equal citizens. Until business personnel take responsibility for educating their frontline staff, these significant barriers to inclusion will remain, and the small number of New Zealand handlers will continue to be forced to educate businesses or continue to endure discrimination.

Summary

This chapter's discussion has focused on interviews with six (parent and adult) handlers and six trainers of disability assist dogs who described their experiences with the New Zealand public when in public places. From the results, the themes of every day a new experience, enabling interactions, disabling interactions, and role of ambassador and educator were identified and discussed in relation to the literature and social model of disability, identifying enabling and disabling interactions. It was evident from the narratives that the public lacks knowledge of the dogs' role, the etiquette of engagement, and the right of access to public places. The public also lacks an understanding of disability in that not all impairments are visible. Analysis of the participants' narratives has shown that the disability assist dog's presence creates a complex mix of enabling and disabling interactions with the public, with handlers taking on additional ambassador roles for the dog training organisations and as educators of the public. This study has identified the need for further research to

understand why handlers continue to experience disabling interactions, such as denied access, when the law clearly states they have the right of access. Furthermore, this study identified that from the handlers' and trainers' perspective, the public has yet to learn how to appropriately engage with a disability assist dog and its handler or trainer.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion and Recommendations

The current research reports on strengths and areas of contestation and the improvements required to establish an environment that accepts, includes, respects, and empowers disabled people who use disability assist dogs. The following section summarises the key findings and is followed by a discussion of the limitations, recommendations, future research, and conclusion.

Summary of Key Findings

There are five key findings derived from this research. The first key finding relates to the participants perceiving that the public lacked knowledge about the role and purpose of disability assist dogs. Using the social model of disability as a lens identified that lack of knowledge leads to complex interactions that can be enabling and disabling. Building on this finding, the second one relates to the lack of etiquette members of the public use when interacting with the handler or trainer and their dog, which thereby creates significant distress for handlers. The third finding identifies that businesses in the community might not be aware of the legal rights of disabled people and their disability assist dogs, which impacts their social and civic participation. Fourthly, the lack of understanding the general public has about disability tends to dichotomise impairment as visible and invisible, affecting attitudes towards and interactions with disabled people. Lastly, the lack of understanding that the dog and handler is a single unit and discriminating against the dog is the same as discriminating against the disabled handler. As with any study, there are limitations, and these will be discussed in the following section.

Limitations of the Study

Findings of the current study offer insights into the interactions between handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs and the public in NZ. This study was undertaken with duty and care, but as with all research, there are some limitations. The recruitment and selection process to obtain participants posed some limitations. To avoid selection bias, the researcher approached each organisation's manager, asking them to forward an email about the research to all their handlers and trainers. During the interview process, it became apparent that managers had not forwarded the email to all handlers and trainers. Instead, they selected some handlers and trainers to which the information was sent. In doing so, they inadvertently created the selection bias the researcher was attempting to avoid. In the future, selection bias could be addressed using social media and snowballing methods to advertise the research and recruit participants.

This study was exploratory because there was a lack of data on the social experiences of New Zealanders who use disability assist dogs. A qualitative study provides rich, in-depth narratives of personal experiences of a small selection of the total population of handlers and trainers in NZ, but the results cannot be generalised to all disabled handlers and trainers.

A further limitation of this study was using a heterogeneous group of both trainers and handlers of varying age and impairment. Even so, existing qualitative and quantitative literature shows that the experiences of handlers with the public are consistent across a range of disabilities. For example, grouping the participants according to age, whether novice or experienced handler, by dog breeds, by type of disability, whether rural or city dweller may have assisted with reliability and future replication of the study. The study was further limited

because there is such a small cohort of handlers and trainers in NZ who are geographically dispersed.

Recommendations

The most significant result from this study was that participants reported experiencing a wide range of complex enabling and disabling interactions. These results further confirm the importance of contextualising such encounters from a socio-political and structural context of how disability and disabled people continue to be positioned and perceived. The use of a social model lens helped identify, through the participants, that the public still had limited knowledge of the access rights of the participants and their dogs, a limited understanding of how to interact with the dog, and that impairment could be both visible and invisible.

One crucial recommendation based on the study's outcomes is that there is a need to provide information and training to ensure business personnel and public transport staff understand the legal right of access requirements of disability assist dogs with their handler or trainer. By using the social model of disability, this study has highlighted that it is social attitudes towards disabled people and their assistive devices/tools that prevent participants from having full and equal access to the environment: it is not just impairment that limits participation. New staff need to be informed, and existing staff kept up to date regarding the legal access rights legislation of disability assist dogs and their handlers or trainers. To deny such access is illegal, discriminatory, and in breach of human rights. They also need to be informed that guide and hearing dogs are not the only type of disability assist dogs and that all certified disability assist dogs have legal right of public access.

Secondly, the public and business personnel need to be informed of the appropriate etiquette regarding interacts with a dog and its handler or trainer. Etiquette is simple - ask first, and do not be offended if the answer is not to your liking. Most handlers and trainers are willing to accommodate the public if it is convenient for them, but their decision must be respected. This recommendation was suggested previously by Spence (2015), without any suggestion of who should be responsible for providing this public education. This study has identified that handlers, trainers, and the respective disability assist dog organisations are currently responsible for providing education to the public. Since disability assist dogs have legal public access rights, business personnel need to be responsible for ensuring their staff have the appropriate level of knowledge to identify a disability assist dog and its handler or trainer. The education of the general public on dog engagement etiquette will continue to fall on the handlers, trainers, and the respective organisations as they are in daily, direct contact with the public unless a means of national publicity is developed.

