

“HEART OF A WARRIOR”:  
THE LAW ENFORCEMENT  
CANINE-HANDLER  
RELATIONSHIP

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Though law enforcement agencies in the United States have used dogs since around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the 1960s that police dogs became commonplace (Dorriety, 2005). Beginning in 1952, the number of police canine teams swelled from 14 to over 7,000 in 1989, and the number continues to grow (Dorriety, 2005, p. 89). K-9 units can have as few as one team or as many as 125 (Dorriety, 2005), with almost 50% of agencies in the United States routinely using police dogs (Hess & Orthmann, 2010, p. 227). Because of the prevalence of police K-9 units in American society, the canine-human teams working in law enforcement deserve a place in the literature. However, because police K-9 units are relatively new in the history of the United States, they have received relatively little analytical attention. The bond between the police canine and its handler is a different dynamic than that of any other canine-handler relationship, making it worthy of attention. It is also a necessary topic of study if researchers are to fully understand the complexities of the canine-human relationship. This study attempts to help fill this gap by studying the relationship between law enforcement canines and their handlers. Through qualitative ethnographic methods, four types of relationships were identified between the handler and the canine in a large metropolitan department: canine as tools, as coworkers, as kids, and as pets. From these views, a new typology that is between humans and good animals in Arluke and Sanders' (1996) oft cited sociozoologic scale (discussed below) was identified as *police canines*.

## PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Humans and canines developed a special relationship over time as dogs became not only work partners used for hunting, but companions and part of the family. Because companion canine-human relationships are so commonplace, much research exists based around the familial bonds between dogs and humans (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Dotson and Hyatt, 2008; Hens, 2009; Horn et al., 2011; Irvine, 2013; Kerepesi et al., 2005; Prato-Previde et al., 2003; Merola, Prato-Previde, & Marshall-Pescini, 2011; Mongillo et al., 2010; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, 2003; etc.). Previous research identifies many aspects of the bonds that can exist between humans and canines in the family setting. While these dimensions help us to understand the complex relationship between companion canines and their owners, the bonds between working canines and their handlers create a different relationship and deserve study in their own right. When reviewing the literature, very little has been written regarding the bonds between working dogs and their handlers. It is this specific category—relationships between working canines and handlers—this article will address. To begin this exploration, I will review the small body of research that has examined the bonds formed between humans and dogs in the work setting (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Corkran, 2013; Hens, 2008; Kuhl, 2011; Prato-Previde et al., 2003; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, 2006; Tedeschi et al., 2005). This previous research—with the exception of Prato-Previde et al. (2003) who used a standardized test to observe the dogs' responses to certain situations—uses mostly analyses of previous literature along with ethnographic methods of observation and interviews.

Within this research there are several themes related to working canine-human relationships that are generally agreed upon. First, Arluke and Sanders (1996) analyze

how people construct relationships with non-human animals as well as how they construct an understanding of them. Their work found that humans gain sympathetic understandings of animals when they view the animal “as self-aware, planning, empathetic, emotional, complexly communicative, and creative” (p. 43). Arluke and Sanders (1996) also suggest that social interaction between canines and humans is mutual, involving both participants taking the role of the other, empathizing, and adjusting behavior based on the other’s reactions. Dotson and Hyatt (2008), while not studying working dogs specifically, did identify symbiotic relationships, or relationships that are mutually beneficial, as main a dimension of human-canine bonds. Kerepesi et al. (2005) supported the idea of two-way communication, finding that 83% of human-canine exchanges studied were interactive (p. 73). From these interactions studied, Kerepesi et al. (2005) inferred “that dogs have a natural tendency to organize their behavior in a way that is compatible with that of their human partners” (p. 78). These ideas of two-way communication are supported in much of the related literature (Corkran, 2013; Hens, 2008; Kuhl, 2011; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, 2006; Tedeschi et al., 2005). Some of this research also identifies ways in which owners view their dogs.

Sanders (1999) states that most dog owners describe their dogs “as individuals with distinct personalities, unique tastes, identifiable feelings, and personal histories” that are “considered to be authentic family members” (p. 28). The idea that dogs are individuals is supported by others who have studied human-canine relationships in the work environment (Corkran, 2013; Kuhl, 2011). Another common theme in the literature is described by Corkran (2013) as “collaborative work,” or when the skills of both the dog and the person are used in conjunction with effective interspecies communication to

complete a task more efficiently (p. 2). Trust is an essential part of this collaborative relationship (Corkran, 2013; Hens, 2008; Kuhl, 2011; Sanders, 2006).

Trust and communication indicate that having a strong bond between the human and the canine is considered very important when working together. Prato-Previde et al. (2003) performed a study that, while not about working canines, speaks to the nature of human-canine bonds in the work setting. They observed that dogs do in fact perform a range of attachment behaviors, including “search and proximity seeking behaviours when separated from their owner” (p. 225). Compared to strangers, the dogs greeted their owners more enthusiastically and for longer periods of time. The dogs also played more with the stranger when their owner was present. This is directly related to what Kuhl (2011) concluded: handlers (of sled dogs) emphasize the importance of spending time bonding with their dogs. This way, the dogs are most comfortable with their handlers and rely on them more than any other human.

The notion of “collaborative work” (Corkran, 2013, p. 2) is further elaborated by the idea of interlocution, or “speaking for,” as presented by Arluke and Sanders (1996, p. 67). Humans rely heavily on vocalizations and speech when communicating, which dogs cannot reciprocate; therefore, one way that humans interact with dogs is through “speaking for,” a method of communication where one of the participants—the human in this case—expresses what he or she determines the other participant—the dog—“really means” or is trying to say (p. 62). Speaking for occurs in direct and indirect manners. Direct speaking for would be when the person states interpretations and assumptions of the dog’s thoughts and behaviors in quotes as if the dog were saying them. Indirect speaking for includes expressing these same ideas using “excusing tactics” (p. 70). This

is where the person provides a justification for the dog's behavior, but expresses the idea through his or her own voice and does not imitate the dog's. The last method of speaking for is "triangling" (p. 70), where the person speaks as the dog in order to give direction to other people present. The process of speaking for "demonstrates the intimacy of his or her relationship" and is "intrinsically pleasurable" (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 67)). Kuhl (2011) also acknowledged the importance of interlocution. In addition, speaking for can be used by people to construct their own identities and the identities of their canine partners (Arluke and Sanders, 1996). Dotson and Hyatt (2008) called this notion that a human's identity can be constructed based on his or her relationship with a canine the *dog-oriented self-concept*.

In work that addresses the place of canines and other non-human animals in the social and biological hierarchies created by humans, the sociozoologic scale is developed (Arluke and Sanders, 1996). The sociozoologic scale is the hierarchy that arises when humans rank animal species (both human and non-human) on a scale of worth depending on biological, moral, and social grounds. However, ranking animals leads to inconsistencies based on how well a species, or sometimes a specific animal, fits into society and plays the expected roles. Animals that are brought into the human world and fit into the expected roles assigned to them are good animals, such as pets and domesticated farm or lab animals used to assist humans. These so-called "good animals" are seen either as companions or instruments (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 170). Companion animals hold a relatively high place on the scale and are regarded as "almost human," so there is "moral concern for their welfare" (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, pp. 170-171). Considering an animal as more human than an animal is anthropomorphism



(Dotson and Hyatt 2008; Sanders, 2003) and allows the dog to be considered a part of the family (Dotson and Hyatt, 2008). As affirmed by Tedeschi et al. (2005), “An animal’s loyalty and authentic nonjudgmental willingness makes our relationships with them some of the most enduring and safe interactions possible” (p. 62).