One practical suggestion to inform the public would be to develop a leaflet identifying and describing all types of disability assist dogs and the work they do, the handler's or trainer's legal right of access, and proper etiquette when engaging with the dog. For example, the leaflet could include:

- Photographs of the six different types of dogs with their coats on;
- Contact details of each organisation;
- Information on access rights granted under the Dog Control Amendment Act (2006);
- Information on appropriate ways of interacting with the dog, e.g., please ask before patting the dog.

This leaflet could be distributed with the city and regional council documentation, such as dog registration or rates invoices, to hospitality, business and tourism associations or other businesses. Another solution could be to place signs in shop windows displaying photographs of the six types of certified disability assist dogs, and a statement saying disability assist dogs are welcome here.

Further recommendations to address the socially constructed disabling barriers could extend to public service announcements in magazines, newspapers, social media, radio or television. Whilst a recent documentary series on service dogs (police, drug detection, and Mobility Dogs®) was informative about disability assist dog training and roles, it missed the opportunity to inform viewers on the appropriate etiquette around interacting with the dog and their handler or trainer (Peacocke, 2020). A brief demonstration in this programme on how to engage with the handler or trainer and their dog could have been a very effective method to demonstrate etiquette protocol.

A final recommendation is that a regional support group for handlers and trainers from all the training organisations be established to enable sharing ideas and providing local support to handlers. Participants identified that talking to school children was a very effective means of providing education on etiquette. A regional group could support each other to present community and school talks to spread knowledge about disability and disability assist dogs.

Future Research

Further research is needed to explore why there is variation in public reaction to the presence of disability assist dogs. This study identified that lack of knowledge is a possible reason, but international research has identified other issues such as fear of dogs and cultural and religious norms that discourage interactions with dogs and disabled people. There is a need for such reactions to be examined in greater depth in the NZ environment to determine if they are the same as in other countries, or there are unique factors specific to NZ. Spence (2015) raised a question about whether the public's interest and desire to interact with disability assist dogs was specific to NZ, or was it a worldwide trend. As suggested by Coleman (2013), cross-cultural research may identify if the same attitudes exist across a range of countries and religious, racial, and ethnic groups. Further research on the acceptance of disability assist dogs within the disabled population is also warranted as this group is also socially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. Attitudes towards dogs may prevent some disabled people from considering a disability assist dog as an acceptable assistance tool. It is essential to conduct such studies to develop solutions that disseminate knowledge of these dogs and enable disabled handlers to gain equal access to the public environment without enduring stigma and discrimination.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide an outline of the key findings of the current study. It identifies the limitations of the study and the need for future research. It presents recommendations designed to address the identified lack of public knowledge and understanding of disability and disability assist dogs rights. The participants' experiences in

this study are supported by the literature and the social model of disability, in that it is society's attitudes that create disabling and enabling interactions. Recommendations for addressing these attitudes in order to improve the lives of disabled handlers are also presented. Disability can be minimised if social attitudes change to be more accepting of disabled people, thereby creating enabling environments.

References

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. (1990). https:/www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08mark.htm

Antonacopoulos, N. M., & Pychyl, T. A. (2014). An examination of the possible benefits for well-being arising from the social interactions that occur while dog walking. *Society & Animals, 22*(5), 459-480. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341338

Ascarelli, M. (2010). *Independent vision: Dorothy Harrison Eustis and the story of seeing eye.* Purdue Press.

Audrestch, H. M., Whelan, C. T., Griceb, D., Asher, L., England, G. C. W., & Freeman, S. L. (2015). Recognizing the value of assistance dogs in society. *Disability & Health Journal, 8(*4), 469 – 474. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2015.07.001

Assistance Dogs International. (2021). https://assistancedogsinternational.org/

Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. (2003). *Disability.* Polity Press.

Barnes, C., & Mercer, G. (2004). *Implementing the social model of disability: Theory and research.* The Disability Press.

Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. (2006). *Independent futures. Creating user-led disability services in a disabling society*. Policy Press.

Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. (2010). *Exploring Disability* (2nd ed.). Polity.

Beatson, P. (2004). *The disability revolution in New Zealand: A social map* (3rd ed.). Massey University.

Biddle, D. (2017, June 2). *Man and assistance dog denied accommodation in Hamilton.* Stuff. https://i.stuff.co.nz/business/93284646/man-and-assistance-dog-denied-accommodation-in-hamilton

Bould, E., Bigby, C., Bennett, P. C., & Howell, T. J. (2018). 'More people talk to you when you have a dog' – dogs as catalysts for social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 62*(10), 833–841. https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12538

Boult, K. (2018, February 20). *Blind woman and guide dog refused entry at Hāwera restaurant*. Stuff. https://i.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/south-taranaki-star/101298390/blind-woman-and-guide-dog-refused-entry-at-hwera-restaurant

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.* Sage.

Brinkman, S. (2018). The Interview. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 576–599). Sage.

Burrows, K. E., & Adams, C. L. (2008). Challenges of service dog ownership for families with autistic children: Lessons for veterinary practitioners. *Journal of Veterinarian Medicine 35*(4), 559-566. https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.3138/jvme.35.4.559

Burrows, K. E., Adams, C. L & Spiers, J. (2008). Sentinels of safety: Service dogs ensure safety and enhance freedom and well-being for families with autistic children. *Qualitative Health Research 18*(12), 1642–1649. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308327088

Byström, K. M., & Lundqvist Persson, C. A. (2015). The meaning of companion animals for children and adolescents with autism: The parents' perspective. *Anthrozoös*, *28*(2), 263-275. https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2015.11435401

Calder-Dawe, O., Witten, K., & Carroll, P. (2020). Being the body in question: young people’s accounts of everyday ableism, visibility and disability. *Disability & Society, 35*(1), 132–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1621742

Camp, M. M. (2001). The use of service dogs as an adaptive strategy: A qualitative study. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy 55,* 509-517. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.55.5.509

Cardol, M., de Haan, R. J., van den Bos, G. A., de Jong, B. A., & de Groot, I. J. (1999). The development of a handicap assessment questionnaire: the Impact on Participation and Autonomy (IPA). *Clinical Rehabilitation, 13*(5), 411–419.

Catran, K., & Hansen, P. (1992). *Pioneering a vision. A history of the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind 1890 - 1990.* RNZFB.

Cella, D., Riley, W., Stone A., Rothrock, N., Reeve, B., Yount, S., Amtmann, D., Bode, R., Buysse, D., Choi, S., Cook, K., Devellis, R., DeWalt, D., Fries, J. F., Gershon, R., Hahn, E. A., Lai, J., Pilkonis, P., Revicki, D., Rose, M., Weinfurt, K., Hays, R., & PROMIS Cooperative Group. (2010). The Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) developed and tested its first wave of adult self-reported health outcome item banks: 2005–2008. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 63*(11), 1179–1194.

Chur-Hansen, A., Werner, L-K., McGuiness, C. E., & Hazel, S. (2015). The experience of being a guide dog puppy raiser volunteer: A longitudinal qualitative collective case study. *Animals (2076-2615), 5*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani5010001

Coleman, A. (2013). *Differences in attitudes towards people with disabilities: Examining the effects of the presence of an assistance dog.* [Master's thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University]. http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/3252

Crowe, T. K., Perea-Burns, S., Sedillo, J. S., Hendrix, I. C., Winkle, M., & Deitz, J. (2014). Effects of partnerships between people with mobility challenges and service dogs. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68*, 194–202. http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.009324

Curl, A. L., Bibbo, J., & Johnson, R. A. (2020). Neighbourhood engagement, dogs, and life satisfaction in older adulthood. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464820953725

Cypress, B. S. (2017). Rigor or reliability and validity in qualitative research: Perspectives, strategies, reconceptualization, and recommendations. *Dimensions in Critical Care Nursing, 36*(4,) 253-263. https://doi.org/10.1097/DCC.0000000000000253

Dargan, C. (2016). New Zealand accessibility advancement re-imagined: Dis/ability, social change, and philosophy of the 'be. Institute.' *New Zealand Sociology, 31*(5), 88-109.

Daruwalla, P. & Darcy, S. (2016). Personal and societal attitudes to disability. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*(3), 549-570. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.10.008

Davis, B. W., Nattrass, K., O'Brien, S., Patronek, G., & MacCollin, M. (2004). Assistance dog placement in the pediatric population: Benefits, risks, and recommendations for

future application, *Anthrozoös, 17*(2), 130-145. http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/089279304786991765

Department of Internal Affairs. (2019). Guidelines for authorisation to certify disability assist dogs. https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Resource-material-Dog-Control-Guidelines-for-authorisation-to-certify-disability-assist-dogs

Dog Control Amendment Act, No. 23, 2006. (2006). http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/hist_act/dcaa20062006n23241.pdf

Duffy, D. L., & Serpell, J. A. (2012). Predictive validity of a method for evaluating temperament in young guide and service dogs. Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 138(1-2), 99-109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2012.02.011

Dwyer, F., Bennett, P. C., & Coleman, G.J. (2006). Development of the Monash dog owner relationship scale (MDORS). *Anthrozoös, 19*(3), 243–256. https://doi.org/10.2752/089279306785415592

Eddy, J., Hart, L. A., & Boltz, R. P. (1988). The effects of service dogs on social acknowledgements of people in wheelchairs. *The Journal of Psychology 122*(1), 39-45. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1988.10542941

Emiliani, P.L. (2006). Assistive technology (AT) versus mainstream technology (MST): The research perspective. *Technology and Disability 18*(1), 19-29. https://doi.org/10.3233/tad-2006-18104

Ensminger, J. J. (2010). *Service and therapy dogs in American society: Science, law and the evolution of canine caregivers.* Charles C. Thomas.

Equality Act, 2010. (2010). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf

Fairman, S. K., & Huebner, R. A. (2001). Service dogs: A compensatory resource to improve function. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care. 13*(2), 41-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/J003v13n02_03

Fallon, V. (2018, May 22). *'I could be killed' - Wellington blind people put in danger by dog-bothering public.* Stuff. https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/health/104098813/i-could-be-killed--wellington-blind-people-put-in-danger-by-dogpatting-public

Finkelstein, V. (2004). Representing disability. In J. Swain, S. French, & C. Barnes (Eds.), *Disabling barriers, enabling environments* (2nd ed., pp. 25-32). Sage.