Lower on the sociozoologic scale are other good animals, which are used instrumentally and are consequently regarded not as humans, but as tools. It is their usefulness or ‘necessity’ to society that leads to an “interest in their welfare” inasmuch as they need to be kept healthy and unharmed to continue to be used by humans (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p.171). Some feel this way about working dogs and posit the idea that dogs should be deanthropomorphized. This view would lower the rank of working dogs on the sociozoologic scale—placing them on par with good instrumental animals such as horses or oxen. In the current view of dogs in Western cultures, working dogs would be considered “lesser beings or objects that think few thoughts, feel only the most primitive emotions, and experience little pain” (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 173).

Related to the sociozoologic scale is the idea that in all human-animal relationships, there is a fundamental master-servant relationship dictating the interaction. This points to the power relationship between humans and other animals, where humans are thought to always be in control of the fate of animals. This idea is discussed by Hens (2008), who did not primarily study the working canine, but acknowledged it as the base for one type of human-canine relationship that can be formed. The study discussed several different current views on dog-human relationships, including dogs as slaves, replacement children, friends, and workers, each of which places the dog subordinate to humans in some way. Most relevant to this study is the idea of the dog as a worker or

employee. When looking at the canine is as an employee, the dog is assigned jobs to complete and is rewarded for performing its duties (Hens, 2008).

The drastic difference between seeing canines as companion animals that are anthropomorphized or seeing them as instrumental animals that are deanthropomorphized—called ambivalence—is encountered often by those who work with dogs (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, 2006). Ambivalence occurs because “meanings of animals are not fixed...they are social constructions” (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 191). This is the central concept explored by Sanders (2006) in a study on police canine-handler relationships. He established that dog trainers show a lack of concern about the ambivalence of seeing “the animal as either/both an object/tool or individual/being” (Sanders, 1999, p. 109) because they can “shift, when necessary, between two very different concepts of dogs” (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p.188).

The majority of Sanders’ (2006) study of police canines and handlers was devoted to identifying the ideal characteristics for dogs and handlers that are chosen for K-9 units. In describing the training process, the view of the dog as ‘child’ was briefly noted, meaning that the officers frequently used parental terms when talking about their relationship with their dogs. In contrast, the study states that the canines protect their handlers. Additionally, a section of the article is devoted to discussing the dichotomy of constructing the dogs as either tools to be controlled or sentient beings to work with. This is explained further when Sanders (2006) states that handlers see “a balance between dangerous aggression and petlike obedience” in the relationship between them and their canine (p. 165). The article notes, however, that at home, the officers’ families are

hesitant to be around the dog due to the potential danger. As previously stated, trust and mutual communication were extremely important in maintaining the handler-canine relationship, as was mutual confidence. To Sanders (2006), the ambivalence in this relationship emerges from uncertainty in how the canine will react in certain situations and because the officers are “cognizant of potential legal problems” (p. 164).

There have also been studies that focus specifically on these types of working dog: bird dogs (Corkran, 2013), sled dogs (Kuhl, 2011), dogs used in social work (Tedeschi et al., 2005), and police dogs (Sanders, 2006). These studies identify major dimensions of the human-canine relationship that arise from and are present in the work environment. While such qualitative studies are important for helping us to understand the complex bonds formed between working dogs and their handlers, they only begin to explore the intricacies of interspecies work-based relationships. Further study of these relationships will help us to better understand the importance and meaning of collaboration occurring between humans and canines. It also assists in gauging the impact that these relationships have on human identities and behaviors. Developing a categorical language with which to talk about the dimensions of these bonds will have implications for the methods used to train and live with working canines. Especially important is developing an understanding of the role of the human-canine bond and how that bond works to facilitate the work that humans and canines do together. Also important is that research generate other questions about working dogs to be studied in the future. To accomplish these goals, this research used ethnography and observations to identify four views of the police canine-handler relationship: canines as tools, as

coworkers, as kids, and as pets. From these views, the *police canines* typology mentioned above was created to fill a gap in the sociozoologic scale.

### METHODS

This study is based on ethnographic research beginning in the summer of 2012 and ending in the spring of 2013 with the K-9 Unit of a big metropolitan area police department in the Midwest region of the United States. The unit was made up of teams, with each team consisting of one canine and one handler. The number of teams in the unit varied throughout the study. It started with eleven, though one officer was promoted and another left the unit. These two vacancies were both filled during the time period of the study so that there was a total of eleven teams at the completion of the research. Of the thirteen handlers that were observed over the course of the study, only one was female. There were twelve dual purpose canines observed throughout the study, trained for detecting narcotics, tracking in outdoor areas, locating perpetrators in buildings, and apprehending perpetrators. These were either German Shepherds or Malinois. There were also three narcotics-only canines observed throughout the study. They were all Labradors, though one was yellow, one was chocolate, and one was black. In addition to these K-9 teams, during some observations, there were officers from other units present to participate in training or to be certified. The names of all the participants of this study—humans and canines—are pseudonyms. Any location names have been omitted.

Though Sanders (2006) notes having difficulty in acquiring access to a law enforcement K-9 unit, because of previous experience with law enforcement canines, I did not have this problem. The original contact was made with the training officer of the K-9 Unit via e-mail, who directed me to the handler that deals with public relations for

the unit. There was an initial, informal interview with this officer, and he invited me to come watch a training session that night. I met the rest of the handlers in the unit that night. After that, I observed weekly training sessions and participated in three ride-ins with different K-9 teams.

Rapport was built with the officers by simply attending the training sessions and conversing with the officers. During the study, one officer told me, “You know, in the couple of months you’ve been coming, you know more about canine than all of our superiors.” When I asked why, he responded, “No one spends time with us.” This rapport allowed officers to speak more freely. Over the course of the study, I observed the teams within the unit and interacted with them, though there were no formal interviews. During each session, I wrote notes that were transcribed within a week. Though an officer would occasionally glance at my notebook as I was writing, I do not believe it affected what they did or said. I made no attempts to hide the notebook and told them they could read it if they wished. On occasion, an officer would remark that they had become too comfortable around me. Therefore, I do not think that my presence affected how the officers behaved or spoke.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The idea that “meanings of animals are not fixed because they are social constructions” (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p.191) is particularly applicable to law enforcement K-9 units because of the various environments in which the handlers and the canines interact. The team is together both at work and at home, leading to bonds that can be quite labyrinthine. Situations at work compel the team to be either “in drive” or not in drive. Being in drive means that the dog is working; he has been given the

command to search, whether it is for narcotics or for human odor. Usually, his tail is wagging and his ears are perked up. His mouth is open until he smells the odor, when the mouth closes. In this case, the handler is also considered to be in drive because he or she is focused on the dog, watching him for any changes in behavior or signs that he is in odor, such as the closing mouth. For example, during a training exercise, Ryan stood straight, in a very relaxed way (he had one leg out in front of the other) while his dog, Blaze, wandered around the yard for about 1 minute before going into the shed. Ryan remarked, "See that tail? Look at the body language. He started wagging it." Very soon after this, Blaze found the source of the odor.