Flahive, B., & George, D. (2017, June 2). *NZ Bus apologises after assistance dog Moose is challenged by driver.* Stuff. https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/health/93262694/NZ-Bus-apologises-after-assistance-dog-Moose-is-challenged-by-driver

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., Mcdermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*(6), 717–732. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100.x

Galletta, A., & Cross, W. E. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond. From research design to analysis and publication.* New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814732939.003.0004

Gibson, B. E. (2006). Disability, connectivity and transgressing the autonomous body. *Journal of Medical Humanities, 27*(3), 187–196. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10912-006-9017-6

Gravrok, J., Bendrups, D., Howell, T., & Bennett, P. (2019). Beyond the benefits of assistance dogs: exploring challenges experienced by first-time handlers. *Animals, 9*(5), 203. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani9050203

Gravrok, J., Howell, T., Bendrups, D., & Bennett, P. (2020). The influence of contextual factors on an individual's ability to work with an assistance dog. *Disability and Rehabilitation*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2020.1728399

Green, J & Thorogood N. (2009). *Qualitative methods for health research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper: Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology, 29*(2), 75–91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30219811

Gunter, B. (1999). *Pets and people: The psychology of pet ownership*. Whurr.

Haegele, J. A., & Hodge, S. (2016). Disability discourse: Overview and critiques of the medical and social models, *Quest, 68*(2), 193-206. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1143849

Hall, S. S., MacMichael, J., Turner, A., & Mills, D. S. (2017). A survey of the impact of owning a service dog on quality of life for individuals with physical and hearing disability: A pilot study. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes, 15*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-017-0640-x

Harland, B. (1992). *On the acquisition and use of guide dogs: personal narratives.* [Unpublished Master's thesis]. University of Auckland.

Hart, L. A., Hart, B. J., & Bergin, B. (1987). Socializing Effects of Service Dogs for People with Disabilities. *Anthrozoös 1*(1), 41-44. https://doi.org/10.2752/089279388787058696

Hart, L. A., Zasloff, R. L., & Benfatto, A. (1996). The socializing role of hearing dogs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 47*(1-2), 7-15. https://doi.org/10.1016/0168-1591(95)01006-8

Hersh, M. A. (2013). Deafblind people, stigma and the use of communication and mobility assistive devices. *Technology & Disability, 25*(4), 245–261. https://doi.org/10.3233/TAD-130394

Herzog, H. (2014). Biology, culture, and the origins of pet-keeping. *Animal Behavior and Cognition, 1*(3), 296-308. https://doi.org/10.12966/abc.08.06.2014

Hill, D. R., King, S. A., & Mrachko, A. A. (2014). Students with autism, service dogs, and public schools: A review of state laws. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies 25*(2), 106–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207313477204

Hogan, A. J. (2019). Moving away from the “medical model”: The development and revision of the World Health Organization’s classification of disability. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 93*(2), 241–269. https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2019.0028

Human Rights Act, No. 82. 1993. (1993). https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/DLM304212.html

Hunt, S. J., Hart, L. A. and Gomulkiewicz, R. (1992). Role of small animals in social interactions between strangers. *Journal of Social Psychology, 132*(2), 245–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1992.9922976

Johnson, J. M. (2002). In-person versus telephone interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and methods* (pp. 103-119). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kruger, K. A. & Serpell, J. A. (2010). Animal-assisted interventions in mental health: definitions and theoretical foundations. In A. H. Fine (Ed.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy. Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice* (3rd ed., pp. 33-48). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-381453-1.10003-0

Lamontagne, M.-E., Djossa Adoun, M., Blanchette, A. K., Champagne, C., Johnson, M.-P., Vincent, C., & Routhier, F. (2020). Facilitators and barriers to the use of service dogs: an exploratory study using the Theoretical Domains Framework. *Disability and Rehabilitation. Assistive Technology, 15*(5), 537–544. https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2019.1594406

Lane, D. R., McNicholas, J., & Collis, G. M. (1998). Dogs for the disabled: Benefits to recipients and welfare of the dog. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science 59*, 49–60. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0168-1591(98)00120-8

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). *An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation, 22*(4), 557-584. https://doi.org/10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557

Levitt, J. M. (2017). Developing a model of disability that focuses on the actions of disabled people. *Disability & Society, 32*(5), 735-747. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1324764

Lloyd, J. K. F. (2004). *Exploring the match between people and their guide dogs.* [Doctoral dissertation, Massey University]. http://hdl.handle.net/10179/1732

Lloyd, J. K. F., Budge, C., Stafford, K. J., & La Grow, S. (2009). A focus group discussion on using guide dogs. *International Journal of Orientation & Mobility, 2*(1). 52-64. https://doi.org/10.21307/ijom-2009-005

Lloyd, J. K. F., La Grow, S., Stafford, K. J., & Budge, C. (2008a). The guide dog as a mobility aid part 1: Perceived effectiveness on travel performance. *International Journal of Orientation & Mobility, 1*(1), 17-33. https://doi.org/10.21307/ijom-2008-003

Lloyd, J. K. F., La Grow, S., Stafford, K. J., & Budge, C. (2008b). The guide dog as a mobility aid part 2: Perceived changes to travel habits. *International Journal of Orientation & Mobility, 1*(1). 34-45. https://doi.org/10.21307/ijom-2008-004

Lundqvist, M., Levin, L., Roback, K., & Alwin, J. (2018). The impact of service and hearing dogs on health-related quality of life and activity level: A Swedish longitudinal intervention study. *BMC Health Services Research, 18*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3014-0

Mader, B., Hart, L. A., & Bergin, B. (1989). Social acknowledgements for children with disabilities: Effects of service dogs. *Child Development, 60,* 1529-1534. https://doi.org/10.2307/1130941

Magnus, R. (2016). The semiotic challenges of guide dog teams: The Experience of German, Estonian and Swedish guide dog users. *Biosemiotics 9*(2)*,* 267-285. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-015-9233-4

McNicholas, J., & Collis, G. M. (2000). Dogs as a catalyst for social interactions: Robustness of the effect. *British Journal of Psychology, 91*(1), 61-70. https://doi.org/10.1348/000712600161673

Messent, P. R. (1983). Social facilitation of contact with other people by pet dogs. In A. H. Katcher & A. M. Beck (Eds.), *New perspectives in our lives with companion animals* (pp. 37-46). University of Philadelphia Press.

Mills, M. L. (2017. Invisible disabilities, visible service dogs: The discrimination of service dog handlers. *Disability & Society*, *32*(5): 635-656. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1307718

Miner, R. J-T. (2001). The experiences of living with and using a dog guide. *Re:View, 32*(4), 183-190.

Mitra, S. (2006). The capability approach and disability. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 16*(4), 236-247. https://doi.org/10.1177/10442073060160040501

Mudge, S., Rewi, D., & Channon, A. (2017). Identifying an outcome measure to assess the impact of mobility dogs. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology, 12*(1), 73-83. https://doi.org/10.3109/17483107.2015.1079267

Mugford, R. A., & M'Comisky J. G. (1975). Some recent work on the psychotherapeutic value of cage birds with old people. In R.S. Anderson (Ed.), *Pets, Animals & Society* (pp. 54 - 65). Bailliere Tindall.

Nelken, D. (2014). Legal sociology and the sociology of norms. In S. P. Donlan, & L. H., Urscheler (Eds.), *Concepts of law. Comparative, jurisprudential, and social science* (pp. 137-152). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315573298

Neufeld, A. H. (2005). Disability policy (Canada). In P. H. Stuart & J. M. Herrick (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of social welfare history in North America* (pp. 78-80). Sage.

New Zealand Disability Strategy. (2016). https://www.odi.govt.nz/home/about-disability/disability-etiquette/

New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act, No 91, 2001. (2000). https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2000/0091/latest/DLM80051.html

Oliver, K. (2016). Service dogs: Between animal studies and disability studies. *PhiloSOPIA, 6*(2), 241-258. https://doi.org/10.1353/phi.2016.0021

Oliver, M. (2004). The social model in action: if I had a hammer. In C. Barnes & and G. Mercer (Eds.), *Implementing the social model of disability: theory and research* (pp. 18-31). The Disability Press.

Oliver, M. and Barnes C. (1998). *Disabled people and social policy: From exclusion to inclusion*. Addison Wesley Longman.

Oliver, M., & Barnes, C. (2010). Disability studies, disabled people and the struggle for inclusion. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 31*(5), 547-560. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2010.500088

Oliver, M. & Barnes, C. (2012). *The new politics of disablement*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Oliver, M., Sapey, B., & Thomas, P. (2012). *Social work with disabled people* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Omar Khayyam, & FitzGerald, E. (2009). *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. The Floating Press.

Onsager, S. (2011). *Experiences with a service dog of an adolescence with spinal muscular atrophy*. [Master's thesis, University of Paget Sound]. http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/ms_occ_therapy/24/

Padgett, D. K. (2012). *Qualitative and mixed methods in public health*. Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* Sage.

Peacocke, K. (Producer). (2020). *Dog squad* p*uppy school*. [TV series]. NZTV1.

Pellegrino, L. D., Cerimele, J. M., & Dubovsky, A. N. (2016). Service dogs in the hospital: helpful or harmful? A case report and clinical recommendations. *Psychosomatics, 57*(3), 301–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psym.2015.12.009

Pérez-Garín, D., Recio, P., Magallares, A., Molero, F., & García-Ael, C. (2018). Perceived discrimination and emotional reactions in people with different types of disabilities: A qualitative approach. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology, 21*(12), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1017/sjp.2018.13

Pfeiffer, D. (2001). "The conceptualization of disability." In S. N. Barnartt, & B. M. Altman (Eds.), *Exploring theories and expanding methodologies: Where we are and where we need to go* (pp. 29-52). Emerald Group. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3547(01)80019-1

Quinn, P. (2005). Disability policy (United States). In P. H. Stuart & J. M. Herrick (Eds.*),* *Encyclopaedia of social welfare history in North America* (pp. 83-86). Sage.

Rain, M. (2016, July, 30). *Weird Service Dog Stories* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ltndZdmYtA

Reeve, D. (2006). Towards a psychology of disability: The emotional effects of living in a disabling society. In D. Goodley & R. Lawthom (Eds.), *Disability and psychology: Critical introductions and reflections* (pp. 94–107). Palgrave.

Reeve, D. (2009). Biopolitics and bare life. Does the impaired body provide contemporary example of *homo sacer*? In K. Kristiansen, S. Vehmas, & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Arguing about disability. Philosophical perspectives* (pp. 203-217). Routledge.

Reeve, D. (2020). Psycho-emotional disablism. The missing link? In N. Watson & S. Vehmas (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of disability studies* (2nd ed., pp. 102-116). Routledge.