When the K-9 team is at work, but is not actively searching or preparing to search, they are not in drive. These different situations that lead the K-9 teams to be either in drive or not in drive also cause the handlers to relate to the dogs in different ways. In both situations, the handlers treat their dogs as both tools and coworkers. As will be discussed, the handlers must view their dogs as "ultimately tools" because of the job they do. When the dogs are not in drive, they are also viewed as kids.

The handlers not only spend time with their canines at work; they take the dogs home with them each night. The canines-as-tools view persists because it is the job; however, at home, the dogs become integrated into the family. Once home, the handler perceives a change in his or her dog's demeanor. For example, Steve explained this change in his dog, Duke: "Duke's completely different at home. He's much more social. Like, his ears are cocked in a different way. It's really nice. He just turns it off." The handler will also change demeanor because he or she is no longer at work. When this happens, their relation is redefined by the new social construction. This new

environment leads the dog to be seen as more of a person than an animal, becoming part of the family (Dotson and Hyatt, 2008). The officers explain this change in the following way.

Mark: Are you the same in class as you are, say, at home?

Me: No.

Mark: It's the same thing. You act differently in different situations.

Joel: It's like your parents taking you to dinner versus eating at home. You don't use the same manners at all.

Steve: You don't act the same with your parents as you do with, like, your friends. That's what the dogs do.

### **Canines-as-Tools**

Each officer in the unit freely admits that the dog is “ultimately a tool.” The dogs are supplied to them by the department for use in the field. As such, the dogs are assigned tasks and are rewarded for completion (Hens, 2008). Essentially, the officers know that their dogs are instrumental in basis—which is a constant consideration in the back of the officers' minds—but the large amounts of time and varying situations that the team shares form circumstances that lead to stronger and different bonds than what the handlers possess for any other tool on their belt. The bonds at work can be seen as ones that parallel those forged between coworkers or partners, and sometimes between parents and children.

When the K-9 team is in drive, the handlers mostly treat their dogs as either tools or coworkers. The officers of the K-9 unit all acknowledge that the rest of the department views them as tools to be utilized in the field. One handler voiced that, “No one spends time with us.” When other handlers expanded on this, they said:

Dave: We're the night shift.

Steve: We're just a tool.

Dave: (*Pointed his finger at Steve and looked at him*). Specifically, a tool to locate.

Steve: We go where they don't want to.

Mark: It's a dog and pony show when they call us. Or a screw up, last resort thing where they call us to come fix it. (*The other officers nodded and agreed*).

The department constructs the K-9 unit as a tool, so that is how officers outside of the unit view the K-9 teams. This construction gives the unit a definition of the dogs as tools that the K-9 unit must ultimately abide by. Pete said of his dog, Lucky, "Personally, I don't care if he barks at people, but it's not what they want." Here, he acknowledged that the dog is not his. He would train the dog and treat him differently if the job did not require him to do it in a specific way.

Arluke and Sanders (1996) explained that on the sociozoologic scale, instrumental animals must be deanthropomorphized. The officers do deanthropomorphize their dogs, but they do so in a way that glorifies the canine's natural abilities (Kuhl, 2011), not in a way that designates them as "lesser beings," as Arluke and Sanders (1996, p. 173) put it. The officers capitalize on canine abilities, especially during the selection process. They are seen as tools that can be optimized by choosing the tool with the correct characteristics for the job. It takes several days for the officers to choose a dog for the unit because they must test it to ensure it has the desired characteristics. On a ride-in with Steve and his dog, Duke, we visited the K-9 office and he spoke about the natural characteristics of police dogs:

Once in the office, Steve looked at the papers on top of the fax machine. They were an ad from a woman trying to sell her German shepherd. Steve said they got these a lot. "People just don't get what goes into it. They see German shepherd and assume it would make a good police dog. We don't train dogs; we just train 'em to follow our commands. They like to bite; we tell 'em when they can and when they can't. Wanna German shepherd? Here, you can look at this." He handed me the paper and sat at the computer and Duke sat on the floor behind Steve's chair.



Steve made it clear that the officers believe they are simply capitalizing on the canine's natural abilities. Not all dogs make good police dogs. They must have high drives (Sanders, 2006), which can be built by keeping the dog in the kennel when home, not in the house. One officer stated, "The day before we go back to work, I have to put Bauer in the kennel. If he gets too much socialization, he won't work worth a damn." Similarly, another officer said, "While in training, they're not a pet. They learn better when they're kept in the kennel." Clearly, keeping the dog in the kennel is seen as an important method of sharpening the tool, whether it is to prevent the dog from socializing too much or to help them learn better.

The dogs must also have confidence so that the handlers can rely on them to be consistent. One dog was returned to the breeder because he lacked confidence. As one officer said, "If he would just be fucking consistent...He just doesn't have that chromosome." From the moment the dogs are chosen to be part of the unit, they are conceptualized as tools that must have the best characteristics in order to be the most useful, and the handlers do what they are able to keep their tool sharp, such as the above examples of using the kennel. However, the dogs have innate characteristics that the handlers have no control over; they are present in the DNA as "chromosomes," to use the officer's wording from the previous example.

The most prominent situation that results in a canines-as-tools interaction is when the K-9 team is in drive. The officers watch their dogs intently, looking for any changes in behavior, such as the dog closing his mouth or doing a "head-kick," that might indicate that the dog is in odor. They also listen for the dog's breathing pattern to change, indicating that he is getting closer to finding the source of the odor. The concentration

that the handlers put forth in ensuring that they see these minute changes in their dogs also puts them in the mindset of being in drive. In situations such as this, the dogs' dominant role is as a tool that is leading them to the source of the odor, and the officers follow their tools, relying on them to be effective investigative tools. The dogs are expected to be instrumental in assisting in the situation, just as a Taser or a building sweep might.

The handlers acknowledge that the dogs are constructed as tools by the department, but they also recognize the conflict that this brings to the forefront. As Joel put it, "They're family, but they're also tools. You have to make a distinction. At work, the dog's a tool, not my dog. You have to be able to put the dog in harms way to a save a human life. That's a question they ask you to get in the unit. Can you make that separation and sacrifice if you have to?" The officers see the conflict, but they recognize that the purpose of their unit is to provide tools for use by the department. As another officer stated, "It's a boring job, but when you get a call, it's the *best* job 'cause we have the *best* tool."

### **Canines-as-Coworkers or Partners**

The K-9 teams are placed in a situation that makes it impossible to consider the dogs as only tools. While the department constructs a definition of the canines as tools—necessitating that the officers also consider their canines as tools—the amount of time the handlers spend with their dogs leads to a stronger, more complex bond. During work hours, the canines are viewed and treated as coworkers or partners in addition to tools. From the moment they start training the dogs, this is readily apparent. One officer described training the dogs like training new officers when he said, "You have to train

dogs like you train rookies. Repeat it; do it one thousand times. On the one thousand and oneth time, it's like 'Oh!'" Initially when they get a dog, the handler will spend a week doing pure bonding. This builds the attachment and ensures that the dog does not get overwhelmed by too many new experiences.

The relationship built through this initial training process creates an emotional connectedness between the handler and his or her dog that makes the bond between the two stronger than that of a normal pet and more similar to that of a coworker or partner. As one officer put it, "Think about it, I spend eight and a half hours, four days a week plus days off with my dog. That's a lot more time than a pet."

The dogs play an active part in the interaction with their handlers; they are not passive participants in the relationship, as a tool would be. The officers believe that the dogs are sentient beings that can understand their communication and communicate with them; they believe that the canines can sense, understand, and react to the emotions of their handler. For example, during one training session, Argos was not acting as he should in the situation, and Kelley was getting frustrated. Another officer reminded her, "Don't let the frustration go down the leash." The officers all acknowledge that the dogs understand and react to handlers' emotions while working and "that dogs have a natural tendency to organize their behavior in a way that is compatible" with that of their human partners (Kerepesi et al., 2005, p. 78). The ability of the dogs to respond to their handlers indicates that there is "two-way communication going on between the dog and the owner" (Kerepesi et al., 2005, p. 77).

Because the dogs can participate in communication and respond to handler emotions, they can share in the stress of the job much as a partner would. Coworker

support and trust has been explored as both a mediating factor of stress related to work and a predictor of organizational commitment (Morris, Shinn, and DuMont, 1999). The canines are viewed as peers that can mediate the stress of police work because the team find comfort in each other's company and understands each other at a basic level (Hens, 2008), a direct result of the initial bonding and training process. As Steve said, "The dogs experience emotions just like us. They see you in your highs and lows. They see you when you've just gotten a bad guy and you're like, 'Woohoo, I've done something good!' (*Steve did a fist pump*) The dog's like, 'Oh my boss is happy.' They're keyed into us." The dogs' ability to "key into" handler emotions is an element of two-way communication that gives the dogs the ability to share the emotions of their team member. In addition to emotion, the canines share experiences (such as training exercises, work shifts, and calls) with their handlers. This combination of shared emotions and experiences lets the officers share the stress of the job with their dogs. When asked about how they feel going into uncertain situations, the officers responded in the following way.

- Joel: It sucks. (*His eyes were wide*). But ultimately they're a tool. (*He shrugged*).
- Steve: We won't send 'em into a no win situation.
- Kelley: Right. But it's their job.
- Joel: It's *our* job. We can't foresee everything. (*Italics is officer placed emphasis*).
- Mark: And we'll be right there with 'em.
- Kelley: Yeah we're right behind 'em.
- Mark: The dogs are most likely to get shot tracking. The dog leads right to the bad guy. It's like an ambush. We've had two dogs get shot in the unit and they were both tracking. All of our handlers that have been shot were tracking.

In this exchange, Joel expresses the ever-present knowledge that the dogs are a tool. But, the handlers are mostly discussing their dogs as partners. Kelley says that the job belongs to the dogs, and Joel immediately corrects her using the word "our," indicating a partner

orientation. Mark and then Kelley support the partner view by acknowledging that they are in the same amount of danger as the dogs because they go into calls as a team. In situations like this, most of the officers agree that they get nervous. For example, Craig said, “We all have a little bit of anxiety about police work. You never know what’s going to happen. The dog probably picks up on it.” Craig again acknowledges the fact that the dogs are “keyed into” the emotions of the officer and can respond to it. In these examples, the officers indicate that when they view their dogs as partners, the dogs are equals.

As in a partnership, a handler and a dog act as a team with a large amount of trust in all situations. For example, the officers trust their dogs as protectors in situations that give them anxiety. One officer stated, “They’re your protector, too. That bond’s hard to break.” Not only do the dogs protect the handlers, but also the handlers protect the dogs. When the situation is uncertain, the handlers take comfort in the fact that they are going in with their dog as a team. They can protect each other in dangerous situations.

The connectedness of the K-9 team is readily apparent when observing training sessions. The officers trust their dogs to perform in various scenarios as a team, working together toward a common goal. The handlers voiced this trust in the following excerpt from my field notes.

Steve: When we’re on deployment, he *knows* what he’s doin’. He senses me, my excitement. He doesn’t even *look* at me. He doesn’t have to because he knows what to do. He just listens. (*Italics is officer placed emphasis*).

Kelley: Argos does the same thing. He’s like, ‘See ya, mom.’ (*She raised her eyebrows and waved over her shoulder*).

Steve: Yeah. Like, ‘I know what time it is. I’m gone.’

Dave: It’s ‘cause work is routine. They know exactly what to do, but it’s still fun. They have fun and play games.

The officers recognize that when the dog is in drive, he senses the emotions of the handler and listens to the handler's commands. In return, the handlers observe the dogs' body language and recognize when the dog is near odor or when the dog is distracted. There are examples of two-way communication and trust between the handlers and their dogs.

Another aspect of communication between the K-9 team is the handler's ability to capitalize on the dog's natural abilities. For example, the dogs are either aggressive (scratching) or passive (sitting) alerts when they find narcotics. The first week Pete had Lucky, they had not decided if the dog would be aggressive or passive. He put Lucky's toy in the middle of the table in his kitchen. A couple minutes later while he was watching TV, he heard a scratching sound and thought, "That's not good." When he went into the kitchen, Lucky was scratching at the ball on the island. This was when Pete realized his dog would be an aggressive alert dog. By letting Lucky use an aggressive alert, Pete was capitalizing on his dog's natural tendency.

The handlers are "keyed into" the dogs' emotions and attitudes about work. They believe that the dogs are bred to do the work they are doing; it is natural for them to work as police dogs, just as it is natural for Lucky to scratch as an alert. While this view can be seen a "dogs as tools" orientation, the handlers also believe—as a result of the dogs' natural abilities and desires—that the canines love to work. They enjoy seeing "the light bulb" come on during training when the dogs finally understand what their handler wants them to do. By assigning value to and naming the canines' attitudes toward work, the officers are attributing emotions to the dogs that increase the emotional connectedness between the team members. Because the dogs love what they are doing, the handlers

love working with them and are distraught when the dogs can no longer do what they love. The officers' discussion of switching canines clearly shows the support that exists between the team members as a result of the emotions and attitudes that the handlers assign to their dogs about working. This is best exemplified by the following conversation from my field notes.

Steve: *(He was looking at Mark)*. They don't live long enough. *(Dave was looking at the floor and nodding while Mark and Steve were talking)*. They want to do it. Mentally, they're still able; they still want to work. But their body won't allow them to. *(Steve gestured as he spoke; Italics is officer placed emphasis)*.

Dave: *(He was looking at the floor; His eyes were very wide)*. They have the heart of a warrior 'til the very end. Then the body just gives out.

Mark: It's been four and half years and I still call Fritz 'Bear' sometimes. *(He paused and looked at me before continuing)*. My wife was helping me to carry Bear to the car to take 'im to the vet to be put down and he got excited. *(He held his arms up like he was carrying a baby)*.

Dave: *(He was still looking at the floor)*. That tail wags.

Mark: He saw the police car and thought he was goin' to work. His legs wouldn't work, but he still wanted to work! *(Mark was very animated)*.

Steve: Ya know the people who think our dogs have it bad. I think dogs that are just stuck in the backyard, that's abuse. Our dogs love what they do.

Joel: The dogs love it. They aren't stuck in the backyard. They get to roam new spaces everyday and explore.

The handlers talked about several situations when they either retired a dog and started training a new one or had to return a dog to the breeder. The officer did not yet have the trust and the bond with the new dog that existed with the former one.