Robins, D. M., Sanders, C. R., & Cahill, S. E. (1991). Dogs and their people. Pet-facilitation in a public setting. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 20*(1), 3-25. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F089124191020001001

Rodriguez, K. E., Bibbo, J., & O'Haire, M. E. (2020a). The effects of service dogs on psychosocial health and wellbeing for individuals with physical disabilities or chronic conditions, *Disability and Rehabilitation, 42*(10), 1350-1358. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2018.1524520

Rodriguez, K. E., Bibbo, J., Verdon, S., & O'Haire, M. E. (2020b). Mobility and medical service dogs: a qualitative analysis of expectations and experiences. *Disability and Rehabilitation. Assistive Technology, 15*(5), 499–509. https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2019.1587015

Sachs-Ericsson, N., Hansen N. K., & Fitzgerald, S. (2002). Benefits of assistance dogs: A review. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 47*(3), 251-277. https://doi.org/10.1037//0090-5550.47.3.251

Sanders, C. R. (2000). The impact of guide dogs on the identity of people with visual impairments. *Anthrozoös, 13(*3), 131-139. http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/089279300786999815

Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., Hellyer, P., Cheung, L., & Kogan, L. (2017). Public perceptions of service dogs, emotional support dogs, and therapy dogs. *International Journal of*

Environmental Research and Public Health, *14*(6), 642-655. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14060642

Shakespeare, T. (2004). Social models of disability and other life strategies. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, 6*(1), 8-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15017410409512636

Shakespeare, T. (2012). Still a health issue. *Disability and Health Journal, 5*(3), 129-131. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2012.04.002

Shakespeare, T. (2014). *Disability rights and wrongs revisited* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Shakespeare, T. & Watson, N. (2001). The social model of disability: An outdated ideology? In S. N. Barnartt & B. M. Altman (Eds.), *Exploring Theories and Expanding Methodologies: Where we are and where we need to go* (pp. 9-28). Emerald Group. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3547(01)80018-X

Shuy, R. W. (2002). In-person versus telephone interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and methods* (pp. 537-555). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shyne, A., Masciulli, L., Faustino, J., & O'Connell, C. (2012). Do service dogs encourage more social interactions between individuals with physical disabilities and nondisabled individuals than pet dogs? *Journal of Applied Companion Animal Behavior, 5*(1), 16-24.

Small, J., Darcy, S., & Packer, T. (2012). The embodied tourist experiences of people with vision impairment: Management implications beyond the visual gaze. *Tourism Management, 3*(4), 941-950. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.09.015

Smith, S. R. (2008). Social justice and disability: Competing interpretations of the medical and social models. In K. Kristiansen, S. Vehmas, & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Arguing about disability. Philosophical perspectives* (pp. 15-29). Routledge.

Smyth, C. & Slevin, E. (2010). Experiences of family life with an assistance dog. *Learning Disability Practice, 13*(4), 12-17.

Spence, R. H. (2015) *How feasible is it to compare effects of companion dogs and service dogs in quality of life in people with movement disorders?* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland]. http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz

Stace, H., & Sullivan, M. (2011). A society that highly values lives and continually enhances our full participation. *Policy Quarterly, 7*(3), 50-55. https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v7i3.4385

Steffens, M. C., & Bergler, R. (1998). Blind people and their dogs: An empirical study on changes in everyday life, in self-experience, and communication. In C. C. Wilson & D. C. Turner (Eds.), *Companion Animals in Human Health* (pp. 148-158). Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452232959.n9

Stohr, K. (2018). Pretending not to notice. Respect, attention, and disability. In A. S. Cureton & T. E. Hill (Eds.), *Disability in practice : Attitudes, policies, and relationships* (pp. 51-77). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198812876.003.0004

Takayanagi, T. & Yamamoto, M. (2018). The use of service dogs for people with physical disabilities in Japan in accordance with the Act on assistance dogs for physically disabled persons. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 6*(198), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00198

Tennyson, Lord Alfred. (1981). In *The Oxford dictionary of quotations.* (3rd ed.). Book Club Associates.

Thomas, C. (2004). How is disability understood? An examination of sociological approaches. *Disability & Society, 19*(6), 569-583. https://doi.org/10.1080/0968759042000252506

Thomas, C. (2014). Disability and impairment. In J. Swain, S. French, & C. Barnes (Eds.), *Disabling barriers, enabling environments* (3rd ed. Pp. 9-16). Sage.

Tolley, E. E. (2016). *Qualitative methods in public health. A field guide for applied research* (2nd ed.). Wiley.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 16*(10), 837-851. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Tregaskis, C. (2002). Social model theory: The story so far. *Disability & Society, 17*(4), 457-470. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590220140377

UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. (2006). https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

UPIAS. (1976). *Fundamental principles of disability.* Union of physically impaired against segregation. https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/UPIAS-fundamental-principles.pdf

Valentine, D. P., Kiddoo, M., & La Fleur, B. (1993). Psychological implications of service dog ownership for people who have mobility or hearing impairments. *Social Work in Health Care, 19*(1), 109-125.

Varni, J. W., Seid, M., & Kurtin, P. S. (2001). PedsQLTM 4.0: Reliability and validity of the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory TM Version 4.0 Generic Core Scales in healthy and patient populations. *Med Care, 39*(8), 800–812.