Transitioning to a new partner is particularly challenging. For example, Dave retired his dog Mojo, and began training Otto. He said, "When I first got Otto and I had to start leavin' Mojo at home for the first couple months, I felt like I was cheatin' on my wife."

(*Dave shook his head*). This example shows how strong the officers perceive the bond is between them and their canine coworkers.

Through perceived emotional connectedness, two-way communication, trust, and interactions between the handler and canine, strong coworker support is formed. When officers must change canines, they are essentially reforming this coworker support that existed between the officer and the former canine. To the handlers, it is difficult to form a bond as strong as the one with the first canine partner. One officer pointed out that, “In most cases, your favorite dog is your first dog. You learn everything together.”

### **Canines-as-Kids**

The canines-as-kids orientation is the dominant relationship identified by the handlers themselves, and it was also noted by Sanders (2006). When asked to relate their relationship to a human one, they each say that the dog is a child. For example, the following is a typical response.

Joel: It’s a little kid.

Mark: A three-year-old.

Dave: They’re always pushin’ boundaries. You have to rein ‘em in, monitor ‘em constantly.

Mark: They all have high drives because that’s what they’re bred for. So when they’re at home and they’re not workin’, they get bored. They start exploring and doing things they’re not supposed to. They’re bored.

When the handlers talk about relating to their canines as kids at work, they are talking about specific behaviors that result in monitoring and correcting the dogs’ behaviors.

Because the dogs all have high drives, they get bored and begin to engage in unwanted behaviors. For example, one officer said, “Sometimes they try to cheat just like people.

They think when they alert they get the toy, so they’ll alert at the wrong spot. We have to



teach them to do exactly what we want. Like with the bite suit, they'll go before we give the command. They're just like kids. They start taking cheap shots."

When in drive, the dog is treated as either a tool or a coworker, unless he breaks concentration and the view switches to the dogs as children dimension. The dog may become distracted by its surroundings and break concentration as a result, or he may begin "taking cheap shots." When this happens, the dog is no longer in drive because he is not searching for odor. This break in concentration changes the relationship from one of harmoniously working together like coworkers to one where the dog is subordinate. The handler must show dominance in redirecting the dog's attention, resulting in treating the dog as a child. The officer corrects the dog's behavior using tactics such as verbal corrections, a jerk of the leash, or the electric collar (usually kept on the lowest level). One officer explained that these corrections are not meant to hurt the dog, they are meant to make the dog say, "Oh, I better listen to dad."

Unlike the equality of the canines-as-coworkers view, the canines-as-kids view indicates that the handlers are dominant. They are like parents showing their children that they must obey the expectations of the officer or be corrected. The purpose of monitoring the dogs and "reining in" their bad behavior is to instill drive, which in large part can be compared to self-control in the dog. The dogs have to learn that if they control their behavior, acting as the handlers want them to, then they get to go to work. The officers make a conscious effort to make work fun for the dogs so that they have the necessary incentive to perform as needed by the department. Here, the officers recognize a childlike mentality in the dogs orienting them towards fun. As one officer so aptly put it, "We make everything a big game to 'em. They associate the scent with playing. If

they knew it was work, they wouldn't want to do it." The officers monitor the dogs' behavior and sanction unwanted behaviors in order to build drive in the dogs.

The main childlike tendency that the officers acknowledge is that the dogs are easily distracted and must be "reined in." However, the dogs also have the desire to play and cuddle and there is the human desire to protect them from danger (Hens, 2008). Both of these dispositions result in treating the dog like a child. For example, the handlers put forth a large effort to make work fun for the dogs. This increases the dogs' drive and desire to work. Mark said about the dogs' work, "That's all it is; it's a game. They're looking for their toy." He added, "They get the light bulb, 'Oh, *that's* what you want!' I'll slap you. It's like teaching a two-year-old." (*He bit his lip, shook his head, and raised his hand when he said, 'I'll slap you,' Italics is officer placed emphasis*).

The canine desire to cuddle, while childlike, is not considered a positive attribute when in drive at work. For example, several officers mention that giving the dogs too much attention decreases their desire to work. As mentioned before, Joel must put Bauer in the kennel before working so that he is not socialized too much. Similarly, all of the officers keep the divider between the front seat and the kennel in the car closed, except for one. She leaves it open and will pet her dog when he leans his head forward, as in the following excerpt from a ride-in.

In the car, Kelley said to me, "Don't be surprised if he lays his head on your shoulder." The entire backseat is a kennel, and there is a window between the backseat and the front so that Argos can stick his head up front. A little later, Argos stuck his head up front and Kelly pet his head saying, "Hey boy," in a soft, higher pitched voice.

As another example, walking to and from the cars during training sessions, the handlers do not pet the dogs and only sometimes look at them. When they are not looking at the

dogs, they are looking at other officers or at the targets. Another reason for not petting the dogs at work is as one officer said, “It’s a fear worse than the bite itself. You know your dog’s not gonna bite you. They might turn around, nip, but they’ll let go as soon as they realize who it is. Other dogs don’t care who you are. We’re hesitant of other dogs.” I did observe several exceptions to this rule, however. For example, Lucky was routinely taken out of the car to be petted. One night after training, Pete brought Lucky out of the car and walked him around before bringing him over to where the other officers were standing.

Steve pet Lucky from the front. While Steve was doing this, Dave petted Lucky from behind. Lucky didn’t react at all to Dave’s touch.

Dave: He didn’t even flinch.

Pete: He’s been out here for a minute.

Steve: This is really good for ‘im. Just hang out with daddy and his friends.

Pete: *(To Lucky)*. Which way are you goin’?

Dave: That way, then this way, then that way. He doesn’t know. *(Dave moved his hand quickly from his side toward his back twice, and Lucky’s head followed him)*. He’s quick.

Steve: Yeah he’ll get ya.

Pete threw Lucky’s toy 5-10 times. Once, Lucky picked it up and dropped it in the middle of the circle of people. He looked at it, and then lay down, still looking at it. He stayed like that until Pete threw it.

In this example, the officers thought it was good for Lucky to be around people and to be petted by other officers. The officers will occasionally pet another handler’s dog during a training session, but not usually.

As discussed in the canines as coworker perspective, the dogs serve as protectors for the handlers. But, the officers also serve to protect the dogs, an attribute of parent-child relationships. For example, one officer had to return his dog, and said, “The decision was easy. Doin’ it’s hard. We had to put ‘im in the kennel, ya know, and ya know how he is with small spaces. He set the alarm off. I had to take ‘im out and then

there were all those people around. (*He paused and looked at Kelley, smiling*). He was slippin' in between my legs. I was tryin' to stop 'im from doin' it, but I've been protectin' 'im for so long that (*He shrugged*).” The handler had a difficult time trying to *not* protect his dog because that was the role he had taken over the year he had the dog.

The final attribute of the canines-as-kids dimension is described by Mongillo et al. (2010) when they found that dogs give preferential attention to the owner over a stranger. While the other officers in the K-9 unit are not strangers, they are not the dog's handler. The canines give preferential attention to their personal handlers. They do not listen to commands from other officers, and they look to their handler for instruction when confused. For example, the following is an excerpt from a training session.

Ryan was walking past all of the boxes with his dog not alerting to any of them: “I don't think my dog's going to alert to any of these tonight.” As Ryan was walking, Blaze was wagging his tail with his ears up, and he was constantly looking back at Ryan.

As seen from the previous discussion, the handlers view their canines as kids at work, both in drive and not in drive. Being in the home provides another distinct situation where the officers view and treat the dogs as kids. The idea that the dogs are three-year-olds is still the primary relationship expressed by the handlers, even in this separate situation. It still holds that the dogs are “always pushin' boundaries. You have to rein 'em in, monitor 'em constantly.” One officer identifies the slight difference between being at home and at work by saying, “They all have high drives because that's what they're bred for. So when they're at home and they're not workin', they get bored. They start exploring and doing things they're not supposed to. They're bored.” Because the dogs are ultimately tools, yet get bored and do “things they're not supposed to,” the

officers must monitor and correct the unwanted behavior, just as they would at work. For example, Pete said that Lucky was like a kid and elaborated by saying,

He just wanted to be close to me all the time. And he could jump man. He just bounced all over the place. I was constantly, ‘Nope!’ (*Pete leaned left and reached out like he was stopping a dog then crossed his arms*). Then two seconds later, ‘Uh-uh!’ (*Pete did the same thing to the right*). I couldn’t leave ‘im in my house for two minutes alone. I never did, but I know he would’ve destroyed my entire house. If I left ‘im in the backyard, he could jump like six feet to see over the kennel.

The home is a distinct situation that alters the demeanors of both the dog and the handler; therefore, the canines-as-kids relationship is slightly different at home than it is at work. At home, the dogs do not need protection, so that aspect of the parent-child relationship is restricted to the work environment. However, the dogs still have the desire to play and cuddle (Hens, 2008), and it is more desirable at home. The officers recognize that there is a difficult balance to keep with play and affection. For example, Joel said:

Bauer just runs around the house goofing off when we’re home. I keep him away from the family on days we’re working because I realized that he won’t work if he gets too much attention. My dog’s a little bit lazy. He craves praise and the joy of working, but he’s too social. Most dogs in the unit run around the house. We treat ‘em like princesses. Most of them stay in the house. They’re coddled. I mean, we’re all dog lovers. We each have our own routine. Now when we have company, I put Bauer up. We don’t want them thinking that everyone’s their friend. It doesn’t make sense to have a canine who thinks all people are friends.

The handlers generally recognize that there is a balance that must be kept between giving the dogs attention and keeping their drives built. If the dogs are too “coddled,” then they will not work because they are fulfilling their desire to play at home. Working becomes unnecessary in this case. The officers also admit that it is up to the dog and the handler to decide where this line is. The personalities and preferences of the handler and the canine dictate the relationship. One handler described it in the following way:

It's a real fine line...It's a hard line to drive sometimes. Sometimes the dog decides what the relationship will be like. If the dog has high play drive, then the handler can play with the dog at home and at work. If the dog has low drive, then he has to be put away at home. If a dog with low drive plays at home, then he will not work. It also depends on the handler. Some guys lean toward tool but some don't.

As children, the dogs are toddlers, unable to speak and express emotions, perceptions, or wants for themselves. Because the dogs cannot speak, handlers engage in interlocution, or "speaking for" (Arluke and Sanders 1996, p. 67). When the officers speak for their dogs, they are usually expressing the emotions and thoughts that they expect the dog to have in a particular situation. For example, someone asked an officer with a retired canine at home how his dog was and he answered, "I've been spending more time with him. Even if it's just five to ten minutes at night rubbin' his belly. [...] Yeah he'll think, 'Oh, dad loves me after all.'" Here, the officer believes that spending time with his canine will communicate love to him, and speaks the imagined thought of his dog aloud.

Another method of interlocution that the handlers engage in is less direct. For example, during one training session, Argos went into the second room without having alerted in the first. Kelley pulled him back and said, "He's just doin' that cause he wants his toy." She did not directly speak for Argos, but she explained what he wanted and provided a motivation for his actions. Speaking for is used to both actualize the relationship and to construct the identities of the handler and the dog. The handler identity established through speaking for is generally one of a parent, while the identity of the dog is generally that of the child. The handlers almost always refer to themselves as "mom" or "dad" when speaking directly for their dog, a phenomenon also documented

by Corkran (2013) and Sanders (2006). The following excerpt from my field notes is an example of how a canine's personality can be constructed through such interlocution.

Steve: His dog (*he pointed his thumb at Dave*) can tell if a car that's coming has one headlight or two headlights. He hates motorcycles and he can tell without seein' it how many headlights it has. (*Steve and Dave were both smiling*).

Me: Seriously?

Steve: Yeah, it's crazy.

Mark: (*He had put his feet on the floor instead of being propped up*). If mine sees any black and white cars, he immediately starts barking. He thinks all black and white cars are police cars and it must have a dog in it, so he starts barking. (*Mark was smiling and laughed when he finished talking*).

In this conversation, the handlers discuss their dogs as individuals with specific preferences. Dave's dog "hates motorcycles," while Mark's dog thinks "all black and white cars are police cars." There are many instances such as this where the officers express the preferences and character of their dogs in a way that makes them stand out from the others. Whenever handlers engage in these discussions, they begin speaking as if they are a proud parent discussing their children. This is easily seen when they talk about their dogs' performances in training and on calls. The officers are invested in the success of their canines, and are therefore excited when they do well and frustrated when they do not perform as expected. Similarly, they are pleased when the dogs listen and cooperate, but frustrated when the dogs do not follow their commands. For example, after one training scenario, Kelley pleased with Argos, saying, "Normally he gets distracted by yelling, ahh! He did really good tonight. I was a happy momma." On another night, she was very frustrated by his performance, as demonstrated by the following.

Kelley put Argos in a down, and as soon as she put the leash on him, he lunged forward toward the sleeve. She put him in the down again, and

then walked about 15 yards away. She turned back and Argos moved forward about a foot. She went back and tried to make him heel in his original place, but he wouldn't, even after she yelled and clapped her hands. She pulled him back and then scratched his ears before walking away again. Again, Argos moved forward without her saying to and without her being attacked. Kelley was very frustrated with Argos' performance and walked back to the car very quickly, looking directly ahead, with her head slightly down. Argos was being pulled behind her while he was still trying to lunge toward the sleeve.

The bond between the officer and the canine is as individual as that between parent and child. A handler treats his own dog with more affection than he treats another officer's dog, much like a parent would treat their child differently than another's child. Craig said, "If someone else's dog was up here, sure I'd give 'em a little love, but I'm not as involved as I am with mine." According to another handler, this happens because "we each have our own bond with our dog. They each have a personality, like a person." The concept of the dogs' personalities is a common theme of conversation between the handlers. For example, the following is an excerpt from my field notes.

Mark: Have you noticed that the dogs and the handlers have the same personalities? They match up? Like Dave and Otto. Especially, Pete and Lucky. (*He raised his eyebrows; Steve agreed*). They were like little cops. (*Steve and Joel laughed*).

Dave: But I handle Otto differently than I handled Mojo.

Mark: Mojo was assy. Either they take on our personalities or we take on theirs. I don't know which it is, but it's neat.

Steve: You should've seen Fritz when Mark first got 'im. He was all peppy (*Steve imitated this by sittin up and smiling*). Now he's like, 'Rrrr.' He's a prime example.