Vos, S. J., Wijnker, J. J. & Overgaauw, P. A. M. (2021). A pilot study on the contamination of assistance dogs' paws and their users' shoe soles in relation to admittance to hospitals and (in)visible disability. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(2), 513-541. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020513

Weinstein, F. (2017, October 5). *Discrimination Against People With Service Dogs Is Sadly Still A Thing*. Huffington Post. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/get-leashed-magazine/discrimination-guide-dog_b_9858236.html

Wells, D. L. (2004). The facilitation of social interaction by domestic dogs. *Anthrozoös, 17*(4), 340-352. http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/089279304785643203

Wells, D. L., Morrison, D. J., & Hepper, P. G. (2012). The effect of priming on perceptions of dog breed traits. *Anthrozoös, 25*(3), 369-377. https://doi.org/10.2752/175303712X13403555186370

White, N., Mills, D., & Hall, S. (2017). Attachment style is related to quality of life for assistance dog owners. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14*(6), 658-666. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14060658

Whitmarsh, L. (2005). The benefits of guide dog ownership. *Visual Impairment Research, 7*(2), 7–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13882350590956439

Wiggett-Barnard, C. & Steel, H. (2008). The experience of owning a guide dog. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 30*(14), 1014-1026. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280701466517

Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Harvard University Press.

Wilsson, W., & Sundgren, P. (1997). The use of a behaviour test for the selection of dogs for service and breeding, I: Method of testing and evaluating test results in the adult dog, demands on different kinds of service dogs, sex and breed differences. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 53*(4)*,* 279-295.

Winance, M. (2019). 'Don't touch/push me!' From disruption to intimacy in relations with one's wheelchair: An analysis of relational modalities between persons and objects. *Sociological Review, 67*(2), 428–443. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119830916

Winkle, M., Crowe, T. K., & Hendrix, I. (2012). Service dogs and people with physical disabilities partnerships: A systematic review. *Occupational Therapy International, 19*(1), 54–66. https://doi.org/10.1002/oti.323

Wood, L. J., Giles-Corti, B., & Bulsara, M. K. (2005). The pet connection: Pets as a conduit for social capital? *Social Science and Medicine, 61*(6), 1159-1173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.01.017

Wood, L. J., Giles-Corti, B., Bulsara, M. K., & Bosch, D. A. (2007). More than a furry companion: The ripple effect of companion animals on neighborhood interactions and sense of community. *Society and Animals, 15*(1)*,* 43-56. https://doi.org/10.1163/156853007X169333

Wood, L., Martin, K., Christian, H., Nathan, A., Lauritsen, C., Houghton, S., Kawachi, I., & McCune, S. (2015). The pet factor-companion animals as a conduit for getting to

know people, friendship formation and social support. *PloS One, 10*(4). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0122085

Wood, L., Martin, K., Christian, H., Houghton, S., Kawachi, I., Vallesi, S., & McCune, S. (2017). Social capital and pet ownership – A tale of four cities. *SSM - Population Health, 3,* 442–447. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2017.05.002

Appendix 1- Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval

Date: 01 June 2017

Dear Bronwyn McManus

Re: Ethics Notification - **SOA 17/23 - Social experiences of and strategies used by trainers and handlers of disability assist dogs in public places in New Zealand.**

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: **Human Ethics Southern A Committee** at their meeting held on **Thursday, 1 June, 2017**. On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise

Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand **T** 06 951 6841; 06 95106840

E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 2 - First email to Managers.

Hello

I am a Masters of Public Health student at Massey University, Palmerston North. My supervisor is Dr Gretchen Good, Senior Lecturer, School of Health Sciences, Massey University.

For my research, I am undertaking a project exploring the experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs when engaging with the New Zealand public. I plan to interview one handler and one trainer from each of the 6 organisations certified under the Dog Control Act about their experiences with the public. For clarification, I refer to handlers as the people who receive the trained disability assist dog and trainers as the person who trains the dog.

As part of my ethics application, before starting my research, I firstly require written permission from your organisation to engage in my project.

Once permission is received, I will contact you again to ask if you would forward an invitation to participate and an information sheet about my project to all your handlers and trainers. Handlers and trainers will be asked to contact me directly if they wish to participate.

Therefore I would appreciate it if you could express your permission by replying with a yes or no at the end of the following statement. Please give your name and organisation.

I give my permission for Bronwyn McManus to contact my organisation to assist with recruiting participants for her project titled - Social experiences and strategies used by handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in public places in New Zealand.

Please contact me if you would like more information about my project.
Thank you very much for your assistance.
Yours sincerely

Bronwyn McManus
Ph: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Appendix 3 - Second Email to Managers

Hi

Thank you very much for agreeing to help with my project; your assistance is greatly appreciated.

I will be sending a second email shortly for you to forward to your dog trainers and handlers (people and/or families who have received and use a trained disability assist dog) actively using their dog in public. This email will be addressed to handlers and trainers and contains the information sheet and consent form. You are welcome to read the information sheet, so you are fully informed about my project.

All you need to do is add addresses and forward this second email to your **dog trainers** and any **Adult Handlers or families who regularly use their dog in public places.**

To ensure my project does not take up any more of your time than is necessary, I have asked anyone who wishes to participate to contact me directly.

Thank you so much for your help. At the end of my project, I will forward a summary of the results.

Many thanks

Bronwyn McManus

Appendix 4 - Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

Social experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in public places in New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

- I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.
- I have had sufficient time to talk with others about participating in this research project.
- My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without disadvantage.
- I understand that the interview will be sound recorded and **I agree/do not** agree to the interview being sound recorded.
- **I wish/do not wish** to have my recordings returned to me.
- I understand that no information that may identify me, my family, my dog, or the public places I visit will be included in the research.
- I understand that the results of the research may be shared with other disability assist dog users and organizations and may be published in an academic journal.
- I understand there is no remuneration for participating in this research.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information sheet.