To the handlers, the dogs' personalities vary just as much as peoples' personalities. In addition, the dogs are socialized just as children to reflect aspects of their parents' personalities. However similar they are, it is clear that the dogs retain personalities distinct from their handlers—like when Mark referred to Mojo as "assy," but not Dave. Similarly, one officer described his dog as "a goober." This difference in the dogs'



character is another common topic of conversation because according to the handlers, the dog's personality determines what the relationship will be like. Dave provides an excellent example of the dog's personality defining the relationship because he currently has a retired canine, Mojo, at home to compare with his current canine, Otto. On one call, a SWAT officer and Dave shared the following exchange.

SWAT officer: *(He was standing at the sidewalk entrance to the front lawn).* How's Mojo?

Dave: Retired! I have a new dog, completely different. *Completely different. (Dave stressed 'Completely' by separating the syllables).*

SWAT officer: Oh man! I can't tell you how many times Mojo made me drop my keys. *(He held up his hand like he was about to put a key in a door and they threw both his hands up in the air, dropping the imaginary key).*

Dave: Every time you would get that key near the car, he would bark, bark, bark, bark! *(The barks were imitations of dog barks).* The entire car shakes. *(He shook his hands back and forth like he was holding a box and shaking it vigorously).* With Otto, you can get near the car and he just looks at ya. *(He jutted his head forward and opened his eyes wide, looking at the SWAT officer).* Otto is 180 different. Mojo was ornery, ornery. Otto is friendly.

Dave recognizes the differences in his dogs' personalities just as a parent recognizes the differences in their children's personalities. He describes Mojo as "ornery," while Otto is "friendly." These differences mean that the dogs respond differently to rewards and corrections in training scenarios, which means that Dave must handle and treat them differently. He said, "If I got on Mojo, he was like, 'Whatever.' *(He shrugged and waved his hand as a dismissal).* If I get on Otto, he's like, 'Oh, I'm so sorry!' *(He opened his eyes wide and shook his head; He paused).*"

The handlers believe that this relationship—dogs-as-kids—is the predominate relationship between them and their canines. It is definitely the relationship most clearly and most often verbalized and spoken about. However, this relationship is challenged at

home because the dogs are ultimately tools, and this sometimes dictates how the dogs must be treated, resulting in a canines-as-pets relationship that is discussed below.

### **Canines-as-Pets**

Because the canines are ultimately tools, the handler must treat the dog in certain ways until the officer is comfortable with the dog's drive and consistency both in training and on calls. This results in the canine being treated like a pet until he is older and the handler feels that he is consistent enough. At this point, the handler will relax the rules and allow the dog to be treated as more childlike. The main distinction between the pet and child bond is prescribed by where the canines are kept and why. When the officer first gets the dog, he is kept in the kennel outside. This is a mechanism used to build the dog's drive and help him understand that the handler is the alpha in the relationship. The dog is taken out to play and is fed on the handler's schedule, not the dog's. The handler does not show too much affection toward the dog because it will make the dog softer and less willing to work. When the handler perceives that the dog's drive has been built, which is typically after a couple of years, the dog will be allowed inside instead of purely in the kennel. Inside, the handler's family gets to interact with the canine. For example, Mark describes his dog as a "mama's boy" at home, who follows his wife around everywhere until it is time to work, when the dog once again follows Mark. Steve describes the purpose of first treating the dog as a pet, and then transitioning to a more relaxed treatment of the dog in the following depiction from my field notes.

Kelley can't trust 'er dog to be consistent or reliable in a deadly force situation. Mine and almost everyone else's', yeah we can trust 'em. It's because he gets too much affection at home. If they get all that, they'll still love you and come to you, but they won't be honorable to you in the field. I kept Duke in a kennel in the backyard for the first couple years. If we were at home, he was in the kennel. Unless it was raining or too hot or

cold or something. I didn't want 'im in the house. I didn't want 'im messin' up the house. Now, in the last three and a half, four years he's been inside." Steve raised his eyebrows in during the last statement. He was being very animated, gesturing a lot. I asked how old Duke was, and he replied, "Almost eight. I wanted to build his drive. Now he understands what I want, so he's allowed inside. He's past that stage where I had to be careful. He understands the boundaries. He won't disrespect me. Like, he won't come up and lick my face when I'm sittin' on the couch. Some people think, 'Oh, that's so cute.' That's okay for pets, not these dogs.

Steve says that he kept Duke in the kennel until the dog "understood" what Steve wanted him to do and his drive was built up enough. This is the normal process that the teams of this unit go through. Steve has become more relaxed with Duke as he got older, as most handlers will. I heard of one handler who did not become more relaxed with his dog because "his last dog was mean. His wife was scared of it, so it wasn't allowed in the house at all. It was always in the kennel. That dog would eat you alive." Again, the relationship between this handler and his dog was determined by the dog's personality.

Another distinct characteristic of the pet relationship is the amount of direction the handlers give their dogs at home. They monitor their dogs as children, but they do not command them as they do at work or in training. Mark admits that at home, Fritz is "more of a pet" that he doesn't command. Similarly, another officer said, "At home its like, 'Knock it off.' (*He said this very nonchalantly and waved his hand*). At work it's a harsh 'foeey.' (*He said this harshly with his eyebrows furrowed*). At home, they're off just like we're off." Besides being "off work" and in a more relaxed situation, there is another reason that the handlers command the dogs more at work than at home. As one officer put it, "The bottom line is, there's more liability at work. At work, we're on top of 'em. We watch every step. We don't have to do that at home." This change in

attitudes and perceived liability is a major contributor to the change in the relationship that occurs when the team arrives home.

Another contributor to the alteration of team relationships between work and home is the presence of the officer's family. For the officers that have families at home, once the dogs are allowed inside, the family interacts with them on a regular basis. To the family, the dog is a pet entirely. This is exemplified by Joel's description of how his son interacts with Bauer.

The day before we go back to work, I have to put Bauer in the kennel. If he gets too much socialization, he won't work worth a damn. But the two days I leave him out of the kennel, he's just a dog. I come home and my boy is laying on the floor playing X-box and using Bauer as a pillow. [...] I've asked my kids to come out here. They won't. They don't want to see the bite work. They don't want to see that side of 'im. I mean, my son just lays on 'im like a pillow. They don't want to see 'im bite someone.

The families interact with the dogs purely as pets, making the officers see the dogs that way as well. Even so, the handlers recognize at least subconsciously that the dogs cannot fully be pets. Joel admits that Bauer is a regular dog, except for the day before they go back to work, when he has to be kept in the kennel to build the dog's drive again. The handlers recognize this contradiction. They describe their canines as pets and distinguish them from pets. For example, one officer said, "That's okay for pets, not these dogs." While both views are voiced by the handlers, they are not seen as contradictory. They are simply seen as different aspects of their relationship with their dog. They want to treat the canines as pets, like their families do, but if the dogs get too much affection, they won't want to work. The handlers each admit, "They're pretty much pets." Joel said, "Bauer's just a normal dog at home. He runs around just like my other dogs." Yet he

immediately added, “Now I do put ‘im up when visitors come over. I don’t even want to take the chance.” He does not put away his other dogs.

I asked a group of handlers if they treated their patrol dogs differently than their pet dogs. Three of them answered “no” immediately. Steve waited about ten seconds and then said, “I do. If he were to get out and run, I’d be chasing after him. I’d call everybody in here to help. If my other dogs got out, I’d be like, ‘Okay, I’ve got to go find ‘em.’ It’s a completely different bond. If Duke got out, I’d worry about the health of everyone else and about his health. I wouldn’t do that with my other dogs.” The three who had originally said “no” agreed with Steve’s answer. They expanded through the following discussion.

Kelley: I agree. But that’s a completely different question.

Dave: Bond is much different than treat. *(He was sitting in his chair, leaning forward so that his elbows rested on his knees).*

Kelley: I have a Yorkie at home that I’ve had for twelve years. I like Argos a whole lot more. But I treat them the same. *(Kelley looked at me whenever she spoke).*

Craig: Yeah, I mean they both get fed and loved on.

Steve: The other dogs are just pets. Frankly, it’s easier to replace them.

According to the handlers, they treat all of their dogs the same, no matter if they are patrol dogs or pets; but the bond between the patrol dog and the officer is much stronger than the bond between the pet dog and the officer. Though they voice that they treat all dogs the same, their actions suggest otherwise, as discussed above. The previous example also shows once again the ever-present view of the canine as a tool when Steve admitted, “It’s easier to replace them,” meaning that the police dogs involve more training and resources, including monetary resources. However, Steve is also implying that his bond with his police dog is so strong that it would be difficult to find an adequate replacement.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research identified a gap in the sociozoologic scale that has not been well studied. It confirms the placement of canines among good animals in the sociozoologic scale, but it also brings to the front an interesting contradiction, creating a category separate from the two conceived by Arluke and Sanders (1996). The scale, which ranks animals, human and nonhuman, on a “ladder of worth” (p. 168), creates a hierarchical model both among species and within species. Based on biological, moral, and social standards, dogs have been traditionally placed in the category of good animals, where they are either seen as pets or tools. The results of this study suggest that police canine—and possibly other working canines (Corkran, 2013; Kuhl, 2011)—are placed among other good animals morally, but are viewed as different from good animals both biologically and socially.

Like pets, police canines “seem to love their place in the social order” (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 170). As we have seen, the officers in the K-9 unit studied describe how their dogs love to work and show a genetic predisposition for police work. One officer said, “If I leave in the police car and leave Bauer at home, my wife says he just stands there and howls like he was kicked in the stomach until I come back. He doesn’t like being left at home.” This shows how the dogs are eager to work and fulfill their “place in the social order” (p.170). When at home, the officers and their families show affection toward the dogs. As Arluke and Sanders (1996) state, “there are times when the treatment of children and pets is indistinguishable” (p. 172), which is the case with the police dogs at home. They are anthropomorphized, becoming members of the family (Dotson and Hyatt, 2008; Sanders, 2003).

Like the definition of tools provided by Arluke and Sanders (1996), police dogs are deanthropomorphized, but this occurs in a way that glorifies their natural abilities, as discussed above. Police dogs are “instrumentally useful as ‘tools’” (p. 170), yet they share very little with the definition of “tools” proposed by Arluke and Sanders that viewed tools as lab or farm animals without emotions and thoughts. When police dogs are viewed as tools, they think, feel, and communicate. In fact, the handlers showed a heightened appreciation for the abilities of their dogs (Kuhl, 2011), saying, “It’s hard to describe until you do it. I always grew up with dogs, but I didn’t realize how smart they are until this job. I didn’t know how strong that bond could be. Once I started in canine, I was like, ‘Wow, that’s pretty cool. He’s my buddy.’” Another officer expressed similar sentiments: “It’s hard to put into words. It’s better seein’ it. You basically don’t know what its like unless you’ve handled a dog. I had *no clue!* I thought I loved my little dog. Ha!” (*Italics is officer placed emphasis*). These examples show how much the handlers appreciate the relationships they form as a team and the abilities of their dogs, which are seen as biologically superior to domestic dogs.

Arluke and Sanders (1996) define good animals as being fundamentally subordinate. As we have seen, when in the role of pets and children, the police canines are subordinate; yet, when in drive, the dogs are coworkers and equals. This quality, where the animals’ “subordinate place is unclear” is a characteristic of bad animals (Arluke and Sanders, 1996, p. 170); however, when police canines are not subordinate, it is not a negative quality like it is for bad animals. Corkran (2013) supported the finding that this relationship “[transcends] the human-nonhuman animal boundary” when the article quoted a handler as saying, “They’re not just machines for my bird-hunting

passion...They're my hunting partners" (p.14). Canines being equal to their partners is a good thing, not a quality that places them among bad animals.

The differences between police canines and other good animals warrant the consideration of another category on the sociozoologic scale. Working dogs can be seen as occupying a different location on the scale because at times they are seen as pets and children, but they are also viewed as tools and coworkers, orientations that are fundamentally different than the established rankings. They are seen as biologically different from other animals because of their capabilities. They also occupy different places socially in the minds of their handlers, as seen by the complex relationships that emerge at work and at home. Police dogs should still be considered good, though, because they are considered morally the same as other good animals.

In the past, research has focused on identifying the characteristics of human-canine relationships in the work environment (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Corkran, 2013; Hens, 2008; Kuhl, 2011; Prato-Previde et al., 2003; Sanders, 1999; Sanders, 2006; Tedeschi et al., 2005) and on describing the ambivalence in human-canine relationships (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Sanders, 1999; Sanders 2006). The current study typified the characteristics of these relationships so that a language could be created to talk about human-canine collaboration in the work setting. Based on these categories and the various attributes of the human-canine bond observed, I propose the existence of a separate type animal different both biologically and socially from the existing classes on the sociozoologic scale: *police canines*. These animals are closer to humans than good animals on the sociozoologic scale. Future research should focus on confirming the existence of and further characterizing this new type. The relationships between humans



and other working animals should also be studied to determine if a larger typology of *working animals* exists above good animals in which *police canines* can be included.

A weakness of the current study is that it focused only on one K-9 unit, and observed the teams in only varying work settings. To correct this weakness, future work should be done in units of varying sizes and genders. These different demographics may influence how the officers treat their dogs. For example, it may be that female officers and male officers emphasize different aspects of the canine-handler relationship. Also, dogs from different fields, both odor detecting and non-odor detecting, such as social work (Tedeschi et al., 2005), should be studied to see if all working canines develop similar relationships with their handlers. It could also be that other working animals, such as police horses, have similar relationships; therefore, the relationships between humans and other working species should be explored. A main weakness of this study was that the canine-handler relationship was not observed in the home. Any analysis of the relationship at home is from handlers' stories. Direct observations of the home should be done to see if what the officers express is what occurs.

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## ABSTRACT

Over time, humans have formed intense bonds with canines that cross into many environments, including work as well as home. Canines have been used for work in law enforcement in the United States for over a century and K-9 units have become common in law enforcement departments across the country. Because of the prevalence of law enforcement canines in American society, they deserve a place in the literature. The bond between the canine and his handler in the law enforcement environment creates very different relationships than those formed between domestic canines and his or her owner. This study identified four types of canine-handler relationships, including the following handler orientations: canine as tool, as coworker, as kid, and as pet. These relationships create a unique bond between the handlers and the dogs that places the canines in a category not yet identified in Arluke and Sanders' (1996) foundational sociozoologic scale. Law enforcement canines must be between humans and good animals, in the category of *police canines*.