Signature……………………………………………….. Date:…………………………

Full name printed…………………………………………………………………………

Researcher: Bronwyn McManus
Contact Ph Number:
Email:

Supervisor: Dr Gretchen Good
Contact Ph Number: 06 356 9099 ext. 83510
Email: G.A.Good@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 5 - Information Sheet

Social experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in public places in New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET for Disability Assist Dog Trainers and Handlers

Introduction

My name is Bronwyn McManus and I am studying towards a Master in Public Health at Massey University. My supervisor is Dr. Gretchen Good, Senior Lecturer, School of Health Sciences, Massey University, Palmerston North. For my research, I am undertaking a project exploring the experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs when engaging with the New Zealand public.

Project Description

The aim of this project is to record the interactions handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs have with the public. Legally all dogs under the control of their trainer or handler that are trained by one of the six certified training organizations have right of access to public places. Reports from handlers and trainers indicate that they are frequently challenged about access or are stopped by the public who want to know about the dog. I am interested in all aspects of these interactions such as where they occur, how frequently, how the interaction is dealt with, and reflections on the interactions. I would also like to know how the public could be better informed about the rights of disability assist dogs in public places. For clarification I refer to handlers as people who own and use a disability assist dog trained by one of the organizations mentioned below.

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in this research project. This information sheet provides details about the project.

Who we are seeking to take part?

We are seeking to take part, the head trainer and one handler from each of the six disability dog training organization:

Hearing Dogs for the Deaf; New Zealand Epilepsy Assist Dogs; Assistance Dogs New Zealand; Perfect Partners Assistance Dogs; Mobility Assistance Dogs; RNZFB Guide Dogs.

Managers from each organization were approached by the researcher and asked to forward this information sheet to trainers and handlers.

For trainers to be involved in this study you need to:

Be a qualified trainer of a disability assist dog;

Actively work with a disability assist dog in public places;

Be willing to take part in a telephone interview or if you live within two hour's drive of Palmerston North a face-to-face interview with the researcher.

For Handlers to be involved in this study you need to:

Over the age of sixteen years old;

Own a disability assist dog trained by one of the organizations mentioned above;

Actively work with a disability assist dog in public places. This includes adults who handle a child's dog;

Be willing to take part in a telephone interview or if you live within two hour's drive of Palmerston North a face-to-face interview with the researcher.

If you decide to participate, what you will be asked to do?

After reading this information sheet if you decide to participate you are asked to contact the researcher directly.

Please refer to contact details at the end of this information sheet;

Before the interview sign a consent form;

Once you make contact the researcher will contact you to arrange a time for either a telephone interview or if you are within two hour's drive of Palmerston North a face-to-face interview.

What does the interview involve?

About 60 minutes of your time;

Questions about interactions with the public when you are working with your dog in public places. I am interested in all aspects of these interactions such as where they occur, how frequently, how the interaction is dealt with, and reflections on the interactions. I would also like to know how the public could be better informed about the rights of disability assist dogs in public places;

With your permission a sound recording of the interview will be made.

And after the interview?

All data will be stored in a locked cupboard and/or password protected and kept for five years;

Recordings will be transcribed and returned to you so you can make changes as you see fit;

You will be given a summary of the project findings once it is concluded;

All effort will be made to keep any identifying information confidential. No details of where interactions occurred, people involved, your name, your dog's name, or any other identifying information will be included in the research;

If for any reason taking part in the research causes undue stress we advise you to talk with a support person. Lifeline Aotearoa 24/7 helpline offers free, confidential support, 0800 543354 or contact Palmerston North Methodist Social Services, 06 3500307 who charge a negotiable fee of maximum of $60/ hour for service.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

Decline to answer any particular question;

Withdraw from the study at anytime;

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;

Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Please advise the researcher if you require this information sheet or any other documents produced in a different format or if you require the assistance of a translator.

If you have any questions regarding this research please contact the researcher and/or supervisor.

Researcher: Bronwyn McManus

Contact Ph Number:

Email:

Supervisor: Dr Gretchen Good

Contact Ph Number: 06 356 9099 ext. 83510

Email: G.A.Good@massey.ac.nz

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 17/23. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Lesley Batten, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85094, email *humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz* .

Appendix 6 - Interview Sheet

Social experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs in public places in New Zealand

Interview Schedule

Introduction

Thank you for participating in my research project. Confirm that participant agrees to having interview sound recorded and that consent form signed.

Introduction of researcher and an outline of the project.

Reiterate the participants rights outlined in the information sheet.

Interview

This project is about experiences of handlers and trainers of disability assist dogs with the public when out in public places.

Could you please tell me about an experience/interaction with the public when you are out with your dog?

Prompt for information about:

What other interactions have you had?

How often do you get approached by the public?

How did you feel about the interaction?

Has the interactions with the public affected you in any way?

Do you do anything to avoid interacts, if so what do you do?

What do you think could be done to educate the public about disability assist dogs?

What do you know about your legal rights when working with your dog in a public place?

How do you do to prepare for taking your dog away on a trip say on public transport - bus, train, plane or motel, hotel or a national park?

For handlers: what information or advice did you receive about dealing with the public?

Conclusion of Interview

Thank participant for giving up their time to take part in the interview.

Ask if they have any questions.